Hierarchs of the Malankara Church visit Metropolitanate of Smolensk



DECR Communication service, 02.08.2023.

On August 31–September 1, visiting the Metropolitanate of Smolensk was a delegation fr om the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church consisting of Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos of the Northeast American Diocese, co-chairman of the Working Group for Coordinating Bilateral Relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church, and Metropolitan Abraham Mar Stephanos of the Diocese of United Kingdom, Europe and Africa. They were accompanied by hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christians relations of the Moscow Patriarchate' Department for External Church Relations.

Upon arrival in Smolensk, the guests were warmly welcomed by Metropolitan Isidor of Smolensk and Dorogobuzh at the premises of the Diocesan Administration. He told them about recent history of the diocese which is closely linked with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' who had been its head for twenty-five years as Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad. During their visit, the hierarchs fr om India could see the results of His Holiness' work done for restoring churches and

monasteries and for developing different areas of social ministry.

During their meeting with Metropolitan Isidor, representatives of the Malankara Church made a statement in support of Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav.

Members of the Indian delegation visited the Cathedral of the Dormition wh ere they were welcomed by its rector, Rev. Vladislav Bagan, who is also a secretary of the Smolensk diocesan administration, and by Archpriest Grigory Trubin, a sacristan. The guests venerated the miraculous 'Hodegetria' icon of the Theotokos and other sacred images. They were very much impressed by Fr. Grigory's narrative about the life of the Holy Martyr Mercurius, a heavenly patron of the city.

Representatives of the Malankara Church visited the Orthodox Children's Home founded by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2009. Accompanying them was Rev. Dionisiy Davydov, head of the Department for Social Ministry and Church Charity of the Smolensk diocese. Teachers and children told the guests about their life, while the guests shared their experience of running children's homes by Christians in India. The children gave gifts to the guests that they had made by themselves.

That same day, the delegation visited 'Smolensk House for Mom,' a regional Orthodox centre for the protection of family, motherhood and childhood wh ere they were welcomed by its director, Ms. Tatyana S. Stepanova, and by Archpriest Pavel Petrovsky, rector of the church of St. Michael the Archangel. The guests said that they had been very impressed by 'the unique social institution operating under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church.' It is well known that an idea of setting up 'houses for mothers' belongs to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and is being successfully realized by the Russian Orthodox Church.

On September 1, Metropolitan Isidor invited Metropolitans Zachariah Mar Nicholovos and Abraham Mar Stephanos to the Smolensk Orthodox Theological Seminary where they met with the faculty and students. The guests told them about the life of Christians in India and answered numerous questions about history, present-day developments and theology of the Malankara Church.

The guests visited the place of death and burial of the princes-martyrs Boris and Gleb, the first saints canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church, and worshipped the Memorial Cross on the bank of the River Dnieper.

Also, the hierarchs from India visited the Boldino Monastery of the Holy Trinity, the largest in Smolensk region, and were warmly welcomed by its abbot, Archimandrite Antoniy (Mezentsev) and the brethren. The guests venerated the holy relics of St. Gerasimus of Boldino, a great saint of the land of Smolensk. Fr. Antoniy told them about the history of the monastery, which was almost raised to the ground by the

retreating fascist troops, and shared his reminiscences of the restoration works carried out under the direct supervision and with the participation of Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, now His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'.

During their stay in Smolensk, the guests were accompanied with the blessing of Metropolitan Isidor by Rev. Vladislav Bagan and Rev. Dimitry Litvischenko, rector of the church St. Tatiana the Martyr.

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Members of the Holy Synod of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church – Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos of the Northeast American Diocese, co-chairman of the Working Group for Coordinating Bilateral Relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church, and Metropolitan Abraham Mar Stephanos of the Diocese of United Kingdom, Europe and Africa are visiting Russia in preparation for an official visit of the Primate of the Malankara Church, His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III. His visit begins on September 3.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/90697/