

THEODOROS II OF ALEXANDRIA: "WE MUSTS ACCEPT THE STRANGER AND THE IMMIGRANT AS A BLESSING AND A GIFT FROM GOD"

On 6th September 2017, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, participated for the first time in the 25th International Inter-Christian Conference on Orthodox Spirituality, dedicated to the topic: "The gift of hospitality", at the Bose Monastic Brotherhood, in Northern Italy, in the presence of His All Holiness Bartholomaios, the Ecumenical Patriarch, and representatives of Orthodox Churches and Monasteries.

The Alexandrian Primate was accompanied by Their Eminences the Metropolitans Seraphim of Zambia and Angola and Gregory of Cameroon, as well as the Very Reverend Archimandrite Danile Biazis, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod.

During the opening meeting, the Alexandrian Primate addressed a most meaningful introduction, on the topic: "Distinguishing the blessing of the stranger", focusing on the general significance of Christian hospitality according to the teaching of the Holy Gospel and the Fathers of the Church, as well as his modern personal pastoral missionary experience in Africa.

His Beatitude the Patriarch said that "the Lord Jesus Christ began His life on earth as a refugee, when the Holy Family took refuge in Egypt, in order to be saved from the threat of Herod, and continued His activity on earth, as a stranger, who had nowhere to lay His head", concluding that all forms of conduct which offends, degrades, is unjust to or threatens a stranger, who is the image of God, "becomes a question of the authenticity" of the faith of every Christian, since "the other", "the stranger", is "Christ Himself", and "hospitality must be one of the most important duties of a Christian".

He made particular reference to the forms of pastoral ministry which is practiced by the essentially missionary Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, throughout the vast Continent of Africa. "Africans are the strangers of our time...Today Europe shudders and is tormented by the wave of refugees and immigration, but the Church of Alexandria experiences this daily on the vast African Continent, where warfare, civil conflicts, and biblical natural disasters create waves of impoverished refugees", he stressed, which is why "we see the need for Church involvement in addressing and solving of social problems".

It is noteworthy that His Most Holiness Pope Francis of Rome, sent for the first time in the history of the conferences, a brief personal greeting, welcoming and greeting the presence of the two Orthodox Primates.