

THE 3rd SALUTATIONS IN ALEXANDRIA

The poetic magnificence set to music of the Akathistos Hymn leads to a transcendent spirituality without dependence on trivialities and small-minded concepts. The Divine and the Human meet and coincide, through speech, a musical feast and contemplation. It is the moment when Creator and creation face each other within the universal connection of infinity. Reactive bias through questions gives way to the dominance of strong answers given by fear of interpretation. The mortal being ceases to ask, as he is unable to explain the past and the future, and simply prays in silence. The Salutations is a powerful prayer through verse, melody and ontological transcendence.

This is exactly what the faithful Alexandrians of our parish experienced on Friday, March 17, during the Third Salutations. Three Holy Churches, Three Salutations. We carefully observed the adherence of the Christians to the booklet they were holding and we heard them whispering the same words as priests and chanters. A divine band that played to the tune of the Melodist, that God-breathed musician who composed creation's supreme Hymn to its Maker.

In the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria, His Eminence Panteleimon Metropolitan of Naucratis and Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, did the service, while Mr. Ioannis Raptis chanted.

An pious atmosphere surrounded the faithful, as the Byzantine notes soothed their ears and an upliftment of soul dominated their being. Even little Aaron, the nipper who was running inside the Holy Church happily, because no one stopped him from coming and going, as soon as His Eminence invited him to come to him, he felt that he was the little "protagonist" and ran to touch his pastoral rod of our beloved Bishop!

And when the time for the sermon came, everyone was motionless, speechless, completely focused on the words of the Hierarch of the Annunciation, feeling that they were among the very lucky ones who enjoyed a homily of inner depth and a higher theological level.

This was acknowledged by all those who attended after the Salutations, in the Guest room of the Cathedral to enjoy coffee and goodies, where they all expressed their deep gratitude to His Eminence Panteleimon for the spiritual upliftment he offered them.

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Text- photographs by Mr. Gregory Halkiakopoulos
writer-journalist