

Anastasios

This Archdiocese was blessed on Tuesday March 14th by the visit of Mr. Anastasios (Yannoulatos) the Archbishop of Albania. This was a part of his Beatitude's visit to the Antiochian Church. However, his Beatitude Mr. Anastasios honored and specified for us this day because of his heart and of his early growing.

The secret behind this might be the fact that he comes from the "life" brotherhood that was the whiff of spiritual renewal at the boundary of the previous two centuries. Reviving people happens through the reviving word that comes from the Gospel which is preached through all the methods of delivery. And this brotherhood, through its young members, cooperated with the youth movements in Greece. And this is how we knew this man. His vision to tomorrow's Church with its emission and openness was similar to our vision. This is what made him a big apostle and a big bishop. Without any doubt, teaching in the University helped him clarify his thinking and support it especially that he was the professor of religions including Islam. But the spirit that was in him led the Albanian Church in the past nine years.

He rose with the Church of Albania from a complete desert (lack of construction, lack of Church unity) into an obvious and active existence. He leaned on the faith preserved in the hearts through a lethal persecution, a persecution that erased all the features of Christianity in a way no other regime did. He challenged all of this without having any money in his hand, and revealed to the whole world that knowledgeable people are able, through the power of the spirit and some intelligence, to do construction.

The people that welcomed him felt that grace is poured on his lips and that this grace is what makes him a great Bishop. He stepped on our land in the monastery of our Lady of Kaftoun. Perhaps the most important thing we saw in him- and this is found in every feature of our features- was him entering the sanctuary and kneeling in front of the altar that he was constantly touching with his head as if it was a part of him. Our gift for him was an icon of St. Joseph of Damascus to tell him that our unity in all Churches is the unity of martyrdom and that we died here so that all generations would live through those who died with love. He started explaining for us the attempt to destroy Christ in his country. However, he emerged from under the ruins of the ugly history so that the youth of Albania's Orthodoxy is renewed like the eagle's youth.

We had lunch in the monastery of our Lady of "An-Nourieh". He got the chance to see quickly in both monasteries the experience of our monastic life as we gathered around him the Abbots of all monasteries in addition to some of their brothers. Afternoon, we visited some displaced villages of the Mount, and he saw there the pains that we tasted that were similar to what his sons tasted. In the two

Bhamdouns, Mansouriyeh and Alay, the faithful welcomed him. He prayed, we chanted and he gave us a speech. He never said: "I build and I established...etc". He gave credit in everything to the Divine Grace.

While accompanying him, I got to know his wisdom in pastoral care and in facing difficulties. We told you previously in "Raiati" about his interest in displaced Muslim Albanians from Kosovo to Albania: A poor Church like his collected money from the world in order to embrace homeless people that are not even from its religion, taking into consideration that this Church doesn't have the ability to do charity. However, Christ wanted us to share.

The end of the trip was a visit of his Beatitude to the Church of the Theotokos in Mansouriyeh, Al-Maten. The Great Compline had finished and the man was exhausted but he entered the entrance of kings through the crowd of people that came to pray from the town and from neighboring towns. I felt that the enthusiasm increased and that piety was obvious. The choir of the Eparchy felt that it is nice to chant "Christ is Risen" so we did, while he chanted with his companions the troparion of Pascha in their language.

After dinner, we stood up and didn't end the Paschal chanting. This way, and without any analysis, we jumped into Pascha to tell ourselves and others that the faithful respond to each other through the love of that who rose from the dead and that they want his eternal Pascha to be a Resurrection for all Churches.

Metropolitan George of Mount Lebanon