

## **RUSSIAN MONKS PAY A VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA**

On 8th November 2016, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, received at the Patriarchal See the visit of His Eminence Theognostos, Archbishop of Sergiev Posad, Abbot of the famous Lavra of Saint Sergius and Chairman of the Synodal Department of Monasticism and the Holy Monasteries of the Russian Church with a group of monks, as part of their visit to Egypt in order to get to know Coptic monasticism and to venerate the ancient monasteries of Nitria and the Thebaid, cradles of Orthodox Monasticism and a place of ascesis of the Great Fathers of the desert.

Present during the visit were His Eminence Narcissus Metropolitan of Accra, Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria, His Grace Meletios, Bishop of Naucratis and Abbot of the Patriarchal Monastery of Saint Savvas, the Exarch of the Patriarchate of Moscow in Cairo Fr. Viktor Kulanga, and Coptic Bishop Daniel, Abbot of the Lavra of St Paul of the Thebaid.

Welcoming the visitors with warm words, His Beatitude spoke about the fraternal relations between the two Churches of Alexandria and Moscow, the concern of the Most Holy Patriarch Kyril for the Alexandrian Church and all the ancient Patriarchates of the Middle East, his joy that in a few days he will be celebrating the 70th birthday of Patriarch Kyril in Moscow, and also expressed his admiration for the blossoming of Russian monasticism, which he came to know at first hand during his years as Exarch in Russia.

He also mentioned the good relations with the Coptic Church, saying characteristically that it is an ascetic Church, with many monasteries and hundreds of monks and that the concern of the missionary efforts on behalf of the Patriarchate is that monasteries be established in every corner of Africa, to be centres of prayer and Orthodox spirituality, to be like the "lungs" of the Church.

After the exchange of commemorative gifts, the visitors were taken on a conducted tour of the Patriarchal Mansion and the Museums.