

## **HOLY PASCHA (EASTER) IN THE CAPITAL OF THE CONGO**

**At noon on Holy Saturday, 19th April 2004, His Grace Panteleimon Bishop of Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon**, flew to Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo, where he conducted the Resurrection Divine Liturgy at midnight, in the Cathedral of the Resurrection of the Lord.

Before the ceremony of the Resurrection His Grace read the Paschal Message of the Venerable Primate of the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of St Mark, and during the Eucharist he preached the homily. He also expressed his joy and his visions for the further development of parish life, at the same time urging the faithful never to forget the contributions made by the former missionaries, as well as those of the Greek donors and assistors of the missionary effort in the Congo, and to pray for them.

Before the end of the Divine Liturgy, at which all Orthodox people and Russians from the Capital participate, His Grace gave to the Parish Priest, the Reverend Protopresbyter Father Bernard Diafouka and to His Excellency Mr. Seraphin Bhalat, Chairman of the Parish Council and Councilor to the President of the Republic, their appointment as members of the Diocesan Council. In his reply, Mr. Bhalat emphasized the unbreakable unity which defines the local Church and expressed on behalf of all, the respect, love and dedication of the Orthodox faithful to the Mother Church, the ancient Patriarchate and their Shepherd, to whom he gave as a gift a large commemorative photograph from the first meeting of the Bishop of Brazzaville with His Excellency the President of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Dennis Sassou Nguesso, at the Presidential Mansion in the capital, during January 2014. A festive reception followed with local dances and songs by the Orthodox youth of Brazzaville.

**The Divine Liturgy was covered by a television crew** from state television, to which His Grace Panteleimon granted an interview and addressed Paschal wishes to the authorities of the country, other Christian faiths and all citizens. A pleasant surprise was the presence of Greek naval officers who were in the African Equator on this Holy Day.