



## Abbots and monks from monasteries of the Coptic Church visit shrines of the Yaroslavl-Rostov land



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On August 22-27, a delegation of abbots and monks from the Egyptian monasteries of the Coptic Church was visiting monasteries and convents, churches and historical and cultural sites located in the Russian Orthodox Church's Metropolitanates of Yaroslavl and Moscow.

On August 22, the guests arrived in the Tolga Convent of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple and were cordially welcomed at the holy gates by hegumeness Varvara (Tretyak), abbess of the convent, where they were accommodated during their stay in the Yaroslavl-Rostov land.

A visit to the historical abode, a pearl of the Yaroslavl land, began with veneration of its shrines – the Tolga icon of the Theotokos and the relics of St. Ignatios (Bryanchaninov), whose works have become

well known in the Coptic Church in the last decade and are studied in its theological schools.

In the evening the guests met with hegumeness Varvara and sisters of the Tolga convent. Members of the delegation told them about history of the Egyptian monasteries, in which monasticism has been born, and about liturgical life there and monastic obediences.

On August 23, members of the delegation met with Metropolitan Vadim of Yaroslavl and Rostov. He said that he was happy to welcome representatives of the ancient monastic tradition in the land of Yaroslavl and told them about the life of parishes and monasteries in the diocese and about the saints who had lived here. Also, he recalled how he had come to know the Christian world of Egypt in 1978, when a delegation of the Coptic Church headed by Patriarch Shenouda III visited Moscow to attend celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of the Patriarchate.

The meeting was joined by Mr. Artem V. Molchanov, mayor of Yaroslavl.

That same day, the pilgrims saw the holy places of the Russian Golden Ring, the unique monuments of Old Russian architecture and of the Yaroslav icon-painting school. They visited the Cathedral of the Dormition, the monastery of the Saviour and St. Athanasios, the church of St. Elijah the Prophet, and the church of St. Nicholas Nadein. At the convent of the Kazan icon of the Theotokos the guests were warmly welcomed by its abbess, hegumeness Yekaterina (Gayeva). They visited churches in the convent and venerated the shrines, including the relics of hieroconfessor Agafangel, Metropolitan of Yaroslavl. At the end of the tour of Yaroslavl, representatives of the Coptic Church visited the Church of St. Tikhon under construction.

On August 24, members of the delegation continued their tour in Rostov the Great. Accompanied by Bishop Veniamin of Rybinsk and Romanov-Borisoglebsk, they visited the Rostov Kremlin where they prayed at the shrines with precious relics of Sts Leontios and Theodore of Rostov in the Cathedral of the Dormition. Having climbed the bell tower, they listened to the sound of the famous Rostov bells. The bell-ringers demonstrated their art, chiming the bells, the largest of which is called 'Sysoy.' It had been cast in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and named after the father of Metropolitan Jonah of Rostov and Yaroslavl who had been the head of the diocese from 1652 to 1690.

The delegation visited the monastery of the Saviour and St. Jacob, the convent of the Epiphany and St. Abraham, and the monastery of Sts. Boris and Gleb located in Rostov and on its outskirts and venerated the shrines resting in the abodes, such as a wooden Crucifix with a particle of the Life-Giving Cross of the Lord, the relics of Sts. Demetrios, Jacob and Abraham of Rostov, and the relics and precious chains of St. Irenarch the Recluse of Rostov.

On August 25, representatives of the Coptic Church visited the Diocese of Pereslavl. They venerated the Cross of Godenovo, a world's best known miraculous crucifix located at the metochion of St. Nicholas' convent in the village of Godenovo, took a boat ride on Lake Pleshcheyevo, and visited St. Nicholas' convent, monastery of the Holy Trinity and St. Daniel, and St. Theodore's convent in Pereslavl-Zalessky. At the premises of the Diocesan Administration the guests were warmly welcomed by Bishop Feoktist of Pereslavl and Uglich.

During their stay in the Metropolitanate of Yaroslavl the guests from the Coptic Church were accompanied by hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christian relations of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); hieromonk Daud al-Anthony, representative of the Coptic Church in Russia; hieromonk Agafangel (Shkurankov), head of the Social Department of the Diocese of Yaroslavl; hieromonk Platon (Kudlasevich) of the Sretensky stauropegic monastery also representing the Synodal Department for Monasteries and Monasticism; and Mr. Sergei G. Alferov of the DECR.

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