

**LITURGY IN CELEBRATION OF
THE PATRONAL FEAST OF ST NICHOLAS OF JAPAN
23RD FEBRUARY 2014**

Clerical celebrants: His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria Theodoros II, His Eminence Archbishop Damaskinos of Johannesburg and Pretoria, Archimandrite Fr Athinagoras Papaevripides from Cyprus, Archimandrite Fr Athanasios Akunda (Parish priest of St Nicholas of Japan), Fr Elias (Parish priest of the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit), Fr Frementios (Parish priest of the Church of the Virgin Mary, Thembisa) and Fr Deacon Pavlos Potgieter (assistant to Archbishop Damaskinos).

Honoured guests who attended: Messrs John Philippou and Aleko Baladakis, former Presidents of the Greek Federation, as well as Mr John Baladakis, Chairman of the Parish Council of the Cathedral of St Constantine and Helen.

Address by His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros to Parishioners:

It is with great happiness that I am here for you today. In the few hours that I am in Johannesburg on my way to Egypt, I am very happy to be here with you today. This day is dedicated to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Sunday one week before the start of the holy Lenten period. Today Jesus Christ himself was amongst us, as were the holy Virgin Mary Theotokos, the venerable Forerunner, John the Baptist, as well as St Nicholas, Archbishop of Japan, whom we commemorate today. As I was recounting to Archbishop Damaskinos earlier today, St Nicholas of Japan was a great Saint, who suffered so much for the Orthodox faith.

Today (the day of the Last Judgement), the Lord Jesus Christ came amongst us and gave us this great theology. He brought us spiritually closer to the poor, the naked and the prisoners. Christ, who was born so humbly in Bethlehem, today calls all those poor His brothers. I am therefore joyful today in this beautiful church the new parish is glorifying God in so many different languages. This church is so warm and humble, just as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

For this reason, I would like to give you all my blessings for coming here today to listen to the Divine Liturgy. I bring you the blessings from the holy Patriarchate of Alexandria and the one who began that institution in the first instance, namely the Holy Apostle St Mark, who wrote such a powerful gospel. That is why his symbol will always be the lion.

I want to appeal to you my children to let the love of Christ always be amongst you. I know that His love and compassion helps our fellow man. The love and help that we give one another is reflected in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ (which you see in the icons surrounding you). I am grateful that our Patriarchate assists the poor throughout the continent of Africa. I am grateful to you too for your assistance to the poor when they knock on the door of your hearts.

From the bottom of my heart, I wish to thank this parish and its beautiful choir and all the people who guide this church to function as an iron font. I wish you all health and joy as we enter this period of Great Lent. This is a period in which to get to know ourselves that much better. It is a period to enable us to approach more closely the Cross of Christ (Patriarch pointing to the wooden cross at the left of our church). Under His Cross we see gathered all his saints (pointing to all the icons lying behind the wooden Cross). These are friends of our Lord Jesus Christ; these are friends of our church.

May the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ and St Nicholas be with you always.