



Heads of the Orthodox Churches of Alexandria and Russia visit Monastery of St. George in Cairo

On 12 April 2010, His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and All Africa and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia arrived in the Monastery of St. George.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill were accompanied by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat; and six hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria.

The Primates of the Orthodox Churches of Alexandria and Russia prayed before an icon of St. George the Victorious in the main church of the monastery.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill addressed His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore and all those present with the following words:

"Your Beatitude, dear fathers, brothers and sisters! Christ is risen!

"It is the third day of our stay in the ancient land of Egypt. Your Beatitude, and your assistants – bishops, clerics, and laymen extend cordial hospitality and brotherly love to us. During these days we made sure that centuries-long bonds of love between our two Patriarchates remain strong and indissoluble. I am confident that we shall always cherish the memory of these radiant days we have spent together here, at the ancient holy places.

"We would like to leave a visible sign on this land reflecting the atmosphere of our joyous brotherly communion so that looking at a visible testimony and praying before it we could recall fraternal love that binds our Churches. Therefore I ask you, Your Beatitude, to receive a set of bells for this holy place as a gift from the Russian Orthodox Church. By God's grace, the casting of bells is being revived in Russia. The factories come into being, and many newly built and restored churches are being adorned with the bells cast at these factories.

"The bells that we are presenting you today with brotherly love were made at the factory in the city of Voronezh. At our request, generous people from the St. Gregory the Theologian Foundation paid for them. This Foundation unites Orthodox people and does many good things. Let the sound of these bells remind us of our brotherly love and of indissoluble bond between us. Bells are to summon people for

prayer, and we hope that the sound of these bells will attract people to this holy monastery where the great Orthodox sacred relics are kept. Let these bells remind us that in spite of a long distance dividing us geographically we stay together and that our fraternal contacts and our brotherly love have a real and visible expression. May God grant our Churches to be in solidarity with one another both in joys and sorrows and be strong as ever to extend a helping hand to one another when necessary.

"I thank you once again, Your Beatitude, for love extended to us during our stay in Egypt and for the conclusion of our wonderful visit to the Patriarchate of Alexandria at this holy place. You know that St. George the Victorious is depicted on the Moscow coat of arms. I prayed for my capital city, for my country, and my Church. I also prayed to the Lord to keep us in fraternal love through the prayers of St. George."

The Primates of the Orthodox Churches of Alexandria and Russia proceeded to the chapel where St. George's chains are kept. His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore offered prayers for the health of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill came up to the bells presented to the Orthodox Church of Alexandria as a gift. The bells were cast at the order of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations at the "Vera" factory in Voronezh with financial support of the St. Gregory the Theologian Foundation. Seven bells will adorn the belfry of the Monastery of St. George. The Primates listened to bell ringing.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill sang "Memory Eternal" to the late Primates of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria buried at the crypt of the Church of St. George.

They visited the Church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God built, according to legend, in the place where the Ever-Virgin Mary and the Infant God and Joseph the Betrothed lived after fleeing to Egypt. The Primates also visited the Russian tombs at the cemetery. Requiem Litia was said in the restored Russian chapel.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore addressed His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and noted an active part played in the restoration of the chapel by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Arab Republic of Egypt, M. Bogdanov, and the rector of the Metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Cairo, archimandrite Leonid (Gorbachev).