



Patriarch Kirill begins his visit to Patriarchate of Alexandria

His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, arrived in Egypt on April 10, 2010.

He is accompanied by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Patriarchal Administration, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, Archpriest Andrey Milkin, head of the Patriarchal Protocol Service, Archpriest Vladimir Vigilyansky, head of the Patriarchal Press Service, Rev. Igor Yakimchuk, DECR acting secretary for inter-Orthodox relations, Rev. George Kirindas, head of the DECR protocol section, Hieromonk Antony Sevriuk, head of the Patriarch's personal secretariat, Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman, V. Legoida, head of the Synodal information department, M. Kuksov, Patriarch's secretary.

The welcoming party at el-Nouzha airport included His Beatitude Theodore II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, Metropolitan Kallinikos of Pelusium, Bishop Gabriel of Mareotis and Hegumen Leonid Gorbachev, representative of the Patriarch of Moscow to the Patriarch of Alexandria. Among those who came to meet Patriarch Kirill were also Russian Ambassador to Egypt M. Bogdanov, Russian General Consul in Alexandria D. Kurakov and other officials.

From the airport the Primate of the Alexandrian and Russian Orthodox Churches proceeded to the Cathedral of the Annunciation.

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The Patriarchate of Alexandria is one of the oldest Local Orthodox Churches. It was founded by St. Mark, the first bishop of Alexandria, about the year 42 A. D. For the first time the head of the Church of

Alexandria was named Pope in the 3d century; this title was generally used by St. Athanasius the Great. Until the Second Ecumenical Council, which elevated the chair of Constantinople, St. Mark, the head of the Church, occupied the second place in the diptych.

The present 116th Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria Theodore (Horeftakis) represented the Church of Alexandria in Odessa from 1985 to 1990. As Patriarch, he visited the Russian Orthodox Church in October 2007 and in February 2009 for the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill.

At present, the Patriarchate of Alexandria has 26 dioceses embracing the whole of the African continent, 35 bishops, with two of them retired, and over one million believers.

Egypt is divided into 4 dioceses, those of Memphis, Pelusium, Ptolemais and Ermouplis, with the bishop of the latter taking pastoral care of the Arabic-speaking Orthodox Christians in Egypt.

Two out of the five Patriarchal vicars are patriarchal administrators ('epitroposes') in Cairo – Bishop Nikodemos of Nitria and in Alexandria – Bishop Gabriel of Mareotis. Bishop Genadios of Nilopolis acts as chief secretary of the Holy Synod.

The total number of churches and prayer houses is about 1000, the number of clergy is about 500. The liturgy is celebrated in over 50 languages.

Alexandria produced great saints and teachers of the Church who founded the famous Alexandrian theological tradition, among them Clement of Alexandria (d. 216) and Origen (d. 254), St. Athanasius the Great (d. 373) and Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444). The Church of Alexandria is also the cradle of monasticism. Among its monks were Sts. Anthony the Great (d. 349), the founder of monasticism, Pachomius the Great (d. 348), the founder of cenobitic monasticism, Paisius the Great (d. 400) and many others.

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