



Delegation of Coptic Monastics Visits the Holy Sites of the Nizhny Novgorod Region



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On July 14–15, a delegation of representatives of Egyptian monasticism, headed by Metropolitan Antony of Jerusalem and the Middle East, Patriarchal Vicar of the Coptic Patriarch on the Holy Land, who are in Russia at the invitation of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', visited churches and monasteries of the Nizhny Novgorod Metropolis.

The visit began at the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Nizhny Novgorod, where the guests were welcomed on behalf of Metropolitan Georgy of Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas by Archimandrite Tikhon (Zatyokin), abbot of the Ascension Caves Monastery in Nizhny Novgorod. Accompanied by Fr. Tikhon, the delegation then visited the Ascension Caves Monastery. The head and members of the delegation also met with representatives of the media of the Nizhny Novgorod Metropolis.

Later that day, the delegation arrived at the Holy Trinity St. Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery. The visit began with the veneration of its great shrines: the wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God "Tenderness," the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov, and the relics of the venerable and blessed women of

Diveyevo.

On July 15, members of the delegation attended the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Trinity Cathedral. The service was presided over by Metropolitan Georgy of Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas. At the conclusion of the Liturgy, the guests joined the head of the Nizhny Novgorod Metropolis in a prayerful procession along the Holy Canal.

Afterwards, Metropolitan Georgy of Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas met with the delegation of Coptic monastics in the hall of the clergy guesthouse on the grounds of the Diveyevo Monastery. Also taking part in the meeting were Abbess Sergia (Konkova), superior of the monastery, and Priest Vladimir Kargin, dean of the churches of the Diveyevo district.

Warmly welcoming the guests, Metropolitan Georgy of Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas said:

“We are always very glad to welcome representatives of the ancient Coptic Church to our hospitable Russian land. You were born and carry out your ministry in the Greater Holy Land, which includes not only Palestine but also, undoubtedly, Egypt, sanctified by the sojourn of the Holy Family. Holy Rus’, in turn, is one of the earthly domains of the Most Holy Theotokos. Today you are in the very heart of this domain—on the land of Diveyevo, which, according to the testament of our venerable and God-bearing Father Seraphim of Sarov, will not be defiled by the Antichrist and his servants at the end of time. We pray for the peace and prosperity of the Holy Land and of the entire Christian East. We also ask for your fervent prayers for our Orthodox homeland. We love you and always await your return, dear brothers. You have come from the Holy Land and therefore preserve a special grace-filled sense of inner participation in the greatest miracle of Christ’s Glorious Resurrection. Therefore, following the testament of our venerable Father Seraphim, who ceaselessly contemplated the Holy Pascha, I would like to greet each of you with the ever-affirming words of Christian joy: ‘My joy, Christ is Risen!’”

In his response, Metropolitan Antony of Jerusalem and the Middle East warmly thanked Metropolitan Georgy and Mother Sergia for their gracious hospitality in the Nizhny Novgorod region:

“We love Russia very much. A year ago I visited your country for the first time and was deeply inspired by the beauty of its spiritual life. Having seen how the Russian Orthodox Church lives and how it is being revived, I wanted other representatives of our clergy to see what had been revealed to me. It is very important to get to know one another and to exchange experience between our Churches, we value our fraternal fellowship beyond measure. Being on Russian soil, which gave birth to such great saints as St. Seraphim of Sarov, we especially feel the grace-filled power of Holy Pascha. Indeed Christ is Risen!”

That evening, after visiting Arzamas and the city’s Cathedral of the Resurrection, the members of the

delegation departed for Moscow.

The Coptic Church delegation included: Hieromonk Arsenius Anba-Paula, a monk of the Monastery of St. Paul the Anchorite in the Eastern Desert near the Red Sea; Coptic Patriarchate staff members Priest Bishoy Zaki Sidrak, Priest Alkomos Boles, and Priest Seraphim Abdalla; clergy of the Jerusalem Archdiocese of the Coptic Church: Hieromonk Bishoy al-Antoni, Hieromonk Arsenius al-Orshalemi, Hieromonk Gabriel al-Orshalemi, Hieromonk Antony al-Orshalemi, Hieromonk Pachomius al-Orshalemi, and Deacon William Fouad; and staff members of the same archdiocese: Monk Abanoub al-Orshalemi, Monk Theophilus al-Orshalemi, and Monk Samuel al-Orshalemi.

Representing the Moscow Patriarchate during the delegation's visit to the Nizhny Novgorod Metropolis were: Abbess Juliana (Kaleda), Deputy Chair of the Synodal Department for Monasteries and Monasticism and superior of the Conception Stauropegial Convent; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), Secretary for Inter-Christian Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archimandrite Bartholomew (Petrov), member of the board of the Synodal Department for Monasteries and Monasticism; Priest Vitaly Misharin of the Diocese of Nizhny Novgorod; and S. G. Alferov, a staff member of the DECR.

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