

# **FUNCTIONS OF THE ARABIC-SPEAKING ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN CAIRO**

There is a tradition that after the finding of the Precious Cross by St Helen, for Constantine the Great to be informed in Constantinople about this great event, from Jerusalem right to Constantinople they began to light signal fires in places. In this manner the joyful news arrived easily. Messengers at that time, with the transport available to them, needed a long time. Besides, there were many hazards from both land and sea that made travel particularly difficult.

In commemoration of this event, the Arabic-speaking Community of Cairo, every year on 14th September, organizes with the participation of the youth a wonderful function in the grounds of the Spiritual Centre. After the addresses and the awarding of honourable commendations and commemorative gifts to students who excelled in their schools, a young torchbearer enters the grounds and hands over the torch to His Eminence the Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo, who sets fire to a pile of wood. In the centre of the grounds where the function takes place, the Precious Cross has pride of place, in front of which a brief service takes place, at the end of which the Clergy present distribute the blessed basil, according to tradition. The function ends with the hosting of a traditional dinner for all present.

This function is dedicated to the youth, who participate in the worship of the Community, in Catechism gatherings and other activities of the two Parishes, the Dormition of the Theotokos in Heliopolis and the Holy Archangels in Daher and take place with the Venerable blessing and care of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa.

Present at this year's ceremony were His Eminence Nikodimos, Metropolitan of Memphis and Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo, His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Ermopolis Patriarchal Vicar for the Arabic speakers, the Clergy of Cairo, the Chairman of the Arabic-speaking Community of Cairo and others.

**Archimandrite Stefanos Soulimiotis**