A delegation of the Roman Catholic Church visits the Synodal Department for Charity



On August 26, 2019, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church visited the Moscow Patriarchate department for charity and social service as part of their attendance of the Summer Institute of the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies (CMI).

Rev. Alexander Aleshin, deputy head of the department, informed the delegation about the structure of the department, areas of its work and coordinating and methodological activity. ‘Social service in dioceses often begins as a targeted help to a particular person’, he said, ‘This spontaneous help is later arrayed into unified systemic work. The Synodal Department acts as a methodological center teaching leaders and staff of social departments locally and online, publishing a large number of books and educational aids, holding meetings, conferences and congresses to help organize and build the social service of the Church in regions. The leaders of the department’s particular areas of work, one might say, live for social service. Each works in liaison with representatives of the region he is responsible for, coordinates their work and helps them in everything’.

Since 2011, the Synodal Department has conducted 8 online half-year educational courses and over 140 trainings for parish social workers and representatives of diocesan social service departments. In

total, over 2500 people have been trained online and full-time, and graduates of these courses have launched over 1600 new church social projects.

Father Alexander Aleshin showed the guests some training aids published by the Synodal Department. Among them are ‘Creation of an Accessible Environment in a Church: A Comprehensive Approach’, ‘A Parish Temperance School: How to Organize a Temperance Society and Courses for Getting Rid of Alcoholic Dependence’, ‘The Hospital Priest’, a book by Bishop Panteleimon, and other publications. He also spoke about legislative initiatives supported by the Russian Orthodox Church. Among them, for instance, the bill on distributed guardianship.

The Roman Catholic delegation was introduced to the ‘Hangar of Salvation’, a project implemented by the Miloserdie [Charity] Orthodox service.

Ms. Irina Meshkova, leader for aid to the homeless, said, ‘When we were just starting aid to the homeless in Moscow, we went for training to Europe, including Italy. We learn social technologies taking into account your experience. Now we are building a model for rehabilitation of the homeless that could combine the work of social workers, crisis psychologists, specialists in dependencies and priests. The task of our projects is to ensure a possibility for a person to come out of the difficult situation’.

The delegation also visited ‘House for Mom’, a crisis center for women and children. By the middle of 2019, 63 asylums have been opened for mothers with the participation of the Church.

Annually, from 5 to 6 new asylums of this kind appear.

Rev. Hyacinthe Destivelle of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, said, ‘Every time I come here I am struck by how fast everything is developing here, what a success you have achieved in such a short time. I hope that we will cooperate because charity is a field for cooperation between our Churches and, may be, the best way for our coming closer together’.

In the framework of the CMI Summer Institute, the Synodal Department for Charity was also visited by a delegation of the Orthodox Church in America.

The website of the Synodal Department for Charity and Social Service

DECR Communication Service

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