

FOUNDING OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN NORTHERN CONGO

His Grace Panteleimon, Bishop of Brazzaville and Gabon made a pastoral visit to the Parish Community of Impfondo in the north of Congo, from 20th to 22nd November 2013.

On the 21st November, the Feast of the Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos, during the Divine Liturgy, His Grace prayed together with the Orthodox faithful who belong to the Pygmy and Bantu tribes, in the house which is rented by the Diocese and is used as a place of worship, and also preached the homily. He then had the joy of communicating with the locals who, through the very old leader of the pygmies expressed their hospitality.

He then went to the Pygmy village, in the tropical jungle, and spent a long time in the only "school" (a wooden hut) giving the young pupils little gifts.

On the afternoon of the same day, which was also the first anniversary of his election, by the Grace of God His Grace laid the foundation stone of the Parish Church in the middle of the town of Impfondo. This holy place, which will honour the Forerunner and St Nicholas, is a donation from a pious Christian to the local Church of the Congo through the "St Cosmas Aitolos" Missionary Society of Thessaloniki, and is the first Orthodox Church to be nbuilt in the north of the huge country of the Congo, and will also be the missionary centre for the further spreading of the Gospel preaching in the broader area, up to the border with Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

Before the end of the ceremony, His Grace spoke to those present about the significance of the event and of the life of the two Saints of the Church under construction, and did not forget to express grateful thanks both the members of the "St Cosmas Aitolos" Missionary Society of Thessaloniki for their many benefits to and assistance towards the Holy Diocese, as well as the local authorities for their immediate response to every request.

The next day His Grace had lengthy collaboration with the Reverend Fr Sergios Mabelemo, Parish Priest of the Parish Community of the Forerunner – St Nicholas, the Chairman of the Parish Council, colleagues of the missionary effort and the Chairman of the Likouala Municipal Council.