

## THE HISTORIC PONTIFIC COLLEGE "CAPRANICA" IN ROME

Thirty clergy and lay students accompanied by the Director and other ranking members and colleagues from the Vatican visited His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa in .

This pilgrimage of the Roman Catholic clergy is part of their getting to know the holy places of Egypt, the monasteries of the Coptic Church in the Nitrian desert, and, in , the Greek Orthodox pilgrimage sites as well as the Second throned Patriarchate in Alexandria.

They began with a tour of Cairo, the Patriarchal Monastery of St George, the Coptic Monasteries in the desert of Nitria, the Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria; they were told about the operation of the Patriarchal Academy "Athanasios the Great" in Alexandria, and held discussions with the first African students who had already arrived in Alexandria from Tanzania (Mwanza) and Zimbabwe (Harare and Bulawayo).

**On the morning of 3<sup>d</sup> October 2009**, His Beatitude welcomed the group from the Roman Catholic Church in the Throne Room and spoke to them of the work of the Patriarchate through the Missions in Africa.

The Roman Catholic clergy were amazed by the information given to them by His Beatitude and requested to learn more about the humanistic and social efforts especially regarding the children and health issues which are faced in Africa.

His Beatitude gave them all commemorative gifts, his love and the blessing of the Apostle Mark and spoke about the centuries old peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in the Land of the Nile, and he stressed that this is an example for coexistence between Christians and Muslims everywhere. He also informed them of the work of the upcoming Holy Synod and spoke to them of the Synodal System of the Orthodox Church. The event is particularly current as the 1<sup>st</sup> Synod of the Catholic Bishops of Africa gathers soon in the Vatican.

The elite guests, all of whom act as Secretaries and Executive Staff with Bishops and Directors of Service in the Roman Catholic Church, both within and outside of the Vatican (while at the same time completing their post graduate and doctorate studies at various Pontifical Universities around Rome), were taken on a conducted tour of the historic Patriarchal Library of which they knew a great deal, and showed enormous interest. They were also shown the Patriarchal and Sacristy (catacombs) which is under construction, as well as the Patriarchal palace and the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria.