

PATRIARCHAL DIVINE LITURGY AND ORDINATION OF DEACON IN CAPE TOWN

On 20th May 2012 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa conducted the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Cathedral of St George in Cape Town, together with His Eminence Sergios of Cape Town and His Eminence George of Accra, as well as the ordination to the Diaconate of Michael Simos who studied Theology at the University of Athens courtesy of His Eminence Sergios.

During his homily to the large congregation His Beatitude said: "With feelings of spiritual joy we find ourselves on this auspicious day among you, under the dome of the magnificent Cathedral of St George, in the City of the Cape of Good Hope, conducting the bloodless Sacrament and communing of the Sacrament of Life through our mutual communion.

I am particularly overjoyed at our presence here, with our spiritual children of the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of St Mark, at the far end of Africa, because we feel it is our particular Patriarchal duty to constantly be among the Christians of the entire continent, not skimping on labour and trials, so that we can support and strengthen them.

Certainly it goes beyond saying that the life of the Church is interwoven with the life and the progress of its flock. There has been no other institution that is so close to Greeks and Slavs abroad during the first difficult years of their immigration to the African lands, as was the glorious Alexandrian Throne, as a nursery of faith and principles. And no other institution's life and history was ever so inseparably interwoven with the life and the experiences of the Orthodox flock of South Africa, as was our Patriarchate, which over the centuries has remained faithful to the words of the Lord: "Come unto me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The Church of St Mark is faithful to the apostolic example of its founder and custodian, and it has never ceased to shoulder the needs of its flock, to sympathize with the labours of its faithful Christians, old and newly-enlightened, to comfort and strengthen, to enlighten and to guide.

Together with the responsibility of maintaining its ancestral heritage, our Patriarchate, dedicated to the Gospel command of preaching the faith of Jesus Christ "to all the world", builds up souls and gives strength and hope to our African brothers and sisters.

Our Church feels this missionary responsibility to the people of Africa, which comes from the great mercy of God to mankind, as well as from the universality of the preaching of the humble Nazarene, which was addressed to all people, "from the ends to the ends of the universe".

"Go out into all the world and teach all nations" commanded the risen Jesus to His Disciples before His Ascension. This command of the Lord remains the cornerstone of our Patriarchal concern and responsibility. Our African brothers and sisters are called on voluntarily and freely to come to know the immortal and life-giving Gospel truth. They are called on to enlighten their souls with the light transmitted by the inextinguishable torch of Orthodoxy, when in most cases they find themselves in adverse living conditions, which the Patriarchate also tries to alleviate, as far as possible, through free offers of food, drinking water and pharmaceutical care, as well as through the building of educational institutes, clinics, orphanages, old age homes and all manner of other beneficial institutes.

Under the above prerequisites, The Holy Metropolis of the Good Hope,

through the tireless efforts and enlightened spiritual guidance of His Eminence Metropolitan Sergios, our dear brother and concelebrant, works for the progress of all the Orthodox souls who live in the broader area of the Cape, having as his support the state and local Officials, to whom we express officially our grateful thanks.

My dear children,

Participating today in the Divine Sacrament, let us feel deep in our souls the quiet breath of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let this day of our Liturgical meeting be a stop for spiritual replenishment for the continuation of our ascendance to the future. Let it be the starting point of new visions and higher elevations.

Through the passing of time and the continually changing world, the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa remains in its two thousand year path as a tested and calm institution, which gives courage, which offers comfort and security for souls. It is a perennial institution, an institution of circumspect course, an institution of divine supervision and divine providence which has never disappointed and was never belied.

So, remaining faithful to the Church of Christ, the Church of the Apostles, the Saints and the Martyrs, let us fortify our spirit and shout out with the voice of our souls, calling on the mediation of our Protector and Guide, St Mark "That always guarded by Your power, we send up glory to You, Lord, now and ever and to the ages of ages".

In conclusion he offered His Eminence Sergios a pectoral Cross to which he expressed his joy at the presence of the Venerable Primate of the ancient Patriarchal Throne of Alexandria to the Christian faithful of the Metropolis of Good Hope and in return gave a silver icon of the Virgin Mary of Kykkos.

His Beatitude then went to visit the catechetical Schools, spoke in words of love to the children and the Sunday School teachers and attended a festive function.

At noon on the same day he attended an official lunch which was hosted in his honour by the Hellenic Community of Cape Town, during which the Chairman of the Community, Mr Nasos Bartalas, who was born in Egypt, and the Consul General of Greece Mr Constantinos Soulios spoke accordingly.

On his departure from Cape Town he spoke of the satisfaction of the Church of St Mark with His Eminence Metropolitan Sergios for his general pastoral and spiritual efforts and his hospitality of Abraham.