

THE FEAST OF ST CONSTANTINE AND THE INAUGURATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN OF HELOPOLIS IN CAIRO BY HIS BEATITUDE

On 26th May 2013, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa conducted the Inauguration Service of the wholly renovated Holy Patriarchal Church of the Most Holy Theotokos of Heliopolis, Cairo, sponsored by the Great Benefactor of the Community of Egypt, Mr. Kyriakos Kyriazis.

The Alexandrian Primate was in the Egyptian capital from last Thursday 23rd May, in order to conduct both the Vespers of the Feast as well as the Festal Divine Liturgy and Procession on the morning of Friday 24th May in memory of the Patron Saints of Hellenism in Cairo, Ss Constantine and Helen, Equal to the Apostles, in the Holy Community Church in the centre of Cairo (the Feast was moved to the Friday because of a public holiday in Egypt).

Referring to the late founder of the Church Mr. Nestor Tsanaklis, His Beatitude said: "Great men come and go, but they leave their legacies: their great works. They leave behind the splendor of their hearts, so that all following generations can sing for them eternal be their memory". At the same time His Beatitude thanked Fr. Chrysostomos Karagounis, who was parish priest of the church until a few days ago, who has left for Libya to continue to offer his services to the ancient Patriarchate from there; he then welcomed Fr. Theodoros Dridakis as new Parish priest and wished him strength in his new post. At noon of the same day His Beatitude attended a lunch hosted in his honour at the fully renovated Hellenic Naval Club of Cairo.

On Saturday 25th May the Alexandrian Primate had a meeting with His Excellency the Ambassador of the Ukraine in Cairo, Mr. Yehven Kurilenko, during which an official invitation was given from His Excellency the President of the Ukraine Mr. Viktor Yanukovych and His Eminence Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, for His Beatitude to participate in the memorial and prayer events next July on the occasion of the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus by St Vladimir, equal to the Apostles.

Later on the same day, His Beatitude has the opportunity of examining the progress of the renovation works of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George Cairo, together with the Director General of the building company Arab Contractors, Dr. Osama el Hussein, with whom he had lengthy working discussions.

On Sunday 26th May the Alexandrian Primate conducted the inauguration of the centuries old Holy Patriarchal Church of the Most Holy Theotokos of Heliopolis and the first Patriarchal Liturgy following its complete renovation. The signs of age were completely repaired by these works, under the sponsorship of the exceptional businessman from Egypt Mr. Kyriakos Kyriazis, in memory of the early loss of his son Johnny Kyriazis.

Honouring his general exceptional contribution His Beatitude awarded Mr. Kyriazis the Office of Great Benefactor of the Patriarch of Alexandria, saying: "The Holy Church of the Most Holy Virgin of Heliopolis has passed through a century of existence, becoming a privileged place of viable expression of the pious faith of Hellenes who sought a new homeland in the land of the Nile, without forgetting the Orthodox legacy of their fathers and grandfathers. Due to your noble contribution, my dear Kyriakos, this beautiful church is again given over to the faithful as proof of the fact that Orthodoxy in the God-walked country of Egypt remains as a stable source of meaning and direction in our lives".

During the services of the past three days, His Beatitude was accompanied by His Eminence Nicholas of Ermopolis, His Grace Nikodimos of Nitria, Patriarchal Vicar of

Cairo, His Grace Niphone of Babylonia, Hegumen of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George Old Cairo, as well as the clergy of the city. Honouring the festal celebrations by their presence were the Hellenic diplomatic authorities headed by His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to Egypt Mr, Christodoulos Lazaris, the Cypriot diplomatic authorities headed by His Excellency the Ambassador of Cyprus Mr Sotos Liasides, community heads headed by the Honourable Chairman of the HCC Mr. Christos Kavalis, the Chairmen of the Arabic speaking communities, representatives of various Societies and Associations, many faithful and His Grace Raphael Bishop of Heliopolis, representing the Coptic Church.