

THE THRONAL FEAST OF THE ALEXANDRIAN CHURCH

On the 7th and 8th May 2011, the Thronal Feast of the Alexandrian Church took place with great splendour, on the occasion of the commemoration of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark, its first Bishop and Custodian.

On the eve of the Feast, at the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa officiated at the Service of Great Vespers, together with His Grace Gabriel Bishop of Mareotis and Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria and His Grace Niphon of Babylonia, Hegumen of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George in Old Cairo.

On the Sunday, 8th May, His Beatitude conducted the Divine Liturgy concelebrated by His Eminence Nicholas Metropolitan of Ermopolis, His Grace Gabriel Bishop of Mareotis, His Grace Nikodimos of Nitria and patriarchal Vicar of Cairo, and His Grace Niphon of Babylonia. The homily was preached by the Very Reverend Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos, Chancellor of the Holy Synod, who said, among other things: "...This most venerable Patriarchal Throne, under the spiritual guidance of His Beatitude, has over many years conducted its missionary tasks, passing on the Light and the Truth, the Grace and the comfort from the Mediterranean down to the African South and from East to the West of the continent of the future, a continent which has been deeply hurt by its colonial past, exhausted by poverty, and fenced in the vicious circle of underdevelopment.

The life and activity of St Mark is a lighthouse which illumines and inspires the admirable efforts and humanistic contribution of the missionary staff of our Patriarchate, which is not inactive before all these exceedingly huge humanistic problems which rock the African people, but strives daily for the passing on of the message of the Resurrection given by the Myrrh-bearers and its genuine implementation in the easing of human pain. And it is the current missionaries who make Christian love a practice, as it was taught and embodied by the Holy Evangelist Mark two thousand years ago.

And you, Your beatitude, the Thirteenth of the Apostles, the Successor of the Apostolic trust, the witness and sacrificial love of your Holy Predecessor, who has embodied this certainty of the fullness of the Throne, lift up a hand of supplication to the Arch-Shepherd Christ, to lead it from pure circumstances to even more pure evolutions and from honourable struggles to most honourable outcomes, to the glory of God and the structure of the world".

Prior to the end of the Eucharistic gathering His Beatitude awarded Patriarchal Offices to two distinguished persons. Particularly, he awarded the Office of the Arhontissa Dikaiofylax to the Honourable Mrs Kalliope-Kelly Bourdara, Professor of the University of Athens, former Minister and former Deputy Mayor of Athens, and the Office of Arhon Nomofylakos to the Honourable Michael Kountouris, Vice President and Legal Advisor of the ING Group.

A festive gathering then took place in the Throne Room, where His beatitude expressed his sincere gratitude to the special Members of the Brotherhood of Office Bearers of the Throne "Apostolos Markos".

On their behalf the Office Bearers of the Patriarchate, via the President of the Brotherhood, the Most Erudite Mr. Theodoros Panagopoulos, Professor of the University of Pireaus, declared their unceasing support of the multifaceted work of the Second Throne Church, and gave honour to the Most Venerable Nun Sister Theoxeni, Abbess of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery Chrysopege in

Hania, Crete, for her multifaceted work. Also, the Erudite Mr Spyridon Kamalakis, Megas Arhon Logothetis and Great Benefactor of the ancient Patriarchate addressed His Beatitude and offered him the tools which placed the foundation stone in 1926 of the Kaniskerion Orphanage of Alexandria and the Holy Church of the Saint and Great Martyr George within its walls.

Also, honouring the assistance of the Holy Monastery of Chrysopege in Hania towards the missionary effort, awarded the Monastery the Cross of St mark, through the Most Venerable Abbess.

The rite of the inauguration of the area which will house the Patriarchal Archives and their naming in honour of the distinguished Egyptian Greeks, the Erudite Messrs Christos Zerefos, Academic and Megas Arhon Didaskalos, Spyridon Kamalakis, Businessman, Chairman of the Association of Hellenic-Egyptian Friendship, Megas Arhon Logothetis and Efthymios Soulogiannis, Historian, Megas Arhon Asikritis.

At noon the Chairman and Members of the Brotherhood of Office Bearers of the Throne hosted an official lunch in honour of His Beatitude at the Hellenic Naval Club in Alexandria, and that same night a musical function was held in the grounds of the Patriarchal Mansion by the artists Mrs. Sevi Mazera-Mamali, Mrs. Jenny Hatzidimou, Mrs. Zafiroula Hanti and Mr. Konstantine Gravos.

The festive and Liturgical functions of the Thronal Feast of the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa were attended by their Excellencies the former Ministers Mrs. Kalliope-Kelly Bourdara and George Kalaitzis, the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria Mr George Diakofotakis, the Chairman of S.A.E. Mr. Stephanos Tambakis, the Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria Mr Ioannis Siokas, representatives of Hellenic and Arabic-speaking Associations and Organizations of the Great City, as well as the entire Hellenic Community.