

THE FEAST OF THE PATRIARCHAL CHURCH OF THE VENERABLE SAVVAS THE SANCTIFIED IN ALEXANDRIA

In a solemn and joyful atmosphere, the Second Throne Patriarchate of Alexandria and all of Africa, honored the Memory of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified, at the celebrating Most Venerable Patriarchal Church in Alexandria.

On Friday, December 4, 2020, Great Patriarchal Vespers was served by His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, together with His Eminence Narcissus Metropolitan of Naucratis and His Grace Germanos Bishop of Tamiathus.

The Vespers service was honoured by the presence of His Excellency the Minister of National Defense Mr. Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos, who is paying a two-day official visit, on the occasion of the joint interdisciplinary exercise of Greece – Egypt 'MEDOUSA 10', in the sea area of Alexandria. Also present were His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to Egypt Mr. Nicholas Garilides, the Director of the Diplomatic Office the Honourable Ambassador Mr. Eleftherios Angelopoulos, the Air Chief Marshal Mr. Athanasios Papakonstantinou, Commodore Ioannis Trivlides, representatives of Hellenic society of Alexandria, the Vice Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria Mr. Andreas Vafiadis, the Chairlady of the Hellenic Naval Club and the Association of Greek Scientists of Alexandria Mrs. Lilika Thlivitou and many faithful of the city.

Having preached the homily, His Beatitude addressed His Excellency the Minister saying:

"I would like to express my warm thanks to all of you who came tonight to honour Saint Sava, but above all to you, Mr. Minister, His Excellency the Minister of National Defense of our Homeland and I am sure that the Saints who lived on these steps here and in this Church here, will rejoice. The souls of the Great Patriarchs Meletios Pigas and Cyril Loukareos rejoice '.

The patriarch spoke about the modern Saints, Nectarios of Pentapolis, and Nicephorus the leper, who stepped on these Egyptian lands, lived and prayed in the Patriarchal Church of Saint Sava. He also spoke about the historical course of the Patriarchal Church, the ancient Baptistery of the 4th century and the catacombs, where the souls of at least twenty-five Patriarchs rest.

'This Holy Church has been the center of the whole Patriarchate, for centuries now. The souls of the late Patriarchs of Blessed Memory, the Great Hierarchs, the Great Presidents of the Hellenic Community, passed through St Savvas, this blessed Monastery. 'Tradition states that here and there were the charity stores which helped the poor, the lepers, the despised and among them the Great Patriarch John the Merciful of Alexandria was merciful and helpful'.

Concluding his speech, His Beatitude added:

'When the years and times will pass and we will see the pews waiting for the faithful, then our hearts will rejoice because we will see our Saint Savvas and he will tell us' courage, whoever guards Thermopylae knows and endures loneliness, struggle, so that he can say, rejoice, oh rejoice, my Freedom and my Homeland Greece". May the blessing of the Saint always be with our Homeland, in our Troops, our Egypt, our blessed island of Cyprus and so may this beautiful blue Sea of the Mediterranean give tonight the feast of Saint Savvas, and of Saint Nicholas from tomorrow, a message of peace and love among the Nations. Welcome my children, may my blessing always be with you '.

On the day of the Feast, Saturday, December 5, a Patriarchal Divine Liturgy was served in the above-mentioned celebrating Patriarchal Church, presided over by **Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria** with the participation of His Eminence Narcissus Metropolitan of Naucratis and Bishop Germanos of Tamiathus.

At the end of the Liturgy, the Patriarch spoke to the faithful, saying:

'My blessed children, from the bottom of my heart I would like to wish you blessed years. This year that will leave shortly is so strange, so difficult. It brought so many problems to all of humanity. I noticed yesterday that we have all become masked, wearing the mask, afraid of these invisible germs that try to make our lives difficult and add difficulties to the difficulties that already exist. But in this difficulty of 2020, our Saints come as comforters, like our Saint, the Blessed Savvas, who was a man of God. Saint Savvas has been here in our Monastery for so many centuries, he lived in Moutalaski in Asia Minor, he served in Jerusalem, in his beloved Lavra, but according to tradition, he wanted as small child with his mother and father to visit Alexandria and from the 4th century, my children, he has not leave us '.

'Centuries now, stories, events pass through, leave and will come, because that is the history. History, then, brings to us the people who love us, who are in the realm of Holiness. Saint Savvas, therefore, loved this place, he loved his own Monastery, that is why gave his blessing for so many centuries that Patriarchs pass through, that Hierarchs come, that Priests pass through. There were days when we said 'will Saint Savvas end? will it close?' and yet my children, it never closed. In the difficult years of Ottoman rule, Arab rule, of all the Sultans, in the eyes ran and knelt saying 'please take what I have and what I do not have from the treasury of my Patriarchate and leave my Monasteries '. And among them they begged 'leave Saint Sava'. And the Saint from the throne of Christ listened, was patient, advocated, blessed and saved his monastery, so that until today, in these difficult years, we can ring his bell, serve his liturgy, decorate his icon, to boast of him through the centuries, to try to discern his gaze, sometimes happy, sometimes sad, but always spiritual, because he was and is the Blessed Savvas, the man of God ".

Finally, His Beatitude thanked the Vice President of the Greek Community Mr. Andreas Vafiadis for his presence at the feast of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified and asked to convey to all the Members of the Council His Paternal and Patriarchal blessings and prayers.

The Holy Patriarchal Monastery of Saint Savvas the Sanctified of Alexandria and specifically its Katholikon, before becoming a place of Christian worship, was a church dedicated to the god Mithras. It was established as a Christian church, dedicated to the Apostle and Evangelist Mark around the years 318-320. Around the year 536, after the secession of the Egyptian Christians (Copts) from the Ancient Alexandrian Church and the creation of the Coptic Church, the Monastery became the See of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.