



## Moscow Patriarchate's delegation takes part in the celebrations marking the enthronement of new Primate of the Eritrean Church



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On 26<sup>th</sup> January, the enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch Abune Basilios, who had been elected as the 6<sup>th</sup> Primate of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024, took place in Asmara, capital of Eritrea.

The enthronement and consecration ceremony was held at the Enda Mariam Cathedral in Asmara. Taking part in it were members of the Holy Synod of the Eritrean Church and hierarchs from other Oriental Churches – the Coptic, the Syrian, the Armenian Apostolic and the Malankara Churches. Among those in attendance were delegations of several other Christian Churches and inter-Christian

organizations, as well as Mr Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, along with representatives of the Eritrean Government and members of the diplomatic corps.

At the invitation of the Holy Synod of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church and with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church arrived in Asmara to take part in the celebrations. The delegation included Metropolitan Isidor of Smolensk and Dorogobuzh; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; and Priest Lev Garin, a cleric of the Smolensk Metropolia.

Metropolitan Isidor, head of the delegation, read out **a message of greetings** from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow All Rus' and on behalf of His Holiness presented to the new Primate of the Eritrean Church an episcopal crozier. He also handed over to His Holiness Patriarch Baslios **a letter of greetings** from the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk.

The enthronement and the Liturgy that His Holiness Abune Baslios concelebrated with the hierarchs of the Oriental Churches were followed by an official reception. Among those invited to it were the members of the Russian Church's delegation.

In the evening of the same day, the guests visited the Convent of the Holy Martyr Demiana of Egypt and the Forty Virgins, where they were warmly received by its abbess and sisters.

On 27<sup>th</sup> January, the Russian delegation took part in a meeting with members of the Holy Synod of the Eritrean Church. Metropolitan Isidor presented to His Holiness Patriarch Baslios a replica of the Smolensk 'Hodegetria' Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. In his speech, His Eminence pointed out the importance of the centuries-old fraternal relations between the peoples of Russia and Eritrea which are based on the faith in Christ and similar spiritual values.

Later that day, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church met with Mr Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, in his residence near Asmara.

While in Asmara, the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation also visited the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the State of Eritrea, which provided considerable assistance in organizing their visit.

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The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church is one of the six Oriental Churches. It received autocephaly in 1998. Considering themselves as members of the Eritrean Church today are over three million people

inside the country (approximately half of the population) and about one million of the Eritreans living in the diaspora, mainly in North America and Western Europe.

His Holiness Patriarch Abune Basilios was born in 1954 in the territory of today's Eritrea. In his youth, he took monastic vows, was ordained as hierodeacon and soon afterwards as hieromonk.

In 2005, his episcopal consecration took place. In 2021, he was elevated to the rank of archbishop. Prior to his election, he had served as Chief Administrator of the Office of the Patriarchate and a member of the Holy Synod.

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