Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East holds its third meeting



On 23-27 October 2018, the third meeting of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East took place at the Novodevichy Convent of the Holy Resurrection in St. Petersburg.

The Moscow Patriarchate's delegation included Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov, co-chairman of the Commission; Archimandrite Stefan (Sado), chief librarian of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christian relations of the Department for External Church relations; and Mr. Sergei Alferov, DECR staff member. Representing the Assyrian Church of the East were Bishop Mar Awa Royel of California, secretary of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East, co-chairman of the Commission; Cor-Bishop George Kanon Toma,

cleric of St. Andrew's Church in Glenview, Illinois, USA; Priest Ephraim Alkhas, personal assistant to the secretary of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East; and Deacon Roland Bidzhamov, cleric of the Assyrian diocese of Northern Iraq and CIS.

As the Commission members noted, the academic contacts between the two Churches have been successfully developing. As part of the student exchange project, in autumn 2018 an Assyrian student was admitted to the Moscow Theological Academy. On 5-11 October 2018, the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies organized in Russia the first Summer Institute for a delegation of young representatives of the Assyrian Church of the East.

The coordination of inter-Christian cooperation aimed at rendering aid to the suffering Christians in the Middle East remains a major aspect of the bilateral relations. Having emphasized an important role of the Working Group for Rendering Aid to the Population of Syria of the Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations under the President of the Russian Federation, the Commission members acknowledged as a task of great significance the promotion of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the traditional religious communities of Iraq, including the oldest one – Assyrian Church of the East. A practical step towards this goal was a working visit of Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov) and Cor-Bishop Samano Odisho, rector of the Assyrian church of St. Mary in Moscow, to Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on 25-30 March 2018.

The participants in the meeting expressed their deep concern over the alarming developments pertaining to the ecclesial situation in Ukraine and emphasized that it could only be settled in strict compliance with the canons of the Orthodox Church. The Commission members expressed their hope that the problems would be peacefully resolved in the spirit of fraternal Christian love, as was stated in a joint communiqué adopted at the results of the meeting.

On October 24, a colloquium on theology, history and modern life of the Assyrian Church of the East was held at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. Taking part in it were the Commission members, as well the faculty and students of the Theological Academy.

Addressing all those present, Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov told about the current state of bilateral relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. Among the reports presented at the colloquium were: "Historical Contacts between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Russian Orthodox Church" by Bishop Mar Awa Royel; "The Sacrament of the Holy Leaven in Assyrian Church of the East" by Cor-Bishop George Kanon Toma; "Mar Babai the Great and St. Maxim the Confessor: Christology in the Byzantine and East Syrian Traditions" by Priest Ephraim Alkhas; and "Assyrian Church of the East in Russia in the Modern Times" by Deacon Roland Bidzhamov.

A joint communiqué was adopted at the conclusion of the colloquium. The Holy Synods of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East will be informed of the results of the meeting.

The Commission will hold its next meeting in the territory of the Assyrian Church of the East in 2019.

DECR Communication Service

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/47021/