

HIS BEATITUDE MAKES AN OFFICIAL PILGRIMAGE TO ROMANIA

His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa made an official pilgrimage to Romania following an invitation by His Beatitude Daniel Patriarch of Romania, to officiate at the Liturgical and spiritual functions in honour of the memory of ST Dimitrios the New, Patron Saint of Bucharest.

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria arrived in Bucharest on the morning of 26th October 2011, together with His Eminence George Metropolitan of Accra, his representative in Athens, and the Very Reverend Panteleimon Arathymos , Chief-Secretary of the Holy Synod.

He went to the historic Cathedral, where His Beatitude Daniel was waiting for him together with many Hierarchs of the Romanian Patriarchate. Following the Doxology the Primate of the Romanian Church addressed His Beatitude, emphasizing the importance of the visit of the Venerable Primate of the ancient Patriarchal Throne of Alexandria, who has undertaken a multifaceted missionary and humanistic effort for the dissemination of the Orthodox faith on the African continent, bearing the blessing of the great Alexandrian Fathers and Teachers of the first Christian centuries to the Romanian Church.

During his reply His Beatitude Theodoros mentioned: "We give glory and honour to the Triune God who deemed us worthy of coming to day to the blessed country of Romania, to meet with beloved brothers.

Your Beatitude, we are with you at this moment, having accepted your kind invitation to concelebrate the holy memory of St Dimitrios the New, Protector and Patron Saint of Bucharest.

This pilgrimage is an essential and fraternal expression of the genuine communion, love and understanding between our two Holy Churches, as has been the case for many centuries.

Your Beatitude,

We are here with you as a Brother in Christ, to mutually express our unity of faith in the communion of love. We come to you from the Patriarchal See of St Mark the Evangelist, bringing to you all the Apostolic blessing.

It is with great joy that we meet the holy Hierarchs of the Patriarchal Throne of Romania, who with fraternal and kind feelings are here today, to offer their respect and appreciation to the Patriarch, by God's Grace, of an Apostolic Throne with a heavy spiritual heritage, with a history that is lost in the depths of the first Christian years.

Yes, Your Beatitude, the honourable Hierarchs, who are the immediate supporters of your love, are the precious stones which decorate your Patriarchal Crown. "Let Israel be glad in his Maker, let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King!"

The ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa is already in the third millennium of its turbulent journey. A journey which began with its first Bishop, the Evangelist Mark and continues ceaselessly though to today with an unshakeable faith in the Apostolic tradition and the unchanged heritage of the Holy Fathers and the great figures which adorned this Throne. The history of the Throne of Alexandria recorded and guided at the same time the journey of the Church from the first days of its revelation to the world.

Therefore, bearing this witness of this historic journey of the Throne, and joyfully facing your Clergy and collaborators, we wish them from our heart, health, spiritual progress and a rich productive life in Christ.

Our gratitude at this moment, under the influence of natural emotion, is expressed within our souls and with mixed emotions of spiritual delight, is manifest and becomes a prayer, a compelling prayer and a fervent blessing, that the Lord will strengthen you all, my dear brothers in the continuation of your ecclesiastical service. The words of the hymnographer come spontaneously to my lips: "Lord of the Powers, be with us...Lord of the Powers have mercy on us".

We pray, Your Beatitude and most honoured Brother that you will have a long life to serve the beloved people of Romania to the praise and glory of God. We are also sure of your prayers for the ancient Patriarchate, as a valuable gift.

We thank you for this complimentary welcome which you have given us, for your love and fraternal concern, for your kind words especially, which are an expression of your nobility.

Our praise is lifted up as fragrant incense, as well as a fervent plea to the Arch-Shepherd Christ, to whom we call: "Lord, Lord, look down from heaven and see and visit this Vineyard... May you have many years Your Beatitude!"

Following the Doxology His Beatitude venerated the Holy Relics of the Apostle Andrew, which had been transferred to Bucharest by His Eminence Chrysostomos Metropolitan of Patras as a blessing for the faithful. He then attended the official lunch which was hosted in his honour by His Beatitude Daniel of Romania at the adjacent Patriarchal Mansion.

In the afternoon of the same day His Beatitude conducted together with His Beatitude Daniel the inauguration of the renovated offices of the Holy Archdiocese of Bucharest, the Patriarchal Mansion and the studio of the ecclesiastical TV station TRINITAS.