Delegation of monastics of the Coptic Church visits Orthodox holy places in Moscow



Fr om August 24 to 26, 2021, a delegation of abbots and monks of the Coptic Church monasteries, who are on a visit to Russia at the invitation of His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, visited churches and monasteries in Moscow.

The program began with a visit to the Novospasski Monastery (the New Monastery of the Saviour), where they were warmly welcomed by the father superior - Metropolitan Dionisy of Voskresensk, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate and the first vicar of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Metropolitan Dionisy personally took the guests fr om Egypt on a tour of the monastery, speaking about its historical sights, including the burial-vault of the Romanov noblemen. The pilgrims venerated the main shrines of the monastery - the miracle-working Icon of the Mother of God the Queen of All, the Icon of the Saviour Not Made with Hands and the Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God Hodegetria, as well as prayerfully honored the memory of the monastery's former abbot Archbishop Alexis (Frolov), as well as renowned monks and those who suffered martyrdom there in 1920s-1930s during the godless persecutions.

In honour of the delegation, Metropolitan Dionisy gave a reception. He greeted the guests on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, saying, 'We are very glad to welcome to Russia our fellow-Christians from Egypt - the blessed

land that gave birth to great founders of monasticism. The heritage of the fathers of the Egyptian Patericon is of special importance for our spiritual tradition. The Coptic Church, just as the Russian Church, is also a Church of martyrs and confessors of the Christian faith, including those who martyred in the 20th and 21st centuries. The blood shed by martyrs is the power of our gospel witness today'.

The head of the Egyptian delegation, Bishop Bigol, Abbot of the Elmeharic Monastery in Asyut, warmly thanked His Eminence Dionisy for the warm welcome and asked to convey greetings and good wishes of the Primate of the Coptic Church, His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II, to His Holiness Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. 'His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II gives a considerable attention to the development to relations with Christian Churches in the whole world. However, of the greatest importance for us today is dialogue with the great Russian Orthodox Church, the guardian of the faith and spirituality of Holy Rus'. The Russian spiritual tradition is very close to our Coptic tradition and we can always feel this closeness; it stands above the borders dividing us', he said.

The Egyptian delegation presented Metropolitan Dionisy with an Icon of the Holy Family, who, as is well known, had to stay in Egypt for about three years to escape from Herod's persecutions. About six months out of these years, the Divine Infant, the Host Holy Virgin and righteous Joseph stayed in a cave in Al Muharraq, wh ere a monastery was built later, of which Bishop Bigol is the abbot. The brethren of the Novospassky Monastery were also presented with Icons of the Ven. Macarius the Great and other Egyptian saints.

The guests visited the Patriarchal Convent of the Intercession, which became the place of their accommodation during their stay in Moscow. The delegation venerated the honourable relics of Blessed Matrona of Moscow, who in recent years has become known and venerated in Oriental Churches. They were also introduced to the work of the orphanage for girls and the convent's farm. Bishop Bigol and his party were given a hearty welcome by the mother superior of the convent, Sister Feofania (Miskina) and the nuns.

The same day the Coptic delegation visited the Sretensky Monastery in Moscow. The father superior of the monastery, Hieromonk Ioann (Ludishchev) introduced the guests to the history and today's life of the monastery and showed its great shrines among which is a particle of the relics of the Ven. Mary of Egypt. The fellowship continued during a common meal after which the Egyptian delegation visited the Sretensky Theological Seminary.

On August 25, the guests from Egypt came to the Ss Martha and Mary Convent of Mercy, in which they were given a warm welcome by Mother Superior Elisabeth (Pozdnyakova) and the sisters. They venerated it shrines kept in the cathedral church and were introduced to the convent's social projects.

The guests also visited the churches of the Moscow Kremlin, Red Square, the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour, the Vysokopetrovsky Monastery (High Monastery of St Peter) and met with a group of students of Moscow higher education institutes - representatives of the Coptic community of Egypt.

In the evening of the same day, the delegation visited the Donskoy Monastery, wh ere the representatives of Patriarch Tawadros II were received by the abbot, Metropolitan Feognost of Kashira, chairman of the Synodal Department for Monasteries and Monkhood of the Russian Orthodox Church. His Eminence cordially welcomed the delegation from Egypt pointing to the importance of continuing such visits for a more detailed mutual introduction to the history, today's life and rich spiritual experience of the Coptic and Russian monastic traditions.

The guests visited the monastery necropolis and the Great Cathedral in which they venerated the Don Icon of the Mother of God and the relics of St. Tikhon the Patriarch of All Russia.

In the morning of August 26, the delegation visited the St. Daniel Monastery in Moscow and venerated its shrines. They were warmly welcomed by the abbot, Bishop Alexy of Solnechnogorsk, with whom the guests had a long talk.

After that the guests went to the Metropolis of Tver to continue their visit to Russia. They will also visit holy places of the Metropolises of Novgorod and St. Petersburg and some monasteries in the Russian North.

The delegation included His Grace Bishop Bigol, Abbot of the Elmeharic Monastery in Asyut – head of the delegation; His Grace Bishop Sawerous, Abbot of the St. Tomas & St. Baktor Monastery in El Khataba; His Grace Bishop Metawas, Abbot of the St. Virgin Mary Mountain Monastery in Akhmim; His Grace Bishop Aghabios, Regent of the St. Bishoy the Great Monastery in Wadi El Natrun; His Grace Bishop Mekhail, General Vicar in Cairo; Rev. Hieromonk Kyrillos Anba Bishoy, Secretary to His Holiness Pope and Patriarch Tawadros II (St. Bishoy Monastery in Wadi El Natrun); Rev. Hieromonk Tawadros Elmoharraqy, Elmeharic Monastery in Asyut; Rev. Hieromonk Dawoud El Antony, Representative of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the Russian Federation; Monk Macarius El Thomasy, St. Tomas & St. Baktor Monastery in El Khataba; Monk Youssef El Akhmimy, St. Virgen Mary Mountain Monastery in Akhmim; Monk Botros El Makary, St. Macarius the Great Monastery in Wadi El Natrun; Monk Zeus El Makary, St. Macarius the Great Monastery in Wadi El Natrun; Monk Mercurius El Makary, St. Macarius the Great Monastery in Wadi El Natrun; Monk Mercurius El Makary, St. Macarius the Great Monastery in Wadi El Natrun; Monk Markos El Makari, monk of St Macarius the Great Monastery; Dr. Anton Milad, Special Representative of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate.

During their stay in Moscow, the guests from the Coptic Church were accompanied by Hieromonk Stephen (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian Relations; Hieromonk Daud el-Antoni, representative of the Coptic Church in Moscow; and Hierodeacon Peter (Akhmatkhanov), S. G. Alferov and D. E. Arakelian, staff members of the DECR.

DECR Communication Service

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