Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate meets with Coptic Patriarch



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On April 29, a delegation of monastics fr om the Russian Orthodox Church led by Metropolitan Dionisiy of Voskresensk, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, visited the residence of Coptic Patriarchs in Cairo and met with His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II.

The Primate of the Coptic Church heartily welcomed the Moscow Patriarchate delegation and emphasized the importance of fraternal relations between Christians of Russia and Egypt.

“Please convey my warm greetings and cordial wishes to my beloved brother, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’. I am deeply moved by constant kind attention of His Holiness to Christians

in Egypt and to our faithful in Russia. It is gratifying to know that they are under the incessant fatherlike care of the Primate of the great Russian Orthodox Church. I thank God for the opportunity granted to me today to receive high representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. I am very glad that good relations between our Churches and peoples have existed from olden times, being determined by the true Christian love filled with the light of the Resurrection of Christ. Living through difficult times, we are called as never before to extend and strengthen our relationship."

His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros highly appreciated the work done by the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church and bilateral initiatives it carries out, including the exchange of monastic delegations that holds a special place.

"I consider the Commission's work very important as it maintains promising and mutually enriching cooperation to the glory of God. Contacts between our monastics are particularly important because the ancient living tradition of faith is being preserved thanks to the witness they are bearing. Therefore we are happy that you, our Russian brothers and sisters in Christ are visiting ancient Egyptians abodes. History of many of them dates back to the 4th century – the time of the earthly life of the founders of Christian monasticism."

His Holiness told the guests about the life of the Coptic Church at present. Its Egyptian flock numbers more than fifteen million, plus two million in diaspora. There are over one hundred Coptic dioceses in the world. Becoming even more important for the church ministry is the work with children and the youth, including young families on which the future of the nation depends.

Metropolitan Dionisiy of Voskresensk conveyed greetings and good wishes from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' to His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II and expressed gratitude for warm hospitality always accorded to the church delegations from Russia. He noted that it was his privilege as the chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate and the first Patriarchal vicar to come to Egypt for the first time as head of the delegation of Russian monastics and meet the Primate of the Coptic Church.

"Egypt, sanctified by the Most Holy Theotokos, the Lord and the Righteous Joseph, is a holy land for all Christians. It is the cradle of monasticism and homeland of its founders. The Russian Orthodox Church has always held spiritual experience of Egyptian zealots in veneration, but today she is getting acquainted with it anew. We see in your country not only ancient roots of Christian faith, but the living Coptic Church which remains faithful to its heritage and brings good fruits to our Lord. Egyptian Christianity has given the multitude of zealots to the world, and in modern times your faithful continue to set examples of holiness, including martyrdom and profession of faith, bringing Paschal joy of the Resurrection of Christ to the world and generously sharing His love with us. We felt brotherly love and hospitality as soon as we set foot on the Egyptian land," said the chancellor of the Moscow

Patriarchate.

He noted a lot of potential for further strengthening of friendly and trust-based relationships between the two Churches that have been actively developing in the recent decade with direct involvement of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II. Metropolitan Dionisiy continued to say that it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the Commission for Dialogue set up in 2015 with the blessing of the Primates of the two Churches. This Commission carries out unique projects in scholarly, theological, administrative, media, social, youth and other spheres pertaining to the church ministry in today's world. A special place in this fruitful cooperation belongs to mutual visits of the delegations of monastics to Egypt and Russia. Metropolitan Dionisiy shared personal reminiscences of his meetings with the Coptic delegations in Moscow and expressed his hope for successful continuation of cooperation.

"We will expect your delegations in Russia with love. Their members are always welcome guests of the Moscow Patriarchate." His Eminence emphasized.

He thanked His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros for the Coptic Church's care for the Russian-speaking Orthodox faithful living in Egypt, especially for letting them use a church complex in Cairo for their religious needs and an opportunity to regularly celebrate at the Coptic churches in Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh. Metropolitan Dionisiy noted that this assistance is highly valued at present as the Patriarchal Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, which centre is located in the capital of Egypt, is conducting active work in African countries.

"I would like to assure you that this work will further consolidate our friendship and cooperation in future," the Metropolitan added.

The Moscow Patriarchate gives every assistance to the Coptic faithful living in Russia. Many of them are getting higher education at educational institutions in over thirty regions of the country. Also, there is a parish of the Coptic Church in Moscow.

"We are happy that a considerable community of your faithful lives in our country. Hundreds of Coptic Christians are studying at the best Russian universities, situated anywhere from St. Petersburg to Barnaul in Siberia. With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill the Russian Orthodox Church is in constant touch with these young people and with hieromonk Dawood El Antony, representative of Your Holiness in Russia," said Metropolitan Dionisiy.

