A delegation of the Ethiopian Church on a visit to Moscow



From November 14 – 18, 2017 – With the blessing of Patriarch-Catholicos Abuna Mathias of Ethiopia and at the invitation of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, a delegation of the Ethiopian Church has come to Moscow for a working visit. The Primate of the Ethiopian Church has sent to Patriarch Kirill a letter expressing interest in the resumption of active cooperation that existed between the two Churches earlier. The delegation includes Bishop Abba Philipos of South Omo Diocese, and Priest Elias Abraha, Manager of the Ethiopian Church's Printing Department.

As part of their trip, the guests visited the Sofrino Art Production, where they were received by its general director Ye. Parkhaev. They discussed plans for establishing cooperation between Sofrino and appropriate structures of the Ethiopian Church. The guests were taken on a tour of the factory to see the wide range of the Sofrino output.

The delegation also visited the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR).

With the blessing of Metropolitan Hilarion, talks with the guest were held by Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations. The sides discussed a possible agenda for bilateral cooperation, which is fairly broad as it concerns such areas as common concern for the situation of Christians who are persecuted in various world regions, advocacy for basic traditional morals in the modern society, youth service, and development of academic contacts. Especially important is the exchange of experience in social service and church-society relations.

Among the traditional areas of cooperation between the two Churches, which intensively developed in previous years, was the practice of students exchange. In this connection, the program of the visit also included a visit to the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies (CMI). Hieromonk Ioann (Kopeikin), SMI pro-rector for training, told the guests about the work of this educational institution of the Russian Orthodox Church and the work of the Moscow Patriarchate commission for regulating students exchange.

The delegation of the Ethiopian Church also visited the St. Sergius Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Moscow Theological Academy, the Convent of the Protecting Veil at Khotkovo, the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour and the Patriarchal Convent of the Protecting Veil in Moscow. During their visit, the guests were accompanied by R. Akhmatkhanov and S. Alferov, DECR staff members.

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The Ethiopian Church is part of the family of Oriental or 'pre-Chalcedonian' Churches along with the Coptic, Eritrean, Armenian Apostolic, Syriac Jacobite and Malankara Churches. It was granted autocephaly in 1959, before which it was an autonomous part of the Coptic Patriarchate. Today the Ethiopian Church is not only the largest of the Churches of pre-Chalcedonian tradition, but also one of the largest Christian communities in the world; the number of its faithful exceeds 65 million who live in both Ethiopia and in diaspora, predominantly in the USA and Canada. Christianity came to Ethiopia as early as the 1st century, when St. Philip preached in those lands.

The history of relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Church goes back to the 18th century, when the first contacts were established between the Russian and Ethiopian (Abyssinian) Empires. The most intensive inter-church contacts happened in the period from 1950s to 1980s especially through the efforts of then-head of the DECR, Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod. In that period there was an intensive exchange of official delegations, including on the highest level, and Ethiopian students were sent to the Moscow Patriarchate educational institutions. Today these relations are being resumed. In September 2011, a meeting took place in Addis Ababa between Metropolitan Hilarion and then-Patriarch Mathias Abune Paulos.

DECR Communication Service

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