

VISIT OF ACADEMICS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL ACADEMIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

On July 29th 2023 His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa, received at the Patriarchal See the visit of a large group of academics from the Association of Theological Academies of the Middle East and the Institute of Theology of Balamand, of the Patriarchate of Antioch, led by their Rector the Very Reverend Archimandrite Iakovos Kihalil, Professor of Biblical Theology, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Panagia Balamad.

During his address, His Beatitude referred to the glorious theological past of the Alexandrian Church, as well as to its current missionary and humanitarian work, saying among other things: "Welcome to the See of the Supreme Church of the City of Alexander the Great, whose Illuminator and Establisher is the second of the Evangelists, the Apostle and Evangelist Mark. Welcome to the land of the Nile, cradle of Christianity and creator of Theology that led the Church under heaven to the path of Truth, in the country where great Fathers and Teachers of the Faith lived and worked, who anointed the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of Alexandria, such as the President of the First Ecumenical Council Alexander, the theologians and pillars of our faith the Great Athanasios and Cyril.

We welcome you to the holy land of Egypt, whose famous Alexandrian Catechetical School of Pantainus, Clement and Origen promoted the link between Christian faith and Greek philosophy, where the vast deserts gave birth to hermetism, asceticism and definitively shaped Monasticism and its canons, through the spiritual struggles of Pachomius the Great, Anthony the Great, Saint Macarius, the Venerable Mary of

Egypt, as well as an innumerable army of holy Monastics, men and women.

We welcome you to God-walked Egypt, the place that offered safety from bloodthirsty Herod to the Infant Lord and Prince of Peace. May this peace always govern, in mutual respect and admirable cooperation, the relations between the Apostolic Thrones of Alexandria and Antioch, but also inter-church and inter-Christian relations in general...Aligning ourselves with this solid tradition of our Fathers, we optimistically contemplate the hopeful future, which is Africa, where we work tirelessly for a better tomorrow for its suffering children, flooded primarily by the light of the Gospel and the Resurrection of Christ”.

In his reply, the Very Reverend Rector Archbishop Iakovos Kihalil, referred extensively to the history and academic work of the Theological Institute of Balamand, as well as to the initiative to activate the Association of Theological Academies of the Middle East, while he expressed the awe of all the members of the group for the fact that they are in God-walked Egypt, the land of the Holy Fathers, the Holy Monastics and its thousands of Holy Martyrs An exchange of commemorative gifts followed, as well as a guided tour of the Patriarchal Library and the Archives.

Present during the visit were His Eminence Metropolitan Pantelimon of Naucratis, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate and His eminence Metropolitan Narcissus Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria.