



## Synod acknowledges importance of bilateral projects carried out in collaboration with Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church



**DECR Communication Service, 24/10/2024**

During the **meeting of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church** held in Moscow on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, presented a report on **the third meeting** of the Working Group for Coordinating Bilateral Relations Between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, which had taken place in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, on 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Paulose II had agreed to establish the Working Group during the visit of the Malankara Church's Primate to Russia from 31<sup>st</sup> August to 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

The Moscow Patriarchate had been represented at the meeting in Dubai by Bishop Kirill of Sergiyev Posad and Dmitrov, Working Group co-chair; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations, Working Group secretary; Hieromonk Mark (Akhmatkhanov) of the DECR Secretariat for Inter-Christian Relations; and Mr Maxim Kalinin, senior professor at the Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies of HSE University. Taking part in the meeting on behalf of the Malankara Church were Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos of the Northeast American Diocese, Working Group co-chair; Priest Ashwin Fernandes, executive director of the Department of Ecumenical Relations, Working Group secretary; and Mr Jacob Mathew, member of the Church Council. Metropolitan Yuhanon Mar Demetrios of Delhi, President of the Department of Ecumenical Relations of the Malankara Church, participated in the meeting as a guest of honour.

The Working Group members pointed out the historical importance of the meeting between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and the Primate of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, which had taken place during the Malankara Catholicos's visit to Russia on 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

Bishop Kirill informed the participants in the meeting of the law adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, aimed at liquidating the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The members of the Malankara delegation expressed their utmost concern over the growing persecutions against Orthodox Christians in Ukraine. The Russian Church representatives thanked the Malankara Church for issuing statements in support of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and its hierarchs.

For the time that passed since the Working Group's previous meeting in Moscow in April 2023, a number of bilateral initiatives were implemented, namely: the two Churches' hierarchs undertook mutual visits; meetings with faculty and students of various theological schools took place; Malankara students continued their studies at the Russian theological educational institutions; further progress was made in monastic exchange projects; a representative of the Malankara Church took part in an international conference on pastoral care for people with mental diseases, organized by the Department for External Church Relations; doctors from the two Churches' leading clinics held two research and medical consultations; a two-part documentary on Apostle Thomas and the Malankara Church was filmed and released; the Malankara Church rendered assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church in providing places of worship for its faithful living in India.

The Working Group presented its suggestions for promoting cooperation in areas of importance for the two Churches.

Having considered the report, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church acknowledged as successful the activities of the Working Group for Coordinating Bilateral Relations Between the Russian

Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and pointed out the importance of the bilateral projects.

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