

HIS BEATITUDE VISITS THE CHILDREN'S ONCOLOGY UNIT MARIANNA B. BARDINOIANNIS – ELPIDA"

On 20h December 2013, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa visited the Children's Oncology Unit "Marianna B. Bardinogiannis – ELPIDA", to bless and to give festive wishes to the children cared for there and to wish them a speedy recovery and return to their usual life rhythm.

His Beatitude was welcomed by the President of the Society of Friends of Children with Cancer "ELPIDA" and Archontissa Lady of the Throne of St Mark , Mrs. Marianna B. Bardinogiannis. Mrs. Bardinogiannis took His Beatitude on a conducted tour of this prototype health unit and briefed him on the progress of the Society's activities. Addressing His Beatitude Mrs. Bardinogiannis praised the symbolism of his visit during the Holy Christmas period and thanked him for the hope which his presence gave to the children and their parents. She said: "We gain strength from you because we follow your God-pleasing efforts and your daily struggles at the Patriarchate of Alexandria to stand beside thousands of our fellow human beings in the countries of Africa, to spread the teachings of Christianity in places which are difficult to get to and in often difficult situations; but you also promote Hellenic culture and our history... We are proud as Greeks that the Patriarchate of Alexandria maintains its majesty and its historical substance in Egypt through the passing of the ages right up until today and we are particularly lucky to have you with us encouraging us".

On his part His Beatitude expressed grateful thanks to Mrs. Bardinogiannis for the assistance both from her and her family to the pastoral and humanistic efforts of the Patriarchate of Alexandria. He went on to talk of the missionary journey which he will undertake at the beginning of next year to Zimbabwe and Mozambique and made special mention of the legendary leader Nelson Mandela and their mutual efforts against HIV/AIDS. He also spoke of the renovations of the Patriarchate in Alexandria and Cairo, where adjacent to the Holy Monastery of St George Old Cairo, the building of a large hospital unit is being programmed. The occasion also offered the discussion of collaboration prospects with ELPIDA both on Egyptian as well as Pan-African levels. The visit ended with the exchange of commemorative gifts.

His Beatitude was accompanied by His Eminence George Metropolitan of Guinea, Patriarchal representative in Athens, and present during the visit were the Director of the Agia Sophia Childrens' Hospital Mr. Emmanuel Papasavvas, the Director of the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit Dr. Stelios Grafakos, as well as the members of the Executive Council of the "ELPIDA" Society, Mrs. Gerogina Ellinas, Melina Daskalakis, Ino Konstantopoulou, Aikaterini Metaxotou, Alina Mineta, Rita Pikrou-Moraitakis, Becky Stravelakis, Elly Tzanetatou and Katy Philippidou, together with the Director of the "ELPIDA" Hostel, Mrs. Anna Panagopoulou.