

## **HIS BEATITUDE VISITS THE SCHOOL OF THE HOLY METROPOLIS OF JOHANNESBURG – VISIT TO PRETORIA**

**On 23 March 2010 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa**, accompanied by His Eminence Seraphim Metropolitan of Johannesburg and Pretoria and His Eminence George Metropolitan of Zimbabwe and Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos, Director of His Beatitude's Private Patriarchal Office, visited the Orthodox School "Agios Athanasios" of the Metropolis, in Tembisa, Johannesburg, where two hundred children from poor African families are being educated.

The young children, welcomed His Beatitude with songs and hymns and he gave them food parcels, sweets and stationery and congratulated His Eminence Seraphim as well as Father Anastasios for the excellent pastoral work they are doing in this area. As a gift in gratitude, the children gave His Beatitude a T-shirt with his name on it.

On the evening of the same day, following a lengthy journey, His Beatitude and his entourage visited the newly-built church of the Apostle Paul and the surrounding areas where they stayed for the night.

**On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010** the Venerable Primate of the Alexandrian Church together with His Eminence Sergios of the Cape of Good Hope and His Eminence Seraphim of Johannesburg and Pretoria, officiated at the Great Vespers at the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Pretoria. During his homily to the congregation His Beatitude expressed his joy at this pastoral visit to the South African capital and its prosperous Hellenic community and encouraged the people to continue their presence and activities with the same zeal, maintaining their faith, their culture and traditions and congratulated the parish priest Archimandrite Micahel Visvinis for his great work with the parish.

Present at the Great Vespers were His Excellency the High Commissioner of Cyprus Mr Argyros Antoniou, the Consul General of Cyprus Mrs Elena Christoforou, Mr Harry Gouvelis Coordinator of SAE Africa-Asia, Mr Nicholas Kakoulias, Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Pretoria and representatives of Hellenic Societies and Associations.

His Beatitude then went to the Greek Ambassadorial residence where the Greek Ambassador Mr Spyridon Theoharopoulos hosted a dinner in his honour.

Addressing His Beatitude the Ambassador emphasized that his visit was an honour and a blessing for the Greeks of the southern-most country in Africa and in his reply His Beatitude thanked him for the hospitality and spoke of the merits of the Greek people, who although they are being tried during this present economic crisis, will be able to overcome the difficulties. He also stressed, because of the presence of the Ambassador of Egypt, the long cordial relations between Greece and Egypt and prayed for the speedy and complete recovery of health of His Excellency the President of the Land of the Nile, Mr Hosni Mubarak.

He then gave the Greek Ambassador a silver tray bearing the emblem of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Present at the official dinner were His Eminence Seraphim of Johannesburg and Pretoria, His Eminence Sergios of Good Hope, their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Egypt, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine, the High Commissioner of Cyprus, the Consul General of Greece in Johannesburg, the Consul General of Greece in Mozambique, Mr Harry Gouvelis of SAE Africa-Asia, Mr Nicholas Kakoulias Chairman

of the Hellenic Community of Pretoria, Mr John Baladakis Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg, Advocate George Bizos SC personal lawyer for Mr Nelson Mandela, representatives of communities, brotherhoods and societies.