

ORDINATION OF PRIEST AND DEACON BY HIS BEATITUDE IN SIERRA LEONE

The historic visit of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa to the suffering land of the bloody diamonds, which has left an indelible place in his heart, was completed with the patriarchal Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of St Eleftherios in the capital Freetown in Sierra Leone, on 26th February 2012. Accompanying him was His Eminence George Metropolitan of Accra, the Very Reverend Themistocles Adamopoulos Patriarchal Vicar of Sierra Leone and the local clergy. During the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude ordained deacon Theodoros to the Priesthood and the teacher and catechist Vaios to the Diaconate.

Before the end of the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude addressed the large congregation which had gathered from early on at the Cathedral and spoke words of love and compassion and called on all with love and harmony to forget the fury of the civil war which totally destroyed the country and to look to the future with optimism and hop and altogether to work hard to rebuild the country. He again congratulated Father Themistocles on his work and gave him a pectoral cross.

Present also at the Divine Liturgy were His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs, many state officials, , diplomats and Orthodox from Lebanon, Russia and the Ukraine. His Beatitude gave the Minister of Foreign Affairs an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos and thanked him that the state assists the work of the Orthodox Church. He also awarded the Cross of St Mark to His Excellency the Minister of Land planning and the Environment for giving the land on which churches and school are to be built, and to Mr Antonios Sklavos, a Greek from Australia, that assists Father Themistocles.

A huge surprise awaited the Alexandrian Primate when he left the Church and was faced with hundreds of invalid children, victims of the war who were patiently waiting for him to bless them and to kiss his hand and with eyes full of tears they asked him not to forget ehem ever and to promise them that he would visit them again.

The festive day closed with a programme presented by the students of the Orthodox Schools who sand and danced to the well-known traditional rhythms of West Africa.