

HIS BEATITUDE MEETS WITH THE PATRIARCHAL VICAR OF BRAZZAVILLE – THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED DIOCESE OF BRAZZAVILLE AND GABON

On 24th December 2010, His Beatitude welcomed to the Patriarchal Mansion of the Vicariate in Cairo Archimandrite Theologos Chrysanthakopoulos of the newly-established Diocese of Brazzaville and Gabon to discuss issues regarding his missionary and pastoral work.

The next day, 25th December 2010, during the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy of the Nativity, His Beatitude, wanting to make the congregation aware of the missionary activity of the Patriarchate in West Africa, presented to the congregation of the Holy Patriarchal Church of St Nicholas in Cairo, the above-named priest and spoke of the work being done in the new Diocese.

Father Theologos, neé Dimitrios Chrysanthakopoulos, was born in Patras in 1951. From 1969 to 1975 he studied and received an Architectural Degree from the Ethniko Metsovio Polytechnio. From 1975 to 1977 he did post graduate studies in Paris in monument restoration. He speaks French, English and Albanian. In 1980 he was tonsured as a monk and went to Mount Athos.

In 2004 he undertook responsibility for the mission in Congo Brazzaville which at that time belonged to the Holy Metropolis of Central Africa. At the same time he taught Church Building and Iconography to the students of the Theological School of the Holy Metropolis of Central Africa.

The Holy Diocese of Brazzaville and Gabon was established by Patriarchal and Synodal Decree on 7th October 2010 by the Holy Synod of the Hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, following a proposal by His Beatitude. It includes in its jurisdiction the countries of Congo Brazzaville and Gabon.

In the capital of Congo Brazzaville the Orthodox Mission is continually developing. However, the main Orthodox centre is situated in the city of Pointe Noire, where Archimandrite Theologos, assisted by native priest Father Maximos Oumba and Father Dimitrios Otomba, is developing enormous spiritual missionary and humanistic activity. Already in operation is a large Missionary Centre, which includes offices, hostels, halls for meetings and Catechism, as well as a radio station. A church is also being completed honouring St Dimitrios the Myroblete, and the Church of the Ascension of the Lord is already completed. It is here that the faithful are taught.

In the city of Dolisie the churches built are those dedicated to St Irene and St Nicholas, as well as an orphanage and primary school. On 20 September 2007 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, during his visit to Dolisie inaugurated the Orphanage, "Agios Efstathios". In the town of Nkayi the work of building the Holy Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour has been completed.

In the neighbouring country of Gabon, a missionary group from the Holy Metropolis of the Cameroon, catechised and baptised in 2-7 the first indigenous Orthodox Christians in the town of Libreville, organised the first Orthodox Community and appointed the first parish Priest, Father Victor Etendi Lissom.

Already the efforts to gain state land are underway and the building of the first permanent Holy Church of St Dimitrios is programmed, donated by the Brotherhood of External Missions.

In both countries, which make up the Holy Diocese of Brazzaville and Gabon, there are indigenous communities of Orthodox Christians, Greeks and Lebanese.