

HIS BEATITUDE'S NAME DAY IN THE CAMEROON

As it was last year in Madagascar, so too this year His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, celebrated his name day on the 17th February 2009, with the children of the poor Orthodox African families, this time in Northern Cameroon, on the border with Chad. Next to the straw huts, with hymns sung by the people in their many dialects, and dancing, at the Church of St Raphael, Nicholas and Irene in the village of Datseka. The same occurred in the many other churches built in their majority by Greek donors in an area where civilization ceased hundreds of years ago...

Everywhere that His Beatitude visited in these arid and far off areas, where the nearest town, Marua, is at a distance of over four hours away, His Beatitude was warmly welcomed by the citizens, local leaders, representatives of other faiths and the few Greeks who all followed him on his missionary journey to see for themselves the results of the missionary effort in the Cameroon.

Addressing His Beatitude in the Church of St Raphael in Datseka, built by Abbess Eugenia of the Monastery of the same name in Mytilene, His Eminence Gregory Metropolitan of the Cameroon, wished him on his name day and asked for his continuing support for the mission. :Whatever is done, is the work for which we are inspired by the zeal of the Primate of our Patriarchate, who did not hesitate to travel thousands of kilometers from his see in Alexandria, to reach the Northern Cameroon to celebrate his name day with the Orthodox Christians of the African Savanna", said the local Metropolitan, emphasizing the significance of the visit by His Beatitude, the first Patriarch of Alexandria to reach this border region of sub-Saharan Africa.

Immediately afterwards, in the presence of all the leaders, the inauguration of the multifunctional Hall which was paid for by His Eminence Iakovos Metropolitan of Mytilene, took place.

In his visits to the buildings and churches which were created by the Greeks of the various areas in the Northern Cameroon, His Beatitude Theodoros thanked the donors of the churches and all the Greeks who give with their whole heart – whatever each can – for the continuation of the missionary work in the Cameroon .

Addressing the locals and especially the youth, he said: "I want you to keep your traditions in our churches. Keep your language, your tradition and the way you express your thanks to God, with hymns sung in your language, your tones, drums, dance. And know that, in this manner, you are not outside of the tradition of our Church. Remember how many times in the Old Testament the chosen people of Israel thanked and praised God with the drums, songs, shouts and dancing...".

The traditional dances gave a particular hue to the welcome of the Patriarch of Alexandria, both within and outside of the churches, especially the war dance of the Cameroonians called the "Gourna" which is similar to one of the ancient "Fire Dances".

His Beatitude, who the previous week had met with His Excellency Dr. Paul Biya the President of the Cameroon in Yaoundé, who gave the Alexandrian Primate the gift of official recognition of the Orthodox Church and the Holy Metropolis of the Cameroon on 12th February 2009, completes his pastoral visit next Monday.