



DECR chairman sends Christmas greetings to heads of non-Orthodox Churches

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, sent Christmas greetings to Patriarch Tawadros II of the Coptic Church; Patriarch Mar Ignatius Aphrem II of the Syriac Church; Pope Francis; Patriarch Bechara Butros Cardinal al-Rai of the Maronite Church; Patriarch Youssef I Absi of the Greek Catholic Melkite Church; Malankara Metropolitan Baselios Marthoma Paulose II, Catholic of the East; Patriarch-Catholicos Abune Mathias of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury; Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Gewargis III Sliwa of the Assyrian Church of the East; Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Yonan of the Syrians; Archbishop Tapio Luoma, Primate of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, chair of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, and heads of many other non-Orthodox Churches.

The text of the message is given below:

From the depths of my heart I congratulate you on the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Today we celebrate one of the most important events in the history of humankind: God has become incarnate for our salvation, desiring "to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). The coming into the world of the Saviour has changed the course of human history, having transfigured forever the created world.

Let us give thanks to God who has loved us by heeding the call of St. Gregory the Theologian, who said: "Revere the birth through which you have been delivered from the bonds of death ... Bring gifts with the magi, gold and frankincense and myrrh, as to a king and a God and one dead for your sake. With the shepherds give glory, with the angels and the archangels sing hymns. Let there be a common celebration of the heavenly and earthly powers" (*Oratio 38: On the Nativity of Christ*).

I wish you good health and God's grace-filled aid in your lofty ministry.

With love in Christ who has been born,

/+ Hilarion/

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk

Chairman

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