

10 YEARS OF CONTRIBUTION BY THE “ST. EFSTATHIOS” ORTHODOX ORPHANAGE IN DOLISIE

On 17th September 2017, His Grace Panteleimon Bishop of Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon served the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Parish Church of St Irene in the city of Dolisie, on the completion of ten years since the inauguration of the Orthodox “St Efstathios” Orphanage by His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa (20th September 2007).

Participating in the Eucharistic gathering were the Reverend Protopresbyter Fr. Maximos Oumba, Hierarchal Vicar General of the Holy Diocese, Father Sergios Mabelemo, Parish Priest of the Holy Parish Church of the Resurrection of the Lord, in Brazzaville, member of the Diocesan Council and the local Parish Priest, Fr. Pavlos Diafouka, Director of the Orphanage. Member of the Diocesan Council, and the liturgical hymns were exceptionally presented by the choirs of the Parishes of St Fotini Pointe-Noire, Resurrection of the Lord Brazzaville, St Irene Dolisie and the newly-established children’s choir from the Orphanage.

In his address His Grace spoke of the ten-year path of the charitable institution, which began with its foundation laying in 2006, by His Eminence Ignatios Metropolitan of Central Africa, now retired Metropolitan of Pentapolis, under the supervision (and concern till 2013) of the Very Reverend Hieromonk Theologos Chrysanthakopoulos, funded by the “Protoklitos” Orthodox Mission Society in Patras, and on 20th September 2007 His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria performed the inauguration. He also mentioned the painstaking efforts undertaken since his enthronement as the first Bishop of the local Church, so that the complete renovation of the building, the administrative reconstruction and the legal recognition could steadily be realized. Another priority was to set up educational programmes, the securing of free medical observation or hospitalization for the young children at the Dolisie General Hospital as well as at the Military Hospital in the same city and the opportunity for the older children to study at technical schools for dignified professional job placement when they come of age.

In conclusion he emphasized the importance of the visit, on 9th August 2014, of the then Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of the Congo, Mrs. Emilienne Raoul to the Orphanage, who defined it as the best in the country and including it amongst the three officially recognized orphanages by the State.

To His Beatitude and to all the afore-mentioned, His Grace expressed the gratitude of the local Orthodox Church for their valuable contribution, as well as to the First Lady of the country, the Honourable Mrs. Antoinette Sassou N’guesso, President of the Congo Assistance Institution, to Mrs. Antoinette Dinga-Dzondo the Minister of Social Affairs, to the Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece, to Holy Archdioceses, Metropolises and Monasteries in Greece and abroad, to the missionary societies of Greece, organizations, companies and pious Orthodox Congolese, Greeks, Cypriots and Lebanese Christians. He expressed his gratitude also to the Clergy, the Parish Councils and the Diocesan Council of the Holy Diocese of Brazzaville, to the voluntary Consuls of Greece to Congo-Brazzaville Mr. Nikolaos Perris and of the Congo in Greece Mr. Christos Kylikas, to the Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Kinshasa and Consul Mr. Gerasimos Dounis, to the Pan-Hellenic Evangelistria Foundation in Tinos, to ship-owner Mr. Athanasios Martinos, to the members of the Rotary Club of Pointe-Noire, the Honorary Chairman of the Parish Council of Brazzaville Mr. Seraphin Bhalat, and especially to the tireless Director of the Orphanage the Reverend Fr. Pavlos Diafouka and all who work there, and to the faithful who came to the Divine Liturgy from various cities, who through their presence express their unity and solidarity which prevails in the local

Church and the recognition of the philanthropic and social work undertaken.

A presentation of hymns and songs by the children cared for at the Orphanage followed, and on whose behalf the little Konstantinos spoke, mentioning among other things: "...Despite the many difficulties, the conditions at our institution are continually improving. Your Grace, we are aware of your dreams for our home, which is its transformation into a modern house, worthy of correctly raising the youth of the 21st century.

We ask our Lord to grant you every good thing and endless strength, not only for the progress of our home, but for every part of our Diocese, who rudder you command with strength... You are a good father who desires the overall progress of your children which is why we place before you today, before everyone, the recognition of your many sacrifices, saying: Father, we thank you!

We thank the Orthodox faithful, as well as our non-Orthodox brothers and sisters around the world, for their donations and their love which help us to not think too often of the lack of biological parents. Rest assured that our prayers will be with you, that you may have strength to help other children too, that need you as you help us with so much love..."

Then the Director, Fr. Pavlos Diafouka spoke of the way in which the orphanage operates.

The last speaker was Mr. Christian Aboke Ndza, Director general of the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Congo, representing the Minister who is overseas, congratulating the Orthodox Church for its Orphanage, defining its work as excellent and emphasizing its solid support by the Ministry.

A festive function followed in the grounds of the institution, after which the Bishop left by road for the See of the Holy Diocese.

Present at the liturgical and festive functions, which were covered by Tele Congo, the state Television, were the Director General of the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Congo Mr. Christian Aboke Ndza, the Representative of His Eminence the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dolisie Mr. Bienvenu Manamika, the Director of Social Affairs of the Niaki District, representatives of the local administrative authorities, the Honorable Mr. Chrysostomos Djimbi Simouna, Chairman of the Dolisie Courts, Member of the Diocesan Council, the Chairmen of the Parish Councils of the Holy Churches of ST Fotini Pointe-Noire Mr. Michel Armand Massa, Member of the Diocesan Council and Mr. Andrien Hosse, of the Resurrection of the Lord Brazzaville, et al.