

# **THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA IN THE LAND OF BLOOD DIAMONDS**

Late on the afternoon of Thursday 8th November 2018, His Beatitude Theodoiros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Arica arrived in the country of the blood diamonds, Sierra Leone, accompanied by Archimandrite Athanasios Kayembe. At the airport His Beatitude was welcomed by the local Metropolitan His Eminence George of Guinea, the Ambassador of Egypt, the Chancellor of the Holy Metropolis of Guinea Fr. Themistocles Adamopoulos, Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Holy Clergy of Sierra Leone.

Then, in a special boat, the Patriarch went to the capital, Freetown, where reporters from the local Media were expecting him.

In his brief statements His Beatitude referred to the importance that Sierra Leone holds in his heart, and that with great joy he returns to the country after 6 years to inaugurate the new Orthodox Church's schools.

On the morning of Friday 9th November, His Beatitude attended the service at the Holy Church of Ss Constantine and Helen for the feast of St Nektarios and then met with Mr Alie Kabba the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Minister welcomed the Patriarch to Sierra Leone, thanked him for the wonderful work done by the Orthodox Church in the country, particularly in the field of education and assured him that the state would assist the efforts of the Alexandrian Patriarchate.

His Beatitude, in turn, thanked him for the warm welcome and hospitality and expressed his joy that he has returned to such a troubled country to bless the new works done exclusively for the children. The Patriarch then went on to the St Moses of Ethiopia Missionary Centre in the Waterloo area. He was welcomed there by the Minister of Education, the Clergy and hundreds of children from the Orthodox Schools.

The Doxology was sung in the Holy Church and then His Beatitude did the Sanctification for the inauguration of the first Orthodox Children's Village for orphaned children who have lost their parents and guardians due to the deadly Ebola virus.

The Orthodox Children's Village is a model village for the Orthodox Church and there the orphaned children will find maternal love and affection from surrogate mothers, shelter, refuge, food, medical care and education.

His Beatitude, with deep emotion, inaugurated the first two houses and blessed 24 orphaned children who will be accommodated there. A festival followed in which all the children participated.

At the beginning of the celebration, His Eminence George welcomed the Father of Fathers, the Hierarch of Hierarchs, the Shepherd of Shepherds and the 117th successor of St Mark, Theodoros II, and expressed his joy that on the day of his feast St Nektarios led the Patriarch to the suffering land of Sierra Leone and the children immediately broke out into cheers and applause.

Thereafter, His Eminence briefly referred to the daily activities of the Patriarchate and to his Missionary journeys throughout Africa and to the unique love he has for all his spiritual children. In conclusion he congratulated Fr. Themistocles and his colleagues on their daily struggle to support the suffering people of Sierra Leone.

Thereafter, the Minister congratulated the Patriarch for the Orthodox schools and their high standards and promised that the Ministry of Education would always be at his side.

The wonderful celebration was brought to a close by the Patriarch with words of love, thanking the friends of the Missions throughout the world for supporting the struggle of the Patriarchate and in conclusion thanked the Minister of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Information Mr. Nikos Papas and the Deputy Minister Mr. Lefteris Kretsos, who gladly accepted his proposal and agreed on the participation of a group from ERT on his journey to Sierra Leone.