

COMPLETION OF THE RENOVATION WORK ON THE HOLY PATRIARCHAL MONASTERY OF ST SAVVAS THE SANCTIFIED IN ALEXANDRIA

On 16th October 2009, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, went to the centuries old Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria, where he blessed the completion of the great effort of renovating the entire building complex of the Moanstery.

During the modest ceremony, which was attended by His Grace Spyridon of Kanopos, Hegumen of the Monastery, His Grace Savvas of Burundi and Rwanda and His Grace Gennadios of Nilopolis, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, the clergy of the Patriarchal Church of St Savvas as well as Messrs. Andreas Zaimis, former Minister and Efthymios Soulogiannis, Professor, the teachers and African students of the patriarchal Academy "St Athanasios the Great" and pious visitors, His Beatitude spoke of the historic journey of the Monastery and expressed gratitude to the Architect Mr A. M. Farah for the successful completion of the work, giving him the praise and pleasure of the Church of Alexandria.

His Beatitude then went to visit the Holy Parish of St Anthony of the Arab Orthodox Community of Alexandria where he conducted the service of the Sanctification of water for the beginning of the new catechism period for the many groups of Arab Orthodox Youth.

Addressing the youngsters, His Beatitude emphasized the

ceaseless interest in and love of the Church for them and thanked the Greek speaking Archimandrite Narkisso Gammo, responsible for the work among the youth of the Arabic speaking Orthodox Community, who also expressed the gratitude of the youth for the ceaseless paternal care of the Venerable Primate, as well as for the trust shown to him.

At noon on the same day His Beatitude attended a lunch hosted in his honour by Architect Mr. A. M. Farah.

Historical facts about the Holy patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified

The Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria and specifically the central church, before it became a Christian house of prayer, was dedicated to the god Mithra or, according to other witness, to the god Apollo. It was established as a Christian church, dedicated to the Holy Apostles or to the Apostle and Evangelist Mark around 318-320, when 40 Christian churches were established in Egypt by Imperial permission of Constantine the Great. During the next few years cells began being built and the settlement of monks around the church began too. Following the break away of the Christians of Egypt (copts) from the Alexandrian Church and the creation of the Coptic Church, the Monastery became the Seat of the Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria (circa 536).

Around the middle of the 7th century, the Monastery was destroyed by an earthquake and was rebuilt by sponsorship from a wealthy Alexandrian Christian named Savvas in honour of St Savva. The late Archbishop of Athens and university lecturer Chrysostomos Papadopoulos mentions that the Monastery was dedicated to St Savvas the Sanctified (+532) because the saint lived in Alexandria before he requested the quiet of the Monastery he established in Jerusalem.

During the Arab occupation of Egypt, the Monastery was set alight and was renovated around 889 at the time of Patriarch Michael of Alexandria by the intercession of Emperor Leon IV the Wise to Khalif el Moutamez. It was renovated from scratch by the holy Patriarch Ioakeim Panis (1487-1567). Also, following the burning of the monastery in 1652 and the loss of all the monks who buried in its ruins, the Monastery was rebuilt from the beginning (1676) by Patriarch Paisios (1657-1677).

During the French occupation Napoleon ordered it to be destroyed because of military priority which was then recalled following insistent resistance by Patriarch Parthenios II Pancosta (1788-1805).

This Monastery was also renovated in 1875 by Patriarch Sophronios IV (1870-1899) through generous sponsorship by the national benefactor George Averof. Small renovations were made by Patriarchs Fotios (1900-1925) and Christoforos II (1939-1967). The danger of the collapse of the building led Patriarch Nicholas VI (1968-1986) to the decision to demolish it, apart from the church, and the building of a new Monastery. The last renovations were done by the late Patriarch Petros VII (1997-2004) during the first years of his tenure as Patriarch.

During its historic route, the Monastery, apart from the Patriarchal Seat was also a cemetery for Patriarchs, clergy, monks, Orthodox and other Christians, a home for the poor, a hospital, clinic, school, quarantine centre, hostel and refuge.

Today, in the beautiful Holy Patriarchal Monastery, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, in continuing the tradition of his predecessor Meletios Pigas (1590-1601), the founder of the first Christian school of Alexandria in the grounds of the Monastery, following the Arab conquest, re-established and operates the

Patriarchal Academy "Athanasios the Great" which has a three-year study programme of agronomy, nursing, and theology, which is recognized by the Egyptian and Greek Governments, and at which African youth come to study, in order to fill the urgent needs of their compatriots, following their studies.