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## **The Patriarch of Alexandria from Nigeria: “The Patriarchate without discriminations laid the foundations of Orthodoxy in Africa”**



On Saturday, 10 February 2024, in an atmosphere of deep emotion and joy, His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and all Africa, presided over the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Resurrection of the Lord in Lagos, Nigeria, within the housing settlement of the Anastasios Leventis family. His Eminence Metropolitan Georgios of Guinea, and the holy clergy of Nigeria, Togo and Benin took part in the Divine Liturgy. Church choirs from Nigeria and Benin alternately chanted in English and French.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude ordained Deacon Kyprianos Ekeocha from Nigeria to the Priesthood and Haralambos Fagnibo Arnauld Osva Abdias from Benin to the Diaconate. Before the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Patriarch symbolically

baptised a little boy, whom he named Michael, a little girl whom he named Cleopatra, and an adult, naming him Joseph. His Beatitude also honoured the children of the late benefactor Mr. Constantinos Leventis, Anastasios and Louisa Leventis, with a small gift for their great contribution to the country and supporting the work of the Patriarchate.



The Patriarch, deeply moved, thanked from the bottom of his heart the entire congregation that defied the heat and the distances and arrived at the Cathedral for the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, since there were faithful present from the capital Abuja, Eastern Nigeria, Lagos, Tongo, Benin, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, and members of the Greek community of Nigeria and prominent figures of the local community.

His Beatitude also referred to the late Metropolitan Alexandros and the important work he accomplished in the country for 26 whole years and asked the

congregation to pray so that his successor would be found to be equal to his personality and lead Orthodoxy in Nigeria to even better days, defying the challenges of the times and the predatory attacks of the supposed saviours of the Mission from the 'north' whose purpose and goal are to sow seeds of weeds and division only where there is a presence of the Patriarchate and nowhere else, since they are indifferent to countries where there are no Greek Missionaries or ordained clergy by Greek Missionaries.

Finally, he emphasised that: "The Patriarchate never cultivated nationalism, except only without discrimination and under very difficult conditions it laid the foundations of Orthodoxy in Africa, and one of the best examples is the work and contribution of the Greeks of Nigeria, in which the local Orthodox Church owes everything to them and especially to the Leventis family that built the magnificent Cathedral and that today among us are the representatives of the family, Anastasios and Louisa Leventis".

Afterwards, in the forecourt of the Cathedral, the children, the youth and the ladies' association presented a festive program with dances and songs. A celebratory feast followed for the entire congregation. His Beatitude distributed blessings and commemorative gifts to all present. Local gifts were offered to the Patriarch by the Ladies Associations of Nigeria, Togo and Benin and the Nigerian Youth Association.



Before his departure, the Alexandrian Primate met with the representatives of the youth and the candidates for the clergy, thanked them for remaining faithful to the Patriarchate which for two thousand years has given witness to Christ in suffering Africa and promised that the Theological and Missionary Seminary of Nigeria will soon reopen.

Due to the Marathon that was being held in Lagos, the Patriarch departed from the Cathedral by speedboat, courtesy of the Leventis family.

On Sunday, 11 February 2024, His Eminence Metropolitan Georgos of Guinea ordained Mr. Antonio Aboko from Nigeria to the Diaconate. At noon on Sunday His Beatitude had a private meeting with the Greek-born Lady Maiden Ibru and her son Alexander Toke Ibru, who belong to one of the most historic families in the country (her parents had a special relationship with Princess Alexandra who was hosted at

their house in Lagos) and who are currently active in the media, where, among other things, they are publishers of the largest circulating newspaper in Nigeria. The Ibru family expressed their desire to offer a plot of land in a central area of Lagos for the construction of an Orthodox Church and Greek Centre.

Before his departure, the Patriarch had a private meeting with the General Hierarchal Commissioner Fr. Iakovos where he gave instructions and guidelines for the smooth operation of the Holy Metropolis. Late on Sunday night His Beatitude arrived in Cairo where he was received by the Patriarchal Commissioner of Cairo, Metropolitan Nikodimos of Memphis.

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