Pope of Rome visits exhibition of Russian art masterpieces in Vatican



On November 27, 2018, Pope Francis of Rome visited the exhibition of outstanding works of Russian art from the collection of the Tretyakov State Gallery and a number of other museums in Russia. Held under the theme ‘Pilgrimage of Russian Art: From Dionysius to Malevich’ the exhibition is shown in the Vatican’s Braccio di Carlo Magno in St. Peter’s Square. It has become a response of Russian museums to the Roma Aeterna exhibition of masterpieces of Italian religious art, which was held with great success at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow in late 2016-early 2017.

Presented are 54 masterpieces of Russian art beginning from 15th-century icons to abstract painting of the 20th century. The works of art are arranged in such a way that old icons and 19-century realism masterpieces could ‘be in dialogue’ with each other on the basis of unexpected but obvious analogies. Thus the exposition shows that Russian art has been marked with the same cultural and spiritual constants through centuries.

A special place is given to ‘Crucifixion’ a great work of Russian iconography ‘by Dionysius (c.

1440-1502), a disciple of St. Andrew Rublev. Its exposition in the Vatican has become a sign of the Russian Orthodox Church's gratitude for the brining of parts of the honorable relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, which are kept in Bari, in 2017 to Moscow and St. Petersburg.

According to the Vatican press service, it was a private visit by Pope Francis; it lasted for 40 minutes. The head of the Roman Catholic Church was accompanied by Tretyakov Gallery Director, Zelfira Tregulova and Vatican Museums Director, Barbara Jatta.

Pope Francis evaluated as outstanding the presented Russian icons, especially Dionysius's 'Crucifixion' and the 15-century icons by Novgorod masters. Among the works of Russian painters, he was most impressed by canvases made on religious topics by Repin, Ge, Ivanov, Kramskoy and others. The pope called the exhibition a unique and spiritually impressive exposition that has become 'a phenomenon of world culture'.

It is noted in the Vatican that the Pope's visit to the art exhibition not only reflects his love for Russian culture but has also become a gesture of friendship towards Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church.

DECR Communication Service

Photos from Vatican Press Service

and Internet sources

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