

## **THE PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA RECEIVED THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA**

On the morning of Saturday, February 22, 2020, a formal meeting was held at the Presidential Palace of the Republic of Zambia between the Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodoros II and His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zambia Dr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, who discussed, inter alia, issues of religious tolerance, the rights of vulnerable groups and persons, environmental protection, and gender equality. His Beatitude the Patriarch presented to the President the work of the Second Throned Patriarchate in Zambia and Africa in general, while His Excellency the President asked the Primate to pray for the peace, prosperity and stability of His country.

The Alexandrian Primate decorated His Excellency the President of Zambia with the Grand Cross of the Throne of the Evangelist Mark (1st Order), which is awarded by the Patriarchate of Alexandria only to Heads of State.

Immediately after his meeting with the President of the Republic of Zambia, His Beatitude travelled to the Chirundu district, to visit the "Vlachakidon" area. The historical Vlachakis family moved from Crete to Zambia in 1894 and marked the first appearance of Hellenism in the sub-Saharan country. The Patriarch congratulated the Vlachakis family on the creation of the first Orthodox core in the Zambezi River region and emotionally referred to their common ancestry from Crete, underlining the great importance for Greeks to maintain their customs and traditions throughout the world.

His Beatitude was welcomed with the honour of a religious leader, by the local authorities and he was welcomed by the Regional Commissioner and the Head of the Tribes of the area. A Sanctification service was then sung and the foundation stone laid of the New Missionary Centre of the Holy Metropolis of Zambia, which will include a school, a medical centre, Church and an agricultural education and training workshop.

On the following morning, 23rd February, at the Community Church of St Alexander in Lusaka, His Beatitude celebrated the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, together with Their Eminences Metropolitans Ioannis of Zambia and Daniel of Aksum.

The Service was attended by His Eminence Nuncio Gianfranco Gallone, representative of the Holy See, His Excellency the Ambassador of Italy Mr. Antonio Maggiore, His Excellency the Consul of Russia Mr. Andrey Danilov, the entire Greek, Russian, Romanian and Serbian communities of Lusaka and many local Orthodox Christians.

The Patriarchal Divine Liturgy was followed by a visit to the Hellenic Community, where the Alexandrian Primate was warmly welcomed.

With God's Grace, His Beatitude the Patriarch today completed his missionary journey to three African Countries in Africa and is returning to the historic Alexandria in Egypt. The visits of the Spiritual Father of the Orthodox Christians in Africa sow the seed of the Gospel and broaden the presence of Orthodoxy to the length and breadth of the Continent.

The Patriarch sows the seed of love, the Great Sower Jesus Christ will multiply and increase the seed of His Gospel. May the name of the Lord be blessed!