

## **HIS BEATITUDE'S JOURNEY TO AMMOHOSTOS**

The 6<sup>th</sup> day, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008, of His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa's official visit to Cyprus, began with a trisagion and a wreath-laying at the statue of the late Patriarch Petros VII of Alexandria and All Africa, of blessed memory, which stands in the grounds of the Holy Church of ST George Kontou, in Larnaca.

"I am very moved", stated His Beatitude, "because two days before I leave for Alexandria, we have come to place a few flowers at the statue of our beloved Patriarch Petros VII, for many tears have been shed, who started out in Cyprus and gave so much to our Patriarchate".

He also noted that "all his works in Alexandria and Cairo have been completed and increased". This is what His Beatitude Theodoros II promised on the day of his enthronement, that the visions of the late Patriarch Petros as well as his hopes would become reality. "We are also continuing along the paths which he carved out in the missions throughout Africa and we will be eternally grateful to him for this".

His Beatitude also thanked Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus, "a Primate who is full of love and so many dreams", who "assists our efforts in Africa". He also expressed gratitude to "an old friend of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, His Eminence Chrysostomos, Metropolitan of Kition, who not only came to love the missions, but from time to time visits some countries and especially helps the children who "have no place to lay their heads". "I thank them and I pray that God will bless the Church of Cyprus and the justice which they hope will become reality".

At the statue of the late Patriarch Petros VII, wreaths were also laid by the Archbishop of Cyprus, His Eminence the Metropolitan of Kition, the Mayor of Larnaca Mr Andreas Moeseos, the Chairman of the Schools of Larnaca Mr Andreas Ioannides, the Headmistress of the Lyceum of ST George Mrs Despina Lysandrou, the Chairman of the Holy Monastery of St George Kontou Mr Andreas Tserkezos, and the late Patriarch's brother Mr Dimitris Papapetrou.

**His Beatitude and his entourage then left for Paralimni, temporary see of the re-established Holy Metropolis of Konstantias and Ammohostos**, where an exceptionally festive atmosphere awaited him in the splendid welcome of many people who filled the Church and the Metropolis, who wanted to see him and greet him.

His Beatitude was met by the popular poet of Paralimni and Cyprus Mrs Pelagia Kyriakou, with a poetic welcome and a traditional song of Cyprus for the All Holy Virgin of Kykkos.

The Mayor of Paralimni in his welcome address praised the Alexandrian Patriarch, saying: "the excellent pastoral work which you do and your enormous contribution to suffering countries, distressed people and struggling nations, is well-known and recognized by all, the Church, the people, the State".

Mr Evangelou stated: "We are certain, that on leaving Cyprus, this tiny part of the vastness of the world, you will unite your voice with ours, so that the inalienable rights of freedom and justice may reign here too". The clergy and the people then went in to the Church of St George for the doxology.

Addressing His Beatitude, His Eminence Vasilios said: "Today, Your Beatitude, we welcome you and your entourage, to the temporary see of our

Metropolis, to Paralimni, which neighbours and is related geographically and spiritually with the 2 historic, cultural, religious and national lungs with which Cyprus continues to breathe, nationally and as Christians. I mean the tomb and the Holy Monastery of the Apostle Barnabas, the founder and protector of the Church of Cyprus – this is the Christian lung and Salamina, the Greek lung. However, unfortunately, both these parts are today under occupation and those of a different race and religion are attempting to derogate life from these two lungs, our Nation and our Religion. We assure you, Your Beatitude, despite all the adverse conditions, we will fight to keep the vitality of our Nation and our Religion, because in this way we will secure the natural existence and survival of our Nation here. Besides, the history of our people has proven that it has the strength and endurance to do this and we are certain that God's providence will come to our assistance in this holy struggle".

"During the few days of your official visit to the Church of Cyprus as Primate of the Alexandrian Church, you have had the opportunity and possibility to get to know the timeless and current work of the Church of Cyprus, work and mission that is inseparable from the entire history of this country. You had the opportunity of verifying of your own accord the deep faith and piety of the Cypriot people and their dedication to their mother Church. You also had the opportunity to listen to the cry of pain and anxiety for our Nation's occupation which has gone on for so long, the destruction of all that is holy to us in the occupied parts of our country, as well as the great degree of desire that the refugees may return to their paternal homes, their land which is sanctified by the saints and heroes of our Nation and the reunification of our Homeland".

"Your Beatitude, we do not want your visit here to be a superficial presence, but that it becomes part of the start of history and to assist in the justification of our land and its people".

He went on to refer to the eternal and unbreakable bonds of the two Churches, "which are forged by your visit to our Church. So, please allow us, by using the language of the Evangelist John from the Book of Revelations, to welcome you to our Ecclesiastical Province and to this town as an "angel" of the Church of Alexandria who brings the message of peace, of love and brotherhood to this suffering land and people".

**Metropolitan Vasilios gave His Beatitude an icon of Saint Epiphanius, Bishop of Konstantia, with the wish that "your next visit will be able to take in both the Monastery of the Apostle Barnabas as well as the basilisk of St Epiphanius in Salamina".**

At noon, the Mayor of Paralimni, Mr Andreas Evangelou, pronounced His Beatitude Theodoros II as an honorary citizen of Paralimni and gave him the gold key to the town at a simple ceremony at the Municipal Offices in Paralimni.

Following the lunch which was hosted by His Eminence Vasilios, in honour of His Beatitude and his entourage, they all visited the cease-fire line in Derenia and the Cultural Centre of occupied Ammohostos from where they gazed at the closed-off town of Ammohostos.

As he gazed at the occupied town of Ammohostos, the Patriarch said to the reporters that "my heart and eyes are crying and mourn as I look at this town in which today the light of freedom does not shine, but looks at us in mourning. But behind the tears and the sadness I know that better days will come and our Ammohostos, a Greek town again, will give light to Cyprus". He said that this was his prayer as he ended his official visit to Cyprus.

**Alexis Galanos, Mayor of the occupied town of Ammohostos,** said that "our joy, honour and emotion is great, that we have with us a great figure of Orthodoxy and Hellenism, in the person of the Patriarch of Alexandria. His presence in Cyprus has especially fortified us.....it will rain, it will rain soon, it will rain for Ammohostos, for Cyprus, it will rain in our hearts and the sun will rise. We need only believe, we need only be resolute, we need only be united", he said. "Our message is that Ammohostos lives and waits for us, our martyred lands live and they wait for us and we are determined to return".