

MEETINGS HELD BY HIS BEATITUDE WITH HIS EXCELLENCY THE AMBASSADOR OF EGYPT AND HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW

On 24th January 2012 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, accompanied by His Eminence Athanasios Metropolitian of Cyrene, Exarch of the Alexandrian Patriarchate in Moscow, His Grace Tychon Bishop of Poldosk, Director of Financial Services of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos, Chancellor of the Holy Synod and the Very Reverend Archimandrite Leonid Gorbacev, Exarch of the Russian Church in Egypt, visited His Excellency the Ambassador of Egypt in Russia Mr Alaa Elhadidy.

Welcoming His Beatitude His Excellency the Ambassador mentioned that his presence at the Embassy was a high honour and blessing and asked to be informed of the missionary efforts of the Patriarchate in Africa. There was also a lengthy discussion on the promotion of religious tourism to the Land of the Nile. His Beatitude informed His Excellency Mr Elhadidy about the discussions which he had during his meetings in the Russian capital with church and other agents regarding this issue, and once again thanked the Egyptian State for their assistance in the issues and general efforts of the Alexandrian Throne. In reply His Excellency the Ambassador thanked the Alexandrian Primate, on behalf of the Egyptian nation, for his essential contribution to the development and progress of the country.

His Beatitude then went to the Holy Monastery of Donskoy in Moscow where he venerated the holy relics of St Tychon, Patriarch of Moscow (1916-1925) and visited the place where he was placed under house arrest by the Bolsheviki.

He then met with His Beatitude Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia at the Patriarchal Residence, at the Holy Monastery of St Daniel in Moscow.

Present at the meeting were the Chairman of the Department of External Church Affairs, His Eminence Ilarion Metropolitan of Volokalamsk, His Eminence Athanasios Metropolitan of Cyrene, His Grace Sergius Bishop of Soldetsnogorsky and His Grace Tychon Bishop of Poldosk, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos Chancellor of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Deputy Chairman of the Department of External Church Affairs Protopresbyter Nikolai Balasov, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Leonid Gorbacev Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate in Cairo and Presbyter Father Igor Yakimchuk, Secretary of Inter-Orthodox Affairs.

Welcoming His Beatitude Theodoros II, the Patriarch of Moscow mentioned the joy which his presence always creates in Russia, spoke of the decisive contribution and assistance of the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria through the ages to Orthodoxy, particularly to the younger Churches, as is the Russian Church. He also said that the Patriarchal Throne of St Mark is the essentially missionary Church in the contemporary world for the dissemination of the Gospel message on the vast African continent.

At another point in his address the Patriarch of Moscow stressed the age old fraternal and pure relations between the two Churches, reminding all that the Patriarchs of Alexandria participated directly in the most significant events in the history of the Russian Church. He then also emphasized the significant role of the Exarchates of the two Patriarchates in Cairo and Moscow in the promotion of bilateral church relations.

His Beatitude thanked Patriarch Kirill for the kind invitation and hospitality for the recent award he received from the the International Institute for the Unity

of Orthodox Nations, spoke about his missionary journeys in Africa as well as of his memories from the time of his duties as Exarch in Odessa.

Also discussed were issues regarding the pastoral care of the Russian Orthodox faithful in Africa under the omoforion of the local Hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, while the Moscow Patriarchate informed His Beatitude about the recent developments in the internal Russian Church, including the establishment of new ecclesiastical provinces. He then hosted an official lunch in honour of His Beatitude the Pope and Patriarch.

Immediately thereafter His Beatitude departed for the International Airport in Moscow on his way to Egypt, where he was seen off by His Eminence Ilarion Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, His Eminence Archbishop Arsenios of Istra, His Grace Bishop Tychon of Poldosk, the Honourable Charge d' Affairs of the Greek Embassy in Russia Mr Tagis, Professor Alexeev Valery Arkadevich, Chairman of the the International Institute for the Unity of Orthodox Nations, priests and other officials of the country.