



## Meeting takes place between chairman of the DECR and representatives of the Church of India responsible for relations with the Russian Orthodox Church.



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On 24<sup>th</sup> February in Kottayam in India a meeting was held between the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony and members of the working group for the coordination of bilateral relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church.

Participating in the meeting were: the co-chairman of the working group the metropolitan of New York Zachariah Mar Nicholovos; the metropolitan of the diocese of Great Britain, Europe and Africa Abraham Mar Stephanos and the executive director of the Department for External Church Relations of the

Malankara Church Father Ashvin Fernadis.

Attending the meeting on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate were: the secretary of the working group and secretary at the DECR for inter-Christian relations hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov) and the secretary of the chairman of the DECR deacon Nikolai Vasin.

The participants of the meeting noted that the working group had made an importance impact on the development of ties between the two churches. It had been set up by the decisions of the holy synods of the two churches (protocol no.137 of the session of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023) after the visit to Russia of the ever-memorable primate of the Malankara Church His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Paulos II and his meeting with His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill in September of 2019. "Since the setting up of the working group in 2019 a number of projects have come to fruition in the academic, humanitarian, media and cultural spheres, in the sphere of church social ministry, the study of the traditions of Russian monasticism and other areas," emphasized metropolitan Mar Stephanos.

For his part the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony reminded those present of the student exchange programme that had become a traditional element of the bilateral dialogue. The metropolitan mentioned that nuns from the Virgin of Bethlehem Convent in the city of Ernakulam in India had stayed at the Convent of the Presentation of the Virgin in Tolga under the metropolitanate of Yaroslavl, with aim of studying the monastic experience of the Russian Orthodox Church and of applying it further in Indian monastic houses. Also of importance was the participation of the head of the Santula Trust hospital Father Eduard George Puttanila in the fifth international conference on the church's care of the mentally ill, projecting a contemporary view of religious experience as a norm and as a pathology and defining the limits of cooperation between the church and psychiatry. The conference was held at the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

In emphasizing the important of interaction at various international forums such as the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia, the chairman of the DECR expressed gratitude to the hierarchy of the Malankara Church for speaking out in defense of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that was enduring persecution at the hands of the Ukrainian authorities. Also noticeable was cooperation in the media sphere, a part of which was the filming in English for the Spas TV station a documentary on the life of the holy apostle Thomas and his legacy in India. The film was a success among audiences in both Russia and India. Growing too is the veneration among Indian Christians of Russian saints, in particular the blessed Matrona of Moscow, whose Life and prayer to whom have been translated into the Malayalam language.

A significant result of the developing interchurch relations was the visit to Russia of the primate of the

Malankara Church His Holiness the Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III and his meeting with His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill.

For his part metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos noted the importance of the present visit to India by the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, stressing that it was an importance event for the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church.

The sides then proceeded to discuss current and future projects that are being developed as part of the working group in cooperation with the structural subdivisions of both churches. Both agreed upon the need for further close coordination in working together.

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