Third round of negotiations held in Egypt on developing academic cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church



Fr om October 11-17, 2021, the third round of negotiations was held in Egypt on the development of cooperation in the academic sphere between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Coptic Church as part of the work of the Commission for Bilateral Dialogue.

With a blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the delegation was led by Bishop Siluan of Petergof, rector of St. Petersburg Theological Academy. The delegation included Hieromonk Stephen (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christian relations and secretary of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church, Department for External Church Relations (DECR) of the Moscow Patriarchate; Rev. Pavel Lizgunov, pro-rector for training, Moscow Theological Academy; Archpriest Vladimir Khulap, pro-rector for training, St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Archpriest Dimitry Yurevich, head of the Chair of Bible Studies, St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Hieromonk Bartholomew (Magnitsky), head of the Chair of Ancient Languages, St. Petersburg Theological Academy; Deacon Sergiy Panteleyev, head of the Oriental studies, Moscow Theological Academy; S. I. Sudosa, head of the protocol section, St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and I. Chernykh, a post-graduate student, St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

The delegation visited the leading theological schools of the Coptic Church and met with their leaders and students. In Cairo in particular, they visited the Coptic St. Athanasius of Alexandria Seminary, where they were welcomed by its rector, Bishop Michael, the First Patriarchal Vicar in Cairo. The guests were taken on a tour of lecture halls and classes and were introduced to the training process. In the new assembly hall, a discussion took place on the process of implementation of the agreements reached at the previous round of the negotiations, which took place in November 2019 in Russia, and on further plans of academic cooperation between the two Churches.

The following day, the Moscow Patriarchate delegation visited the Institute of Coptic Studies, where they negotiated with its director, Dr Iskhak Ibrahim Agban and the faculty. They were also introduced to the area of scientific researches made in the Coptic Churches and the development of church art.

In the third negotiation place, the Theological Academy of the Coptic Church, the negotiation point was cooperation between the higher stages of theological education in the two Churches.

After that, the delegation visited one of the largest seminaries in Egypt located in the El Muharraq Monastery of the Most Holy Mother of God in the Assiut Province. The guests were welcomed by its abbot, Bishop Bigoul, who remembered his recent visit to Russia in August-September 2021 as leader of a delegation of monks of the Coptic Church. The guests also met with the leaders and students of the seminary located in the monastery and with the monastery brethren. They discussed the similarity of the education systems in the Russian and Coptic Churches and the common monastic heritage based on the tradition of St. Anthony the Great.

The delegation visited the main church of the monastery founded on the place where, according to the tradition of the Coptic Church, the Holy Family stayed for over six months during their flight to Egypt. According to the version established in Egypt, it was the place where the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed, “there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt” (Is. 19:19).

The delegation also visited shrines in Cairo including the church of Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus, the cave church at the place where the Holy Family stopped, the church of Great Martyr Barbara, the al-Muharraq (Hanging) church and the Convent of St. Gregory the Victor. The delegation was warmly welcomed in the Monastery of St. Anthony the Great and the Monastery of St. Paul of Thebes, wh ere the guests were given a solemn welcome by the abbot, Bishop Daniel, assistant to the Coptic Patriarch for monasteries and monkhood.

The delegation was accompanied by members of the Working Group for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church, Bishop Cyril, vicar of the diocese of Los Angeles, and Hieromonk Benjamin, a member of El-Muharraq monastic community and pro-rector for educational work of the Coptic theological Seminary in Cairo.

DECR Communication Service

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