Metropolitan Anthony participates in events in India to mark the 1950th anniversary of the martyr's death of the holy apostle Thomas.



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On 25th February 2024 memorial events were held in the city of Kottayam in Kerala state in India to mark the occasion of the 1950th anniversary of the martyr's death of the holy apostle Thomas. His memory is especially venerated by Christians on the Malabar Coast of India as Saint Thomas came here in 52 AD and founded the first church community in the locality.

The celebrations began with services held by the primate and members of the Holy Synod of the Malankara Church. Then a procession of the cross was held through the streets of Kottayam with the participation of thousands of people, including clergy and laity. The culmination of the festivities was a gathering in the city's central stadium attended by more than one hundred thousand pilgrims.

Attending as guests of honour at the events were: the chairman of the Department for External Church

Relations the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony, the primate of the Ethiopian Church the archbishop of the Gurage Melchisedek, the governor of Kerala state Arif Muhammad Khan, the governor of Goa state P.S. Sridharan Pillei, the minister of cooperative societies of Kerala V.N. Vasavan, the Kerala health minister Vina George, member of the legislative assemble of the city of Kottayam Tiruvancor Radkhakrishnan, member of the legislative assembly of the city of Putuppalli Chandi Oommen and other persons.

Metropolitan Anthony was accompanied by the DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov) and the secretary of the chairman of the DECR deacon Nikolai Vasin.

Those speaking at the gathering noted the important role which the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church plays in the life of Indian society as the church which has preserved the legacy of the holy apostle Thomas. Her primate His Holiness the Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III especially greeted the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony. The Malankara Catholicos stressed that the Russian Orthodox Church for many decades had been a true friend to Indian Christians. His Holiness conveyed a message of heartfelt gratitude to His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill for the personal attention he had devoted to the development of dialogue between the two churches.

Metropolitan Anthony at the gathering greeted the participants of the festivities on behalf of the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. The metropolitan noted the importance of Saint Thomas for India: “When the twelve closest disciples of our Lord began to preach the Gospel across the face of the earth, Saint Thomas travelled the furthest in reaching the Malabar Coast of Hindustan. There, having become a ‘fisher of men’ (Matt. 4.19), he cast wide his net, the result of which was an abundant haul. Like the other apostles, Saint Thomas ‘with great power’ bore testimony to the ‘resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Acts 4.33). He founded in the land of India a Christian community which exists to this day.”

Metropolitan Anthony noted that Saint Thomas was the heavenly protector of the people of India, whose lot it was to suffer many tribulations during the near two-thousand-year history of Christianity in India. However, in spite of interference from powers from abroad, Indian Christians have managed to retain their identity, liturgical traditions and language.

The chairman of the Department or External Church Relations also stated that the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, in being an age-old Christian community in India, occupied a worthy place in the life of Indian society and helps with interconfessional dialogue and interreligious peace.

“I must make mention of the unprecedented level of fraternal relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church, which enjoy a good history and play an important role in the strengthening of ties between our churches,” stressed the metropolitan.

At the end of his speech the chairman of the DECR thanked the primate of the Malankara Church for the invitation sent to the Russian Orthodox Church to participate in the festivities and presented as a gift to His Holiness and the Malankara Church an icon of the Saviour.

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