

## THE HOLY AND GREAT SYNOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

On the Sunday of Pentecost, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2016, with the Grace and mercy of the Most Merciful God, the beginning of the deliberations of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church took place at the Orthodox Academy in Crete, in Kolymbari Hania, with the Pan-Orthodox Con-celebration of all the Primate of the Orthodox Churches which were participating in the Great Synod (absent for various reasons were the Churches of Antioch, Russia, Bulgaria and Georgia), at the Holy Metropolitan Church of St Minas in Heraklion, as well as with the Divine Liturgy of the Feast of the Holy Spirit on 20<sup>th</sup> June in the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of Gonia.

His Grace Panteleimon, Bishop of Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon, also participated in the Holy and Great Synod, with the blessing of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, as Synodal Member of the Representatives of the Church of Alexandria.

On Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June, the opening meeting of the Synod was convened under the Presidency of His Holiness Bartholomeus, Ecumenical Patriarch, and the participation of Their Beatitudes the Primate with their Honorable Delegations, as well as their counselors and assistants. On this day the text put forward for discussion was *"The Mission of the Church in the contemporary world"*.

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June, after the acceptance of the amendments on the text *"The Mission of the Church in the contemporary world"*, the deliberations on the text regarding the *"Orthodox Diaspora"* began, as well as regarding the Rules or the organization and functioning of the established local Episcopal Assemblies.

During the morning session on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2016, His All Holiness Bartholomaios, Ecumenical Patriarch, announced the non- final adoption and signing of the texts regarding the Mission of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world" and *"Orthodox Diaspora"* (on which there were textual corrections) due to the non-completion of the Russian translation of these and he introduced for discussion the text *"Regarding autonomy and the manner in which it is proclaimed"*. In conclusion, all the above texts were synodically approved.

During the afternoon session the text for discussion was introduced on the subject *"The importance of fasting and its observance today"*, which was unanimously adopted.

On the Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016, the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Synod was read and adopted by the Gathering of Their Beatitudes the Primate, to which certain additions and amendments were made. On the same day the text *"Regarding the Sacrament of Marriage and its impediments"* was read, introduced for discussion and adopted.

On Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June, the deliberations centered on the text *"Relationships of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world"*, which were completed after lengthy deliberations and some modifications on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June, with the final adoption of the text. On 25<sup>th</sup> June the Holy and Great Synod was briefed in detail on its Circular to the world and its Message, which was read during the Con-celebration of the Primate on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

In the afternoon the official closing ceremony of the deliberations of the Holy and Great Synod took place, and on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2016, at the Holy Church of Ss

Peter and Paul in Hania Crete, the Con-celebration of the Venerable Primate Bartholomeus of Constantinople, Theodoros II of Alexandria, Theophilos III of Jerusalem, Irenaeus of Serbia, Daniel of Romania, Chrysostomos II of Cyprus, Hieronymus of Greece, Savvas of Poland, Anastasios of Albania and Radislav of the Czech –Slovaks.

His Grace Panteleimon, Bishop of Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon, as a Synodal Member of the Representatives of the Ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria, signed all the final documents-decisions of the Holy and Great Synod.