

PATRIARCHAL CONCELEBRATION IN ALEXANDRIA

On Sunday 7th October 2012, the Patriarchal Con-celebration of His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa and His Beatitude Irenaios of Serbia took place with pomp and splendour in the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria, supported by Their Eminences Elder Metropolitan Petros of Aksum, Elder Metropolitan Kallinikos of Pilousion, Metropolitan Ioannis of Soumadia, Metropolitan Andreas of Remeziani, Metropolitan Nicholas of Ermopolis and His Grace Niphon Bishop Babylonos.

Also present were His Excellency the Ambassador of Serbia to Egypt Mr Dragan Bisenik, the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria Mr Christos Kapodistrias, the Honourable Deputy Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria Mr Nicholas Kopelos, the Honourable Deputy Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Cairo Mr. Iordanides, the Honourable Deputy Chairmen of the Arabic speaking communities of Alexandria and Cairo, representatives of Greek Societies and Associations and others.

In his address His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodoros II said:

“Your Beatitude Irenaios, Patriarch of Serbia, Your Eminences brothers and concelebrants, Honoured Priests, Your Excellencies, chosen and blessed people of God,

Today we have the particular joy and honour of concelebrating with your erudite Beatitude, under the dome of this beautiful and historic Cathedral in the City of Alexandria, the Bloodless Sacrifice and to commune of the Common Cup of Life thereby affirming the unity of faith in the bond of love!

In the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist infinite love, mercy and the eternal presence of God in the world in manifest and perfectly expressed. At the same time the Sacrament of the Lord’s Sacrifice shows us the noetic path which we have the divine duty of travelling in our lives, to give the “good witness” and to become “Bright lamps” and the “salt of the earth”, following the example of the Saints of our Church, who, “treading the narrow road” became the timeless bearers of the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

Your Beatitude,

Being here with the members of your honoured entourage in the God-walked land of Egypt, you receive the blessing of the Enlightener and Guardian of our Ancient Church, the Saint Apostle and Evangelist Mark. You receive the spiritual strengthening needed for your very responsible duties as Primate, which stems from the host of great ecclesial writers, the holy monks and the great Alexandrian Fathers of the first Christian centuries, who through their God-inspired writings, their ascetical struggles, their life-giving preaching and their precious blood, secured the noetic ship of Orthodoxy under heaven.

Invisibly present with us here today are the great spiritual presences of Clement, Origen, Pantainos, Dionysios of Alexandria. The choir of the ascetics and monks Anthony the Great, Pahomios the Great, Makarios, Maria of Egypt exult with us. Praying together with us are our Sainted Predecessors Athanasios the Great, Kyrillos the Theologian, John the Merciful. And together with them Kyrillos Loukaris and Meletios Pegas the holy Patriarchs of the 17th century who journeyed through your blessed country, so that with the contribution of Orthodox leaders they could preserve and strengthen the martyred Church of Alexandria in times of turbulence and struggle.

Added to this God-chosen group are the Saints and Apostles Kyrillos and Methodios, the Enlighteners of the Slavs, St Savvas, first Archbishop of the Serbs, St Symeon Myrrhbletes, St Nicholas Velimirovic, St Nikon and a blessed choir of hierarchs, leaders and monks of the suffering Church of Serbia, which was always the nourisher, the balance and the cornerstone of its Christian people.

As both our Patriarchal Thrones bear the indelible marks of these saints that went before us and having such an enormous and important historic trust, we a knowledge of our Patriarchal duty, we continue in the contemporary world our common journey to impart the given and obvious obligation of our important mission to the faithful people of God as well as to all nations.

Today we are experiencing an extreme transitional period. We are living through critical times of reviewing everything. The world is in a state of uncertainty and is desperately looking for a way out. War, as well as the ever-escalating religious violence, poverty and misery, the financial crisis as a crisis of values and principles, lead people to despair.

Precisely at this time, the Most Holy Orthodox Church offers the world the steady and unmovable faith of the existence of the living God in history, with the parallel certainty that faith in Christ imperatively passes the dimension of indiscriminate love for all. It is not an individual and personal gift, but ecclesial liturgy, for society and community, the experience of Church life.

Alongside this the witness of faith takes on a particular significance in the great history of the struggle for the rights of humanity, for respect of humanity. Man, as the image of God, has celestial origins. And with his Christian status and the power of his faith he disclaims violence, to call upon the only rebellion which does not lead to slavery: the rebellion of self-awareness and integrity.

It is this precise peaceful rebellion of self-awareness which we are called on, as continuers of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ "to all the world", to pass on this turbulent global reality, with the frontispiece of our uncompromising conviction that God is man's liberation. The presence and witness of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, has the power to liberate the world and to provide a way out of its ostensibly insurmountable impasse.

Your Beatitude, brother and con-celebrant,

We know well that you too have this perception and pastoral anxiety and concern. We ask at this time that you pray, lifting hands and heart to the God of mercy, love, justice and reconciliation, to bless the pious clergy and Christ-loving people of our ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria, as well as the efforts of evangelization of the nations of Africa, which is increasing continuously and progressing through the tireless and laborious efforts of our philanthropic and self-sacrificing missionaries.

In honouring and respecting our sister Church of Serbia, give you our brotherly embrace in the Lord to Your Beatitude and to your honourable Hierarchy. To your holy Clergy, the struggling monks and the faithful Serbian people we offer wholeheartedly the Patriarchal blessing of the Apostle and Evangelist Mark.

And to the Arch Shepherd Christ we place as spiritual sweet-smelling incense and fervent Patriarchal prayer the supplication which we announce in the Divine Eucharist: "Lord, Lord, look down from heaven and behold and visit this vine and perfect that which Your right hand has planted. Amen!"

In his response His Beatitude Irenaios of Serbia spoke of the historic spiritual ties between the two Churches, which began at the time of St Savvas, Enlightener and first Archbishop of Serbia, during the 13th century, praised the spiritual and theological heritage of the Church of Alexandria to Orthodoxy under heaven, and emphasized the sincere fraternal relations and concord between the two Thrones in all contemporary social and ecclesial issues both local and international. Commemorative gifts were then exchanged.