Delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church visits Ethiopia



On 1-4 March 2018, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church visited Ethiopia to discuss with representatives of the Church of Ethiopia various issues pertaining to the resumption of active contacts between the two Churches.

The delegation included Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christian relations of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and Deacon Dimitry Serov, executive secretary of the Student Exchange Commission.

On March 1, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church met with representatives of the Patriarchate of Ethiopia: Bishop Aregawi Haile Maryam Melesse of South Gonder; Bishop Philipos

Ashageré of South Omo; Priest Elias Abreha, general manager of Tinsae Publishing Organization; Archimandrite Kaletsdiq Mulugeta, head of the Foreign Relations Department; and Deacon Michael Feleke, director of Broadcasting Service Agency.

The participants in the meeting discussed prospects of bilateral cooperation in the follow-up of the visit of the delegation of the Church of Ethiopia to Russia in November 2017. The agenda of the meeting included such issues as plight of Christians subjected to persecution in various regions of the world, upholding of traditional morality in the present-day society, promotion of academic contacts, sharing of experience in social ministry and in working with the mass media, as well as youth ministry and Church-society relations.

On March 2, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church was received by His Holiness Abune Mathias of Ethiopia. His Holiness conveyed cordial greetings to the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, and emphasized that he highly appreciated his efforts aimed at consolidating the Christian world in the face of common challenges. The head of the Church of Ethiopia noted with satisfaction the progress in negotiations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Church of Ethiopia aimed at intensifying bilateral cooperation. His Holiness also shared his recollections of the visit to Ethiopia of His Holiness Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia.

Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov) thanked the head of the Ethiopian Church for the warm welcome and conveyed to him greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia with the 5th anniversary of his Patriarchal enthronement. As Fr. Stefan noted, the resumption of the inter-church contacts has coincided with the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Ethiopia. This topic was discussed in November 2017, during the meeting between Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and Mr. Grum Abay Teshome, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Russian Federation.

On March 3, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church attended the divine service at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa celebrated by His Holiness Patriarch Mathias together with the assembly of bishops of the Church of Ethiopia, as well as a ceremony that marked the 5th anniversary of His Holiness' enthronement.

The delegation members also met with other hierarchs of the Church of Ethiopia, visited local monasteries, theological schools, a publishing centre, church workshops and social facilities.

The visit allowed the guests from Russia to learn more about various activities of the Church of Ethiopia.

It should be noted that Christians in Ethiopia live in difficult circumstances due to the geopolitical situation of the country, socio-economic crisis and other aggravating factors. However, the Ethiopian people preserve the faith that they received in the apostolic times, and are willing to openly cooperate with the entire Christendom. The bearer of the ancient Christian tradition on the African continent, the Church of Ethiopia in recent years has been actively carrying out missionary work among tribes and ethnic groups living in the south-west of the country.

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