



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with delegation of Malankara Church



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On March 8, after the Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Church of the Renewal of the Temple of Resurrection at the Intercession Stavropegic Convent, there took place a meeting at the abbess's quarters between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and members of the delegation of the Malankara Church, who have arrived in Russia from India to celebrate the commemoration day of the Blessed Matrona.

The delegation attended the divine service celebrated by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church on the day of the uncovering of the relics of the saint, whose veneration by Indian Christians has grown over the last few years.

Taking part in the meeting on behalf of the Malankara Church were Metropolitan Youhanon Mar

Demetrios of the Delhi diocese, president of the Department of Ecumenical Relations of the Malankara Church; Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Yulios of the Kunnamkulam diocese; and Priest Ashwin Fernandis, executive director of the Department of Ecumenical Relations of the Malankara Church.

The Russian Orthodox Church was also represented by hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), secretary for Inter-Christian relations of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), and hieromonk Mark (Akhmatkhanov), a DECR staff member.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill cordially welcomed the guests and emphasized that participation of representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in church festivities and commemoration dates of each other has become a good tradition, which contributes to further strengthening of fraternal relations.

His Holiness made a special mention of the high award of the Russian Federation – the Order of Friendship – presented to the Primate of the Malankara Church, His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III in December 2024 and underscored that His Holiness the Catholicos has been playing a very important role in the strengthening of relations between the two Churches. “Please convey my heartfelt brotherly greeting to him,” said Patriarch Kirill.

His Holiness emphasized the importance of the fact that the Malankara Church, led by its Primate, has repeatedly raised its voice in defense of the persecuted Ukrainian Orthodox Church. "Ukraine, a country that declares itself oriented towards Western values and above all towards the observance of human rights and religious freedom, brazenly violates them," said His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and added that Western countries prefer to pay regard to violations of human rights at distant places, but remarks about what is happening in Ukraine are usually out of hearing.

His Holiness noted the importance of activities of the Working Group for coordinating bilateral relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church and thanked Metropolitan Youhanon Mar Demetrios of the Delhi diocese for taking part in its work.

Among the priority topics for cooperation there were named social and, in particular, the hospital ministry, which holds a valuable place in the activities of both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church. “As you know, the Central Clinical Hospital of St. Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow, plays a large part here, and St. Georgios Medical Mission Multi-Specialty Hospital in Partumala, Kerala, plays a major role in your Church,” His Holiness said. “I think that the exchange of experience between our medical institutions can have beneficial consequences as each can learn something from the experience of the other and thus further develop hospital and social service.”

His Holiness considers it useful to develop bilateral relations in the field of culture. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church mentioned the visit of the combined choir of the Lavra of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius and the Moscow Theological Academy to India and thanked the representatives of the Malankara Church for warm hospitality.

"I attach much significance to theological consultations between our Churches," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said and added that such cooperation and contacts were established between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During the current visit to Russia, representatives of the Malankara Church will also visit Smolensk. "I am very glad that you are going to this wonderful heroic city, which has always protected our country against invasions from the West. The fortification wall can still be found in the old part of the city. Also, Smolensk is home to a beautiful cathedral with a long history. I am happy that you will see this city," said His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', who used to be the head of the Smolensk diocese for a quarter of a century.

On behalf of the delegation, Metropolitan Youhanon Mar Demetrios expressed joy over the opportunity to participate in the celebrations dedicated to the memory of Blessed Matrona of Moscow and to attend the divine service celebrated by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

"I first became acquainted with the life of Blessed Matrona of Moscow when I accompanied His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III during his visit to Moscow. Her humbleness, care for ordinary people, sanctity, and selfless life have convinced us in the power of her intercession for the faithful. We are filled with hope that our visit will continue the good tradition of the presence of hierarchs of the Malankara Church at the celebrations dedicated to the memory of Blessed Matrona," said Metropolitan Youhanon Mar Demetrios.

He conveyed greetings and warm wishes from the Primate of the Malankara Church to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, to the entire Russian Orthodox Church and its bishops "Your Holiness! I was present at your meeting with His Holiness the Catholicos and had the opportunity to see for myself good relations and mutual respect, also because you were his mentor as the rector of the Leningrad Theological Academy at which he studied," said the head of the delegation from India.

He underscored, "The long-standing good relations between our Churches are strong because not only the Malankara Church, but also all the people of India sympathize with Russia and its position as well as with your position, Your Holiness. The people of India and our Church are empathizing with you during this period of time when you are forced to cope with the challenges that are accompanying the formation of a multipolar world."

The hierarch noted that the topics and questions raised by the Moscow Patriarchate always find a lively response from Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III who is constantly praying for Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and for all Russian people.

The head of the delegation shared warm personal recollections of his meetings with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' during his visits to Kerala as the head of the Department for External Church Relations. Also, he emphasized the importance of activities of the Working Group for coordinating bilateral relations.

"The mutual visits of our medical teams from Russia to India and from India to Russia were crowned with outstanding achievements. Thanks to your initiative, medical doctors exchanged experience that has allowed them to excel in their field of work," the guest said and noted that these meetings and communication added a new dimension to cooperation between the Churches. "We look forward to the continuation of these visits, which will give us an opportunity to gain experience from each other and learn about new developments in medicine, thus attaining further success."

Metropolitan Youhanon Mar Demetrios told His Holiness Patriarch Kirill how deeply impressed Indian Christians were by the combined choir of the Lavra of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius and the Moscow Theological Academy. "We were all delighted with their performance and hope that such visits from India to Russia could be organized, and your visits will continue."

He expressed confidence that the Working Group will work tirelessly, making efforts to promote better learning of monastic traditions of each other, to hold theological consultations and cultural exchanges, and to pursue cooperation in the field of social ministry, thus serving further rapprochement between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church.

At the end of the talk, the parties exchanged views on the raised topics and other issues of mutual interest.

*Photos by the Patriarchal Press Service*

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