First round of consultations between Russian Orthodox Church and Coptic Church held in Netherlands

On 20-24 January 2020, with a blessing of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Coptic Patriarch Tawadros II, the first round of bilateral theological consultations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church took place at the administrative center of the Coptic Church Diocese of Netherlands and Belgium in Lievelde, Netherlands.

The decision to begin these consultations was made by the third meeting of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church, which took place on May 27-31, 2019, in Cairo. The meetings are held to promote the work of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Churches, which actively worked in the period from 1985 to 1993. Consequently, there were special meetings the Joint Commission's working group, with the latest held on November 24-25, 2014 in Athens. It is underscored that the

consultations, which have begun between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church represent joint theological studies and are not aimed at concluding any bilateral theological agreements since such tasks can be posed only in the format of the pan-Orthodox – pre-Chalcedon dialogue. One of the important tasks of the consultations is also to consider together the most important challenges facing the both Churches today, including in the sphere of bioethics.

Participating in the meeting from the Moscow Patriarchate side were Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christian relations, Department for External Church Relations (DECR), Rev. Pavel Lizgunov, pro-rector for training, Moscow Theological Academy, and Deacon Sergiy Panteleyev, head of the Oriental studies office, MTA.

The Coptic Church was represented by Metropolitan Serapion of Los Angeles (co-chairman of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church) rector of the Ss Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria Seminary in Los Angeles; Bishop Kyrillos; Rev. Paul Abdelsaed and Kyrillos Ibrahim; and Hieromonk Daud el-Anthony, representative of the Coptic Church in Russia. The participants were greeted by Metropolitan Arsenius, administrator of the Coptic Church diocese of Netherlands and Belgium, and Rev. Hildo Bos, secretary of the Russian Orthodox Church's diocese of Hague.

The starting point of the consultations is a study of final documents of the Joint Commission, including those of non-official meetings held prior to its establishment in the period from1964-1971. The meeting will also consider the theological problems of current importance for the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Churches, including issues concerning Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, sacraments, canon law, veneration of icons and relics of saints, and the monastic tradition and its contribution to the theological thought.

After the meeting, Metropolitan Arsenius made a presentation of the Coptic diocese in Netherlands devoted to its history and today's life. This diocese has functioned since the early 20th century, carrying out for many years an active ministry in the secular society of Western Europe. It includes over ten parishes and church centers uniting both the Coptic diaspora in Netherlands and representatives of other ethnic groups living in this country.

The second round of consultations is to be held in autumn 2020 in Russia.

DECR Communication Service

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/45730/