

## **HIS BEATITUDE MEET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF EGYPT AT ST GEORGE IN CAIRO**

On 22nd March 2014, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, welcomed to the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George Old Cairo His Excellency the Prime Minister of Egypt, Mr. Ibrahim Mahleb, who, together with His Excellency the Minister of Local Government Mr. Adel Labib, was responding to an invitation from the Alexandrian Primate, to inspect together with the great donor Mr. Athansios Martinos, the development of the renovation works of the Rotunda of the East. His Beatitude has known the Egyptian Prime Minister since the time of the beginning of the renovation works, as Mr. Mahleb served as Chairman of the Arab Contractors Company, as also has a long friendship with the former Governor of Alexandria, Minister Labib.

The renovation of the complex of the ancient Basilica and the Patriarchal Monastery of St George in Old Cairo, which is a Pan-Orthodox and universal shrine of great religious and spiritual importance, is the pinnacle of the multifaceted renovation activities by His Beatitude. The cracks in the walls, the settling of the ground and the changes in the existing masonry, had rendered the stability of the Rotunda of the East precarious, as it is based on a three-floored Roman tower of circular ground plan from the 1st century A.D. and which was a part of the fortification of Babylon. This joint project between archaeologists, engineers, architects and conservation workers, includes anchoring and reconstruction of the Roman tower, the newer church, as well as maintenance of the hagiography of Constantine Parthenis. The estimate of this gigantic effort, which depicts also the place of holy refuge of the Holy Family and the imprisonment of the Holy Great Martyr George, has reached the breathtaking amount of 6,5 million Euro, an amount which was donated by Marina and Athanasios Martinos.

During the inspection of the works, His Beatitude made the Egyptian Prime Minister aware of his vision for the building of a hospital on land adjacent to the Holy Monastery. On his behalf the Prime Minister defined the work as pivotal for the development of the areas surrounding the Holy Monastery in Old Cairo, but also symbolic on the one hand of the many centuries of ties which bind the people of Greece and Egypt, and on the other hand, of the peaceful mutual journey of the Muslim and Christian faiths in the Land of the Nile. His Beatitude and the distinguished Egyptian office-bearers were accompanied during the inspection by His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece in Cairo Mr. Christodoulos Lazaris, the Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo His Eminence Nikodimos Metropolitan of Memphis and the Hegumen of the Holy Monastery His Grace Niphon, Bishop of Babylonia.