



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
Department for External Church Relations

## **Acting Patriarchal Exarch of Africa meets representatives of Ancient Oriental Churches in the South African Republic**



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On January 12, Bishop Konstantin of Zraisk, Acting Patriarchal Exarch of Africa, currently in the South African Republic, visited the church of St. Thomas the Apostle of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in Johannesburg, which is a parish of the Diocese of UK, Europe and Africa headed by Metropolitan Abraham Mar Stephanos, a member of the Working Group for dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church.

Rev. Stanley James, rector of the church, warmly welcomed Bishop Konstantin and showed him the interior. The iconostasis is adorned with replicas of Russian icons. The Indian faithful have recently begun to venerate icons and Russian saints. Bishop Konstantin presented Fr Stanley with an icon of St. Matrona of Moscow as a token of the visit.

Afterwards, Bishop Konstantin visited the church of St. Mark the Apostle of the Coptic Church in Johannesburg and met with Metropolitan Antonious Markos of West and South Africa, the oldest serving hierarch in Africa. He has been widely known as a missionary and an evangelizer in different African countries for over fifty years. The first Coptic parishes in the South African Republic were founded some thirty years ago thanks to him. The local Coptic community has maintained good-neighbourly relations with parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in Southern Africa. The Coptic Church granted the facility for the service to the Russian-speaking community in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. Archpriest Daniil Lugovoy was the celebrant.

Bishop Konstantin thanked Metropolitan Antonious, who is eighty-seven years old, for fraternal cooperation and assistance, wished him good health and presented him with a icon of St. Andrei Rublev. Accompanying Bishop Konstantin during this visit was hegumen Teklehaimanot of the Monastery of St. Mark the Apostle of the Coptic Church located in the suburb of Pretoria.

Bishop Konstantin's stay in Johannesburg is a part of his pastoral visit to the South African Republic. Travelling with him with the blessing of Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relation (DECR), is hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian Relations. Also, Bishop Konstantin is accompanied by his assistant Vladislav Dendyk and archpriest Daniil Lugovoy, rector of the church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Johannesburg.

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