Delegation of Assyrian Church of the East visits holy sites in Mordovia Metropolia and Diveyevo Convent



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On June 16-26, **participants in the fifth meeting of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East** visited monasteries, churches and historical and cultural sights in the Metropolias of Mordovia and Nizhny Novgorod, as well as in Moscow.

While in Saransk, the Commission members met with Metropolitan Zinovy of Saransk and Mordovia; Archimandrite Melety (Kisnyashkin), father superior of the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Makarovka, nominated as Bishop of Ardatov and Atyashevo; and with Mr A.A. Zdunov, head of the Republic of Mordovia.

On June 17, the Applied Research Conference on the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East: Christian Traditions of Dialogue was held at the Saransk Theological Seminary, timed to the Commission's fifth meeting. The conference focused on the history and present-day life of the Assyrian Church of the East. Chaired by the head of the Mordovia Metropolia, the conference brought together the Commission members and the seminary faculty and students. Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov and Bishop Mar Elia Isaac of Baghdad delivered addresses on the current stage in the two Churches' bilateral relations and activities of the Commission for Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. Professor M.A. Yeldin of the Department of Philosophy of the Mordovia State University delivered an address entitled "Orthodox Assyrians in Russia and the Present Day." Mr. D.A. Sysuyev, pro-rector for research and theological work at the Saransk Theological Seminary, spoke on Spiritual and Military Fellowship of the Russian and the Assyrian Peoples. During the conference, the delegation of the Assyrian Church and the administration of the Saransk Seminary discussed plans to further bilateral cooperation and prospects of launching new student exchange programmes in particular.

On June 18, within the framework of the Commission meeting, its participants visited the Mordovia Regional Branch of The Defenders of the Fatherland National Foundation. Mr. A.V. Gerasimenko, head of the Foundation, told them about the work of that Russia-wide organization, whose top priority is to provide all-round assistance to those taking part in the special military operation and their families. Later, Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov, Bishop Mar Elia Isaac of Baghdad and Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov) talked to the local mass media, focusing on the history of fraternal relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East and current activities of the Commission for Dialogue that channels special efforts to facilitating implementation of joint humanitarian and social projects both in Russia's new regions and the Middle Eastern countries in which Assyrian Christians traditionally live.

While in Saransk, the Commission members saw its religious, historical and cultural sights and attended concerts of the Russian and Mordovian folk music.

On June 19, they attended the Divine Liturgy at the Saransk Cathedral of the Righteous Admiral Theodore Ushakov. Officiating at the divine service were Metropolitan Zinovy of Saransk and Mordovia and Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov. On that day, the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God was brought to Saransk as part of the All-Russian Moleben for Victory carried out with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'. After the Liturgy, the Assyrian delegation venerated the miracle-working icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Then, Bishop Mar Elia Isaac of Baghdad read out a message of greetings fr om His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Awa III of the Assyrian Church of the East to the head of the Mordovia Metropolia on the occasion of his 76th birthday. On behalf of the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Hieromonk Stefan

(Igumnov) also congratulated His Eminence Metropolitan Zinovy.

Later that day, the guests attended a reception which marked the bringing of the great shrine to the land of Mordovia.

On June 20-21, the Commission members visited the Krasnoslobodsk Diocesan Administration, wh ere they held their final session. They also visited the Convent of St. Barsanuphius in Pokrov-Selishche village and the Monastery of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos in Sanaxar village, where they venerated the holy relics of the Righteous Admiral Theodore Ushakov and his uncle, Venerable Theodore of Sanaxar.

In the evening of June 21, having departed from the Mordovia Metropolia, the delegation made a pilgrimage trip to the Holy Trinity and St. Seraphim Convent in Diveyevo – the spiritual gem of the Nizhny Novgorod land. The representatives of the Assyrian Church of the East venerated the miracle-working “Tenderness” Icon of the Mother of God and the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov and of the venerable and blessed women of Diveyevo. They also walked with prayer along the Holy Kanavka (trench) and visited the Seraphim Spring near the convent.

On June 22-26, the delegation of the Assyrian Church of the East visited Moscow. In the Danilovskaya Hotel, they were warmly welcomed by its administrator, Hegumeness Feofaniya (Miskina). The delegation members also visited St. Daniel’s Stavropegic Monastery and other sights in the historical centre.

The delegation of the Assyrian Church of the East included Bishop Mar Elia Isaac of Baghdad – the Commission co-chair; Chorbishop Samano Odisho, representative of the Assyrian Church of the East in Russia; Chorbishop Nikodim Yukhanaev, representative of the Assyrian Church of the East in Armenia; Rev. Ephraim Alkhas, rector of the Assyrian parish in Rostov-on-Don; and Deacon Roland Bijamov, representative of the Moscow community of the Assyrian Church of the East.

Taking part in the Commission’s fifth meeting on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate were Bishop Kliment of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov – the Commission co-chair; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations, the Commission secretary; and Mr. Sergei Alferov, DECR staff member.

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