

## **I WAS SO SAD...**

How sorry I was on hearing the sad news! I particularly respected the venerable Roman Catholic Hierarch Francis of Syros... I was always happy as a priest to pass by his office often for a "good morning" in the building of the Catholic Diocese in Ermoupolis, or less often at his home, in Ano Syros.

How deeply etched in my memory was his last visit to the elderly Metropolitan Dorotheos Stekas, who was hospitalized in Syros Hospital. He entered the room in silence, stood tearfully at the head of my dying Bishop, looking at him sorrowfully.

When I whispered to the old man that the Catholic Bishop had come to see him, the old Bishop opened his eyes, turned his head, extended his trembling hand to Bishop Francis, and smilingly whispered "welcome"!

And when I became a Bishop and went to Syros for Theophany of 2013, before I left for my enthronement in the Congo, he hugged me tightly and said with his characteristic smile "See to it that you dont forget me now, in the episcopal storms that await you"!

This morning, during the Divine Liturgy at the Patriarchal Chapel, without knowing of his passing, I remembered the good Bishop for his name day, in commemoration of Saint Francis of Assisi.

And when I later went to the Patriarch to sign various documents, including the congratulatory Patriarchal Letter to Pope Francis, who is celebrating today, I also told him about the retired old Bishop of Syros, who was also celebrating his name day today! I was so sad...

May we have the blessing of the late Bishop Francis. His legacy is great, his memory is sweet, his smile and crystal words are a nostalgic blessing.

May the memory of Francis, the Venerable Roman Catholic Bishop formerly of Syros, Thira and Crete, be eternal!

*+Panteleimon of Naucratis the Tinian*