

PATRIARCHAL CONCELEBRATION IN ALEXANDRIA

On Sunday 11th April 2010, the Patriarchal Con-celebration of the Divine Liturgy of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa and His Beatitude Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, took place with great splendour and majesty in the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria.

The two Primates conducted the Divine Liturgy together with His Eminence Kallinikos Metropolitan of Pilousion,, His Eminence Ilarion Metropolitan of Bolokolamsk, and His grace Bishop Sergius of Soltzenogorsky, His Grace Gennadios Bishop of Nilopolis and His Grace Niphon Bishop of Babylonos.

Present were His Excellency the Ambassador of Russia in Egypt Mr. Bogdanof, His Excellency the Ambassador of Cyprus Mr Leontiou, the Honourable Chargé d' Affaires of the Greek Embassy Mr Zevelakis, the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria Mr. Diakofotakis, the Honourable Consul general of Russia Mr Kouzakov, the Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria Mr. Siokas, the Chairman of the Cyprus Brotherhood of Alexandria Mr. Haralambides, the Chairman of the Arabic-speaking communities of Alexandria and Cairo, representatives of Hellenic Associations, Societies, and Groups as well as representatives of other faiths. It is worth noting that the choir of the Patriarchate of Moscow created a devout atmosphere.

During his address, Patriarch Theodoros II, said: "With particular honour and joy, the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, welcomes you today to its historic Cathedral. Your presence here is an ecclesiastical event much broader than the framework of a simple peaceful visit. It is an actual confirmation of the historic spiritual ties which bind the Apostolic Throne of St Mark with the Church of Russia. These relations are based on our faith in Christ and on love, and were forged and fortified through struggles, occurrences and common difficulties."

His Beatitude continued, mentioning the contribution of the Alexandrian Church to the Church of Russia: "Patriarch Meletios Pegas of Alexandria contributed a rich and productive support of our Patriarchate to the Church of Russia, in order that this, our holy sister could successfully confront the problem of the Uniates. This good beginning was faithfully followed by all the successors of the great and Patriarchs of good repute, from Gerasimos I in 1677 up to Gerasimos II in 1710... During the 19th and 20th centuries most of the Patriarchs of Alexandria had close and productive ties with the Church of Russia. A characteristic example was that of Patriarch Nikanor, who received the prophecy of his elevation to the ancient Patriarchal seat of Alexandria while he was exarch in Russia, by the mouth of the then Chairman of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Moscow, Philaret. Totally indicative of their relationship is the fact that the awarding of the Patriarchal value to the Russian Church by the All Venerable Ecumenical Throne, in 1589, was valid and only countersigned by the then Pope and Patriarch of the Great City of Alexandria, Sylvestros"

"Many are the valuable offerings and many the reinforcements and proofs of the love of the Church of Russia to the Church of Alexandria. The preservation and operation of our dependency in Russia, the permanent existence in this Orthodox and powerful country, of the Metropolitan of Cyrene of the Alexandrian Throne as our exarch, a position which we also served in the past, prove that this is true", he continued.

His Beatitude also stressed: "In your venerable person, Your Beatitude, as

well as the persons of the members of your entourage, we see the worthy continuers of Orthodox tradition, the valuable assistants and colleagues, as well as the affectionate co-Cyreneans who are always willing to share with us the missionary yoke, which we have undertaken here on the African earth:.

The Christians are spread throughout the dark continent, in countries and areas which are unbelievably more difficult in relation to the great and hospitable land of Egypt where we find ourselves at this moment and where the historic see of our Patriarchate is situated, a country where there are ample comforts of civilization, the kindness of its citizens and the affection of the leaders, under the Presidency of His Excellency Mr. Hosny Mubarak, to whom our gratitude remains always undiminished for his concern for our Patriarchal Throne... Above all though, we work towards the evangelization of all the nations of Africa, lightening the darkness of their ignorance and idolatry with the abundant and life-giving Light of Christ, combining Orthodox traditions with the particular cultural characteristics of every nation and every tribe...The plan of this great and far reaching effort demands faith and hope in the Risen Christ and presumes Your prayers and blessings, Your Beatitude, and is founded on the self-sacrificial contribution and love of our clergy, as well as seeking the ceaseless prayerful assistance of our Russian brothers”.

In his reply His Beatitude Kirill, pointed out that: I thank God for the joy of the fraternal communion in Christ with all of you, which was given to us today in the Holy Chalice. In communing together of the Holy Mysteries, we truly become one body and one spirit with the Lord (1Corinthians 6:17) and of course with each other. The Eucharistic communion offers the living feeling of love, which binds the Disciples of Christ. It is from this feeling that we draw new strength to implement the Gospel of the Kingdom, for the extension of the fruits of the salvific work of Christ in all our actions and our thoughts... Today’s Patriarchal con-celebration occurred together with a particular era of the ecclesiastical calendar. Every soul of every Orthodox Christian joins its voice with the choir of the Ecumenical Church in the hopeful message of our faith: “Christ is Risen!”

His Beatitude also mentioned the feast of the Apostle Thomas. “The commemorated confirmation of the Apostle Thomas also has a great symbolic meaning for us today. Faith in the Resurrection of Christ transformed the conscience and regenerated new life into the nations, as we know from the history of the great Christian civilization. However, the spreading of faith in Christ crucified and resurrected is impossible to imagine without the apostolic service of the Church, which service from the very beginning of its existence is expressed in the two most important figures: teaching and missionary work...The long and productive missionary effort among the nations of Africa under the guidance of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, achieved its form with the extension of the jurisdiction of His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria throughout the continent”.

The Patriarch of Moscow went on to praise the missionary service of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, saying that: “It is with wonder that the Orthodox Christians around the world follow the successes of the Patriarchal Theological Academy in Kenya, from which a great number of native African clergy have already graduated, as well as the preaching of the Gospel to the indigenous people of the 54 countries of Africa who have their own varying cultural peculiarities. It is no surprise that at the rudder of the Patriarchate of Alexandria is Your Beatitude who made so many efforts in the missionary department from when you were Metropolitan of Zimbabwe”.

The children of the Russian Orthodox Church who live on both sides of the African equator found in you the affectionate and helpful protector. According to

the existing fraternal understanding the pastoral care of Russians in Africa is undertaken by seconded priests of the Russian Orthodox Church who are under the jurisdiction of the hierarchs of the Alexandrian Church", stressed His Beatitude Kirill.

In closing he said: "At this time the missionary effort of the Church has one other equally important facet. All the local church are called on to bear witness to the truth of Christ before the threats of the contemporary world. Ecumenical Orthodoxy is faced with the necessity of solving the aim for the preservation of the only Christian civilization with all its ethnic and cultural variations...the most rich tradition of the Church comprises an ample foundation for this common effort. The renewal of the procedure of the Ecumenical Council instils in all of us the hope of finding a common position on all the problems of these times. The success of this holy initiative is directly dependent on the good will of all the Orthodox Churches".

Finally, it should be mentioned, that the Patriarch of Alexandria gave the Patriarch of Moscow pectoral crosses and a cross and the Patriarch of Moscow gave His Beatitude pectoral crosses and a copy of the holy icon of the Virgin of Kazan.