

SPEECH BY THE METROPOLITAN OF NAUCRATIS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA

A particularly important and beneficial lecture for everyone was given by His Eminence Panteleimon, Metropolitan of Naucratis and Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, at the Ptolemy I Association of Scientists, on Saturday, April 29, 2023. The topic developed by the speaker was "Systematic education of the indigenous leaders of the Orthodox Church in Africa as a response to contemporary multiple challenges". The hall of the historical Association was filled with Hellenes from Egypt who wanted to follow, after a long time, such an interesting analysis on an issue that directly concerns Orthodoxy in Africa.

His Eminence Panteleimon belongs to the category of those speakers who, in addition to his rhetorical skill, also have a distinct clarity in his speech. Therefore, its success was a given from the beginning, a fact that was proven in practice. For the best presentation of his views, he used videos of scenes from his time in the Congo and elsewhere and this was especially helpful to the guests who followed his words with attention and admiration.

Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria honored the whole event with his presence, but also with his greeting which was an excellent reference to his missionary work through which, a large part of the African peoples have been helped. The thorough presentation of the Patriarch of Alexandria moved the audience and was the prelude to the speech of the official speaker. Then the hostess and President of Ptolemaios and ENOA Ms. Lilika Thlivitou, undertook to enlighten us about the speaker. She referred kindly to his biography and work, which is extremely important both in Alexandria and in the Congo.

Below is a portion of her speech:

"This year's one hundred and fifteenth year in the history of our Association means a lot to us. We have now institutionalized a proactively updated statute for our operation so that we and our successors can proceed dynamically, at least until the rest of the second centenary of our Association. In this way we will function as an international cultural institution for the study and promotion of the world of both Alexandrian and timeless Hellenism. We can now operate on a national and international level. Our broader goal is the scientific study and promotion of the timeless Alexandrian cosmopolitan heritage and language by any modern means. We consider it an important part, both of our pre-Christian and Christian ecumenical tradition, in the great city of Alexandria and in the hospitable country of Egypt for the Greeks and seat of the second throne Patriarchate of Africa. For millennia, here on the North-East side of the Mediterranean, Egypt and our Patriarchate have existed as leading links of cultural tradition, among the peoples of Africa, Europe and Asia". She therefore stated: "His Eminence was born on the holy island of Tinos in 1974. He is a graduate of the Department of Theology, from the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens and a graduate of the French Institute of Athens. He speaks English, French and Italian. He was ordained Deacon in 2000 and Priest-Archimandrite in 2001 by the blessed Metropolitan Dorotheos I of Syros, and under Dorotheos II he served as Preacher and Director of Services of the Holy Metropolis of Syros. In September 2006, he was seconded to the Patriarchate of Alexandria where he was successively appointed as: Director of Development Projects, Codifier of the Holy Synod, Director of the Private Patriarchal Office and Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod and Member of the Patriarchal Commission for European Affairs. He has accompanied His Beatitude the Pope and Patriarch on official visits and missionary journeys.

He represented the Patriarchal Throne of Alexandria in Inter-Orthodox, Inter-

Church, and Interreligious International scientific meetings, and continues to represent it in the Orthodox Bioethics Committee and the Advisory Body of the International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, the well-known King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz InterNational Center for InterReligious and InterCultural Dialogue. Between the years 2006-2012 he ministered as Parish Priest at the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria, where he was ordained on December 2nd 2012 by His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodoros II, as the first Bishop of the Holy Diocese of Brazzaville and Gabon, since shortly before that, on November 21, following a Patriarchal proposal, he was elected unanimously by the Holy and Sacred Patriarchal Synod for this purpose.

The Holy Diocese of Brazzaville and Gabon, which was founded by a Patriarchal and Synodal Tome on October 7, 2010, was elevated to a Holy Metropolis on October 24, 2017. On January 30, 2019, following a Decision by His Excellency the President of the Republic of the Congo, His Eminence Panteleimon received the country's highest honor, the medal and title of Knight Officer.

On January 12, 2022, he was elected Active Synodal Metropolitan of Naucratis, again assuming the duties of the Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Second Throne Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. His enthronement took place on May 10, 2022 at the Holy Cathedral of St Nicholas in the Camp Cesar area of Alexandria.

In his lecture today His Eminence will present to us the topic: "Systematic education of the indigenous leaders of the Orthodox Church in Africa as a response to contemporary multiple challenges".

