



## Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk meets with Pope Francis



On 19 October 2018, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), met with Pope Francis at the Apostolic Palace in Vatican.

Attending the meeting were also Mons. Visvaldas Kulbokas from the Vatican Secretariat of State; Rev. Alexei Dikarev, a DECR staff member; and sub-deacon Ivan Nikolayev.

Pope Francis warmly greeted Metropolitan Hilarion who attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church as an observer from the Russian Orthodox Church and brought greetings to the participants. Pope Francis thanked Metropolitan Hilarion for his speech. The DECR chairman conveyed greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to Pope Francis.

Discussed during the meeting held in the atmosphere of mutual understanding and amiability were topical issues pertaining to relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Roman Catholic Church.

Metropolitan Hilarion shared his good impressions of the presentations he heard at the plenary session of the Synod and told Pope Francis about his working visit to Portugal last September and his meetings with Cardinal Manuel Clemente, Patriarch of Lisbon, and other high representative of the Roman Catholic Church in Portugal. These meetings have shown the high level of mutual understanding of Orthodox and Catholics of the major problems of our time.

Pope Francis and Metropolitan Hilarion noted with satisfaction the fruitful development of cultural cooperation and the work of the specially established joint group. The Summer institute has proved to be a perspective project of exchange of priests and students of theology for acquaintance with traditions and modern life of the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches. This project looks important in the context of the Assembly of the Synod being held in the Vatican on the theme “Young people, the faith and vocational discernment.”

Special attention was paid to the church situation in Ukraine. Metropolitan Hilarion briefed Pope Francis on the decisions taken at the session of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church held in Minsk on October 15 pertaining to the uncanonical actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, explained the position of the Moscow Patriarchate and presented the statement adopted in Minsk.

The DECR chairman noted that because of the actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople the Russian Orthodox Church had to suspend its participation in the work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Hilarion underscored that bilateral relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Moscow Patriarchate will develop.

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