

## **THE PATRIARCH SUPPORTS THE YOUNG REFUGEES OF BURUNDI**

During the three days from November 30 to December 2, the productive missionary visit of the Alexandrian Primate to the Republic of Burundi continues. The Patriarch is literally "ploughing" through the entire territory of the country, supporting, comforting, giving hope and optimism to the blessed people, inaugurating the projects of love and contribution of the Alexandrian Orthodox Church in Central Africa.

On Thursday 30/11, His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros attended and prayed at the Community Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Bujumbura, where on the holy memory of Saints Andrew the First-called and Frumentius of Ethiopia, a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was served by the His Eminence Daniel Metropolitan of Aksum. By Venerable Order of His Beatitude and permission of the local Hierarchy Innocent, the ordination to the Diaconate of Marcellus Ombeni, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo took place and he will serve at the Holy Diocese of Goma.

Immediately after the Liturgy, in the Conference Hall of the Holy Metropolis, His Beatitude met with the Board of Directors of UOTA (Orthodox University of Applied Technologies), where they discussed strengthening the presence and goals of the Foundation.

Thereafter, the Patriarch met with the Clergy of the Holy Metropolis in Burundi, where they informed him about matters of concern to them.

In the afternoon, the Patriarch paid a visit to the Holy Monastery of Agios Arsenios of Cappadocia, where he officiated at the Vespers service and then Gerontissa Theologia hosted him in the Guest Hall of the Monastery.

In the evening, an official dinner was held in honor of His Beatitude by the Hellenic Community of Bujumbura, where His Beatitude met all the Members of the Greek Community.

The following day, Friday 1/12, the Patriarch visited the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Burundi, where he exercised his electoral right as an Egyptian Citizen, during the Presidential elections.

In the afternoon, he visited the headquarters of the Greek Alumni Association (Association Des Anciens De Grece), whose members are Burundians who studied and were educated in Greek Universities, and returned to their homeland to offer the knowledge they acquired. The Patriarch was informed about the Association's intention to create the necessary infrastructure for the education and accommodation of eighty children per year, providing them with all the supplies for their advancement.

On Saturday 2/12, His Beatitude and his entourage traveled to the Buramata area, a community in the province of Bubanza, where there is the Holy Church of St Alexios the Man of God, where a Patriarchal Divine Liturgy was served.

Since 1994, around 5,000 families have lived in the Buramata region, whose children fled there as refugees after the ethnic separation of the Hutus and Tutsis between Burundi and Rwanda, which resulted in an inhumane genocide with over a million victims of innocent citizens and two million displaced people in the surrounding countries. The protection of these children has been undertaken by the Holy Metropolis of Burundi, which supports them in various ways in terms of providing education and training, nutrition and strengthening their families. The

“paidopolis” (children’s town) of Buramata is being transformed into a protection center for defenseless children, mainly orphans.

His Beatitude, after the Divine Liturgy, inaugurated the new building of the Vocational Orientation Center “SOFOKLEIO”, in which young men and women of the region are trained in practical arts, e.g. sewing, providing first aid, etc., with the aim of training them and providing knowledge. The goal is that with the lessons and training on sewing machines, the young people of the area will acquire the possibility of legal work that will enhance their standard of living and living conditions. He also offered the children and the village a cow, which will offer them its milk so that they will be adequately nourished.

In the afternoon of the same day, the Patriarch officiated at the Service of Great Vespers, at the Holy Dormition Church of the Theotokos in Bujumbura.

Day by day, humbly and quietly, the local Orthodox Church of Burundi grows and strengthens dynamically, because “it drinks from the supernatural and invisible spiritual rock; and this rock is Christ” (1 Corinthians 10, 4).