As soon as Mrs. Thlivitou had completed her speech, the speaker took it upon himself to enlighten us, and among many other things said the following: "The teaching of the Orthodox faith, expressed over the centuries mainly through – in the broadest sense of the terms – Greek philosophical thought and legacy of the pre-Christ philosophers with Platonic and post-Platonic thought and views as the principal ones, combined with the richness of the Greek language, which has been the pre-eminent vehicle for expressing theological concepts throughout the centuries (e.g. αἰών, λόγος, ὢν, μὴ ὢν, ἐπέκεινα [aeons, logos, on, nion, epekeina], etc.), is, in my humble opinion, the principle factor in which our Church is trying to work today, in order that the productive streams of faith can be assimilated by the African brothers and sisters, who, however, lack similar knowledge, as well as the capability of linguistic expression....]

[... I feel the need to include the important role of women in this whole missionary and educational process. The Orthodox Church, as guided by the Holy Bible and the Holy Tradition, is aware of the sanctity and fullness of the person of women, and gives the woman equal status and value with the man. This consciousness of the Church found its highest expression in the unique person of the Most Holy Theotokos, as well as in the faces of a myriad of holy women, both of the first centuries and of recent times. When we refer to the Christian woman, we must realize that the Christian woman is baptized and chrismated and has thus received the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, she has spiritual gifts. From this sacramental foundation comes the charismatic view of the Christian woman. In the ancient Church, the well-known institution of the deaconess also functioned, which, of course, fell into disuse much later, but its revival is still being intensively studied today.

Christianity really substantially and courageously elevated the woman. And we should not forget the women disciples of Christ, as the holy Evangelists present them to us, either as loving ministers of Christ, or as devoted disciples, or as

daring myrrhbearers, either as evangelists of the message of the Resurrection of Christ, or as collaborators in the missionary work of the Apostles. We highlight two women's names as an example, Lydia from Philippi in Thrace, who converts to Christianity after the preaching of the Apostle Paul and becomes the first European Christian woman, as well as Priscilla who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as "co-worker" of the Apostle Paul. In the course of the life of the Church, women did not stop working in it, in both charitable and welfare projects for each person, as well as in missionary projects and the presence of the Christian message in the world. The holy figures of Phoebe, Macrina, Catherine the Wise, Nina in Georgia, Olga in Russia, Philothea of Athens, have a lot to tell us, teach us and inspire us for the solid construction of a healthy European culture .

After all, it has been said and it is a fact that women are able to make people better. They are capable of bringing more understanding, justice and love to earth. The duty, therefore, of all "church men" is to realize the dynamics that will be given to the entire missionary movement by the assignment of very important roles to women everywhere".

His Eminence Panteleimon mentioned many other things, while at the end he accepted questions from the audience and answered them all clearly. The questions raised by the gentlemen: Kyriakos Savvopoulos, professor of archeology at Oxford, and the professor of physics at Averofios, Mr. Nikolaos Gavrielidis, were crucial.

His Beatitude closed the great intellectual gathering by praising the speaker for his breadth of thought, his well-documented analysis and his general speech.

However the evening also hid some surprises. The Patriarch, recognizing the great contribution of Mrs. Lilikas Thlivitou, as President of "Ptolemy" and the Hellenic Naval Club, honored her with the Cross of the Commander of the Lion of Saint Savvas, a special distinction that moved the honoree and delighted all the guests. It was a special moment as the honored President was decorated by the Patriarch, amid applause, for her work as a whole in the two above Associations and in general in Society in terms of Culture.

Many attended the speech of His Excellency Panteleimon and the awarding of Mrs. Lilikas Thlivitou. The Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria, Mr. Andreas Vafiadis, the Community Commissioner, Mr. Vasilios Zoues, the Representative of the Consulate General, Mr. Thrasyvoulos Makris, the archaeologist, Mr. Kyriakos Savvopoulos, the director of Averofeios, Ms. Paschalina Agapiadou, the director of the Tositsai Pratsikion, Mr. Konstantinos Rigas, the director of the Kindergarten of HCA, Ms. Lena Vostanis, the General Secretary of Averofios Ms. Mary Mavrikou, the archaeologist Ms. Pepi Papakosta director of the Research Institute of Alexandrian Culture, the historian of the Community Mr. Konstantinos Vrouliotakis, the Alexandrian creator volunteer, Ilias Pitsikas with the "Parodos" team, Ms. Eleni Astor, manager of HCA Hostels, the teachers of the Greek Community Schools and many others.

The presence of the General Secretary of Ptolemy, Mr. Dimitris Kalomirakis, who helped project the images in the video, goes without saying. After all, his contribution to this particular Association has been long-standing and substantial in all areas.

It was an event, a spiritual evening in which everyone left Ptolemais satisfied with the educative speech of His Eminence and the vindication of the now awarded President, Mrs Lilikas Thlivitou.

*Text-photos by Grigory Haliakopoulos
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