

## **HIS BEATITUDE MEETS WITH THE GREEK MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT ST GEORGE, CAIRO**

On 5th September 2013, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, accompanied by His Grace Nikodimos Bishop of Nitria, Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo, and His Grace Niphon, Hegumen of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George, welcomed to the historic Monastery of Old Cairo His Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister of the Greek Government and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Eleftherios Venizelos, who is in the Egyptian capital for a series of contacts with the political leaders of the country at a particularly sensitive juncture, both at a local level due to the country's transition to constitutional stability, as well as at a regional level due to the impending military intervention in Syria.

During the meeting His Beatitude briefed Mr. Venizelos on the situation at the Patriarchate and the institutions dependent on it in Egypt, as well as the activities of the Throne throughout the African continent. He also made him aware of his contacts with the senior military leaders of the country and conveyed the esteem with which they view Greece as a prime regional partner and neighbor to Egypt. On his part Mr. Venizelos expressed the unconditional support of the Greek Government for the work of His Beatitude and his colleagues, as well as his appreciation for the steady and distinctive role of the Patriarchate in Egypt amidst fluid and changing circumstances.

Following the meeting His Beatitude awarded Mr. Venizelos the Great Cross of the Apostle Mark and took him on a conducted tour of the radically renovated Monastery, where Mr. Venizelos had the opportunity of meeting and talking to the Great Benefactor and exclusive donor of the renovations, Mr. Martinos.

In the statements which followed, Mr. Venizelos praised the Alexandrian Primate, making mention not only of his religious activities, but also of his social awareness and insight. He also spoke of the international prestige of His Beatitude and his acceptance by the Egyptian political and military leadership. He then invited His Beatitude to operate through his words and actions as a bridge of communication and mutual understanding between Greece and Africa, the most rapidly developing continent.

On his behalf, His Beatitude expressed his gratitude for the support provided, emphasized the importance of the visit of the Greek Deputy Prime Minister to Egypt at a critical turning point for the progress of the country and assured him of the tireless presence and activity of the Patriarchate, as a beacon of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in Africa.