Delegation of Egyptian monks visits the holy sites of Moscow



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A delegation of abbots and inmates from the Egyptian monasteries of the Coptic Church visited from 21st to 22nd of August the monasteries and churches of Moscow. They were in the Russian capital at the invitation of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill.

The delegation was received at the Saint Peter's High Monastery by the abbot of the monastery and auxiliary bishop to His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill, chairman of the Synodal Missionary Department and bishop of Lukhovitsy Euthemius. The bishop greeted the guests on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: "It is with great joy that I greet our dear brothers from the Coptic Church in the Russian capital of Moscow. It is especially valuable to us that we are greeting representatives of the

ancient monastic houses of the Christian world and bearers of the thousands-years-old traditions of Egyptian monastic life. The importance of our contact today is hard to overestimate. Your present pilgrimage has come providentially as it is linked to one of the most venerated Orthodox icons, which is that of the Tolgskaya Virgin, and which the Russian Church today glorifies. This miraculous image of the Queen of heaven appeared in the land of Yaroslavl and Rostov, which, with God's help, you will visit in the coming days. It is here today in the heart of Russia that the Most Holy Lady blesses your forthcoming journey. It is a joy to greet you, dear brothers," said bishop Euthemius.

In reply the head of the delegation bishop Discoros warmly thanked the deputy abbot for the reception: "We ask Your Grace to convey the greetings and good wishes of the primate of the Coptic Church His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II to His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill and all the clergy and faithful flock of the Russian Orthodox Church. We value our friendship as a great gift granted to us from God. The mission which the Lord has entrusted to us is not only to preserve but also to make deeper our friendship and to continue our mutually enriching contacts to the glory of his name. May peace and grace abide forever with the people of Great Russia!"

Bishop Euthemius took his guests on a tour of the monastery and showed them its holy sites. The representatives of the Coptic Church venerated the monastery's holy objects, such as a cross with a particle of the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord, the Blachernae icon of the Mother of God, reliquaries with particles of the precious remains of Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Peter of Moscow, Saint Sergius of Radonezh and a host of saints from the Dormition of the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev.

In the Saint Sergius Church the pilgrims attended a prayer service with Akathist to the Tolgskaya icon of the Mother of God and venerated the monastery's copy of the icon of the Virgin, which according to established tradition was transferred from the State Historical Museum to the monastery for the occasion of the feast day. On the same day the Coptic delegation visited the Sretensky monastery. The deputy superior of the monastery abbot John (Ludischev) showed the monastery churches to the pilgrims of Egypt, which included the catholicon of the Vladimir Virgin and the Cathedral of Christ's Resurrection and the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church which contain the relics of the monastery's heavenly protector the holy martyr archbishop Hilarion of Vereya. The monastery's dean hieromonk Athanasius (Deryugin) spoke about the monastery's history and contemporary life and answered the guests' questions, who were interested in various aspects of the organizing of the coenobitic life of Russian monasteries.

The conversation between the brothers continued at a joint refectory meal. A concert was given by the choir of the Sretensky theological academy and the students of the monastery's Sunday school in honour of the visit by the representatives of the Coptic Church.

At the Convent of the Nativity of the Virgin the delegation was warmly met by the sisters headed by the mother superior abbess Victorina (Perminova). The Coptic monks venerated the holy sites of the convent, among which are icons with particles of relics of Saint George the Great Martyr, Saint Panteleimon the Great Martyr and Healer, the holy martyr Cyprian and martyr Justina. A lengthy talk was held at the refectory church of the convent.

Attending the festive reception were the mother superior of Convent of the Conception abbess Juliania (Kaleda), the mother superior of the Saints Martha and Mary Convent abbess Elizabeth (Posdnyakova), the secretary of the Department of External Church Relations for inter-Christian relations hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), the representative of the Coptic Church in Moscow hieromonk Daoud el Antoni, the representative of the Synodal Department for Monasteries and Monasticism and inmate of the Sretensky stauropegic monastery hieromonk Agathangel (Divlatov) and coworker of the DECR S.G. Alferov.

At the request of abbess Victorina the guests spoke about the history and contemporary life of Coptic monasticism and answered the sisters' numerous questions. The abbess shared her personal memories of her visit to the ancient monasteries of Egypt in November of 2018 as part of a delegation of monastics of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The guests then went on a walk around the historical centre of the Russian capital, visiting the Monastery of the Saviour-Beyond-the Icons, Red Square and Christ the Saviour Cathedral, and then met with the faithful of the Coptic parish in Moscow.

The delegation's visit continued on 22nd August as they set off for the metropolitanate of Yaroslavl.

Making up the delegation were: the father superior of the Monastery of Saint John in el Alamein in the Egyptian province of Matrouch bishop Discoros as head of the delegation; the administrator of the diocese of Luxor bishop Joseph; the auxiliary of the diocese of Luxor bishop Joachim; the father superior of the Monastery of the Holy Martyr Thomas and the Monastery of the Holy Martyr Victor in Hadab in the province of South Sinai bishop Thomas; the father superior of the Monastery of Saint Pachomius the Great in the province of Aswan bishop Arsenius; the secretary of the Patriarchal residence in Alexandria archpriest Abraham Emil Nagi; inmate of the Monastery of Saint Pachomius the Great hieromonk Anthony el Bahomi; the dean of the Monastery of Saint Paul of Thebes in the eastern desert of the Red Sea hieromonk Cherubim anba-Pula; inmate of the Monastery of Saint Paul of Thebes hieromonk Poemen anba-Pula; Patriarchal advisor Doctor Anton Milad; and coworker of the Coptic Patriarchate and special representative for church construction Doctor Adel Elmenchavi.

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