

## Patriarch of Alexandria expresses gratitude to Greek government and the Church of Greece



On Sunday, 8 December 2024, Mr. Kyriakos Pierrakakis, the Greek Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, paid an official visit to the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Also present during the visit was His Eminence Metropolitan Symeon of Fthiotida, representing the Church of Greece and the President of its Holy Synod, His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece.

### Signing of Two Memoranda of Cooperation

The visit's primary purpose was the signing of two Memoranda of Cooperation:

#### Inclusion of African Students in Greek Ecclesiastical Education

The first memorandum, signed between the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Church of Greece, and the General Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Greek Ministry of Education, focuses on the inclusion of African youth in Greece's Ecclesiastical

Education. Under this agreement:

Local hierarchs of the Patriarchate in African countries will select candidates and facilitate the issuance of necessary travel documents.

The General Secretariat of Religious Affairs will oversee their enrollment and tuition-free education, issue entry and residency permits for Greece, and cover initial travel expenses.

The Church of Greece and local school councils will provide free accommodation and meals in the dormitories. A similar process will be followed for African clergy candidates attending seminaries.

#### Digitisation of the Patriarchate's Archival Material

The second memorandum, signed between the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the General Secretariat of Religious Affairs, and the General State Archives of Greece, aims to inventory, assess, and digitize the archival material of the Patriarchate.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and All Africa welcomed Minister Pierrakakis at the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of Saint Sabbas in Alexandria. During the Divine Liturgy, the Patriarch expressed his joy over the visit and highlighted the harmonious relationship between Greece and Egypt, which collaboratively supports the multifaceted mission of the venerable Patriarchate on the “continent of the future.”

He extended heartfelt thanks to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis for their unwavering support. Gratitude was also expressed to the Church of Greece and His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece for their continuous assistance in the demanding missionary work across Africa, which remains exclusively under the spiritual and pastoral jurisdiction of the Second Throne Patriarchate.

The Patriarch referenced the rich history of the Patriarchal Monastery of Saint Sabbas, noting its establishment in 536 AD after the schism between the Alexandrian Church and the Coptic Orthodox. He described it as the “heart” of the Patriarchate, housing relics of saintly predecessors, ascetics, and martyrs. He remarked on the decision in 2007 to continue the tradition of Patriarch Meletios Pegas (1590-1601) by re-establishing the Patriarchal School of Alexandria, “Saint Athanasios,” a two-year institution for African students preparing to serve in ecclesiastical provinces of their homelands.

The Patriarch thanked the Greek government for assigning Greek teachers to the community's schools in Alexandria.

Concluding the visit, Patriarch Theodore presented Minister Pierrakakis with a sacred icon of Saint Catherine the Great Martyr. He noted that the marble column

on which Saint Catherine was martyred is preserved in the Patriarchal Church of Saint Sabbas.













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