

HISTORIC VISIT BY HIS BEATITUDE TO THE SINAI DEPENDENCY IN CAIRO

Seventy six years have passed from the year 1935, when Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis visited the historic dependency of the Holy Monastery of Sinai in Cairo, the Church of St Catherine, for the last time, in Daher in the Egyptian capital, during the tenure of Archbishop Porphyrios III of Sinai.

This year too, on 24th and 25th November 2011, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa visited the dependency of Sinai, being welcomed by His Eminence Archbishop Damianos of Sinai, Faran and Raitho and the Council of the Hegumen with great honour and joy as the 25th November was also his 57th birthday.

On 24th November His Beatitude officiated at the festive vespers, together with His Eminence Nicholas of Hermopolis, His Grace Nikodimos Bishop of Nitria and His Grace Niphon of Babylonia, Hegumen of the Holy Monastery of St George (Old Cairo), during which he awarded the Great Cross of the Apostle Mark with a Star to His Eminence Damianos Archbishop of Sinai.

“This visit to the Dependency of the Holy Monastery of St Catherine in Cairo expresses my love and respect towards Sinai, the mountain where God walked”, said His beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria, as he explained, the first priest who made him love Christ and Orthodoxy was from Sinai, at the Sinai Dependency of the Virgin of the Caves in Crete; also from Sinai was the late Metropolitan Theodoros of Lambis and Sfakion, and later of Rethymnon and Avlopotamos, by whom he was ordained to the priesthood.

Addressing His Eminence the Archbishop of Sinai, he emphasized the love which the Archbishop always had and maintains to this day for Missionary work. That is why the awarding of the medal to His Eminence Damianos comprises the proof of his love and the bonds of the respect of the Orthodox Church of Africa with the ancient Monastery of Sinai.

On his own behalf and thanking His Beatitude for the great honour, His Eminence the Archbishop of Sinai defined the visit of the Patriarch of Alexandria to the Dependency of St Catherine in Cairo as historic, and wished him on the occasion of his birthday that his years would be as many as those of the Prophet Moses and even more.

On the next day, the 25th November, the Venerable Primate of the Alexandrian Church conducted the Divine Liturgy at the Dependency, concelebrating with His Eminence Nicholas of Hermopolis, as well as with His Grace Gabriel Bishop of Mareotis, Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria, His Grace Nikodimos Bishop of Nitria and His Grace Niphon of Babylonia.

At noon on the same day, His Beatitude hosted a reception for the Hellenic and Arabic-speaking communities of the Egyptian capital at the renovated Hellenic Shelter Club in Hermopolis. At this function, where the pupils of the dance group of the Ambetios Academy of Cairo presented traditional dances, His Beatitude was addressed by the Chairman of the Club Mr George Halkias and the Vice Chairperson Mrs Stella Kyriazi to whom His Beatitude awarded the Office of Mother of Hellenism in Egypt. He also awarded honours to the former Educational Attaché of North Africa and the Middle East Mr Ioannis Stavropoulos, the present Educational Councilor of the Hellenic Community of Cairo.

His Beatitude was given gifts by the Administration Committee of the Hellenic Community of Cairo, the Scouts of Cairo, who gave him a scout trumpet from 1932, the Executive Committee of the Patriarchal Spiritual Centre and the Arabic Orthodox Community. To them all His Beatitude addressed heartfelt gratitude.

Present at the functions were Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus Messrs. Christodoulos Lazaris and Sotos Liasides, the Consul General of Greece in Cairo Mr Ioannis Hatzantonakis, the Vice Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Cairo Mr Nicolaos Vadis, Chairmen of Societies and Associations and many other people.