



## Primate of the Assyrian Church of the East visited the holy places of Vladimir land



**DECR Communication Service, 30.10.2023.**

On 26 - 28 October, the delegation of the Assyrian Church of the East headed by His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III, who is in Russia on an **official visit**, visited monasteries, churches and historical and cultural sites on the territory of the Vladimir Metropolitanate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October the delegation arrived in Vladimir. The meeting of the Primate of the Assyrian Church of the East with Metropolitan Tikhon of Vladimir and Suzdal took place at the diocesan administration. The meeting was attended by members of the delegation accompanying His Holiness, the Vicar of the Vladimir diocese, Bishop Stephan of Kovrov, heads of diocesan departments and members of the Assyrian community of the Vladimir region.

The Head of the Vladimir Metropolis greeted His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III: "It is a great honour and joy for us to receive for the first time in history on the fertile Vladimir land the Primate of the Church, which remembers the Holy Apostles themselves. Welcome to our ancient capital city, which bears the name of its Equal-to-the-Apostles founder, the Baptist of the Russian world! Our city is already more than a thousand years old, and it has known different times. But never here, in this region of North-Eastern Russia, has Church life ceased, never has the prayer offered to the Lord been silent. It is gratifying that our region has become a native home for the sons and daughters of the brotherly Assyrian people, who for more than a century have been living and working peacefully together with us for the good of our Fatherland. Therefore, Vladimir is also your native home, Your Holiness!"

In his reply, His Holiness Catholicos Mar Awa warmly thanked Metropolitan Tikhon for the warm welcome. The head of the Assyrian Christians emphasised that his visit to the ancient capital of Russia has a special meaning for him: "Here, in these beautiful boundless forests and fields, the very soul of Orthodox Russia is hidden. Here beats its heart, radiating inexpressible love, which we, the Assyrian people, deeply feel and highly appreciate. Divine Providence was pleased to bring the historical destinies of our peoples closer together, and we have shared many joys and sorrows. Today we live in a very difficult time. That is why now, in the days of new severe trials for all mankind, we are called to make special efforts so that our testimony of the Risen Lord would be a firm witness in the face of the whole world".

His Holiness the Catholicos then gave a press conference to representatives of local Church and secular media, speaking about the purpose of his visit to Russia, the traditionally close relations between the Russian and Assyrian peoples, and about the history of the establishment and current activities of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East.

In the evening, the delegation travelled to Suzdal, visiting the Spaso-Evfimiev Monastery, the Convent of the Protection of the Mother of God and the Suzdal Kremlin.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III and his entourage visited the boundaries of the Diocese of Murom. At the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery of Murom the distinguished guest was met by Bishop Nil of Murom and Vyaznikovsk, the vicar of the monastery Hieromonk Simeon (Nesterov) and the head of the Diocesan Department for the Relations between the Church and Society and the Media Priest Artemiy Chernov, accompanied by whom the delegation of the Assyrian Church visited the Trinity Convent and the Annunciation Monastery of the city. There, His Holiness Mar Awa venerated the great shrines- the frame with a part of the relics of the Monk Ilya of Murom and the honourable relics of the Blessed Peter and Fevronia of Murom.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, on Demetrius Saturday, the Primate of the Assyrian Church of the East and members of the delegation attended the funeral service in the Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery in Vladimir. The service was performed by Metropolitan Tikhon of Vladimir and Suzdal. On the same day, on behalf of the head of the Vladimir Metropolitanate, a solemn reception was given in honour of the distinguished guest.

Then Catholicos Mar Awa visited the Dormition Cathedral, the Church of the Intercession on the Nerl - the pearl of ancient Russian architecture - and the Svyato-Bogolyubsky Monastery in the village of Bogolyubovo, after which he left for Moscow, where he continued his visit to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The delegation visiting Russia includes: His Eminence Mar Afram Athneil, Metropolitan of Syria; His Grace Mar Narsai Benyamen, Bishop of Iran, Armenia, and Georgia; Rev. Chorbishop Samano Odisho, Parish Priest of Mart Mariam Church in Moscow and member of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East; Rev. Fr. Peter Pavlov, Parish Priest of Krasnodar; Rev. Fr. Ephraim Alkhas, Parish Priest of Rostov-on-Don and member of the Dialogue Commission, Rev. Dn. Roland Begamov, senior deacon of the Mart Mariam Church in Moscow.

On the territory of the Vladimir Metropolis the distinguished guest was accompanied by Priest Dimitry Romensky, head of the Protocol Service of the Vladimir Diocese, Priest Arkady Makovetsky, head of the Missionary Department of the Vladimir Diocese, A.V. Bondarev, head of the Architectural and Construction Department of the Vladimir Diocese, S.G. Alferov, an employee of the DECR, and V.V. Davedyanov, head of the Assyrian community of Vladimir.

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/90946/>