He expressed profound gratitude to the Primate of the Coptic Church for understanding the Moscow Patriarchate's position in connection with the situation around Ukraine and for the recent letter of His

Holiness Patriarch Tawadros in defence of the shrines and the brethren of the Kiev Lavra of the Caves.

"We highly appreciate that the Coptic Church is acutely aware of the responsibility of her ministry to God and has consistently declined any contact with representatives of the Ukrainian schism. It was vividly manifested during its leader's visit to Egypt earlier last month. Millions of our faithful, including our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, thank and deeply respect Your Holiness and your flock for such a firm position," said the chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate.

He underscored a particular importance of strengthening active cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Coptic Church at international platforms, including the World Council of Churches. A remarkable example of such cooperation was given at the 11th WCC General Assembly held on August 31-September 8, 2022, as representatives of the Coptic Church spoke out against the unfounded attacks on the Russian Orthodox Church and attempts to impose discriminatory measures on her.

The chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate emphasized that full context and agenda of this aspect of cooperation were much wider and continued to say: "There are very dangerous tendencies to thrust another understanding of the principles of morality on the world, to justify the religious-based persecutions and even to provoke them. Serving as a tool of these attacks are attempts to sow discord and schism among Christians, to deprive them of the joy of brotherly contacts and of an opportunity to proclaim God's truth with one mouth on the earth. We can counteract these tendencies only by preserving and strengthening our unity, by combining efforts in defence of morality and our spiritual and cultural heritage, and of the right to have one's own view on the events happening in the world."

Discussed during a long talk were other topics of mutual interest.

At the end of the meeting the participants exchanged souvenirs.

Taking part in the meeting on the part of the Moscow Patriarchate were Bishop Arseniy of Yuriev, vicar of the Novgorod diocese; hegumeness Iuliania (Kaleda), deputy head of the Synodal department for monasteries and monasticism and abbess of the Zachatyevsky convent in Moscow; hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations and secretary of the Commission for dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church; archimandrite Mitrofan (Pismensky), abbot of St. Anthony of Leokhnovo hermitage and dean of the monasteries in the Novgorod diocese; hegumen Damaskin (Leonov), abbot of the Dormition monastery in Staritsa, Tver metropolia; hieromonk Amvrosiy (Zhelyabovsky), abbot of the hierarchal metochion at the church of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple, the former Holy Trinity Makariev monastery in Kalyazin, Tver metropolia; hieromonk Pavel (Gelyastanov), dean of the Novospassky monastery; hieromonk David (Legeida), head

of the scete of the Smolensk icon of the Holy Theotokos and precentor of the choir of the brethren of the Valaam monastery of the Transfiguration; Rev. Ioann Ignatov, a cleric of the Novospassky monastery; hierodeacon German (Murog), assistant to the hegumen of the Valaam monastery; hierodeacon Petr (Akhmatkhanov) of St. Daniel's stauropegic monastery in Moscow and a DECR staff member; sister Ioannikia (Zhdanova) of the Zachatyevsky convent; monk Mark (Zaikov), director of "The Light of Valaam" religious and educational centre; monk Afanasiy (Nikolayev) of the Information department of the Valaam monastery; A. Bespoldenov, a novice of the Novospassky monastery; and N. Pikulev, a subdeacon of Metropolitan Dionisiy.

Attending the meeting was also Rev. Alexiy Mashkov, rector of the Russian Orthodox Church parishes in Egypt.

The Coptic side was represented by hieromonk Kyrillos Anba Bishoy, secretary to the Patriarch; hieromonk Dawood El Antony, representative of the Coptic Church in Russia; Dr. Anton Milad, adviser to the Coptic Patriarch; Ms Barbara Soliman, director of the Office for projects and relations; and other employees of the Patriarchate.

Metropolitan Dionisiy and members of the delegation visited the Cathedral of St. Mark located on the territory of the Patriarchal residence and venerated the righteous relics of the enlightener of the Egyptian land resting in the crypt and relics of St. Athanasius of Alexandria.

Also, the delegation of monastics from Russia visited the Church of Ss Peter and Paul located in the vicinity of St. Mark's and saw a museum exposition dedicated to the new holy martyrs of the Coptic Church.

That same day, the guests from Russia visited the Ss Sergius and Bacchus church in Old Cairo with the crypt wh ere the Holy Family rested at the end of their journey into Egypt, the famous Hanging church (El Muallaqah), the church of St. Barbara, the convent of St. George, and the Coptic museum.

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