



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with delegation of Italian Province of Trento

On 27 February 2018, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Russia met with a delegation of the Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy.

The Italian delegation included Msgr. Luigi Bressan, Metropolitan Archbishop Emeritus of Trento; Dr. Ugo Rossi, President of the Autonomous Province of Trento; Dr. Dino Leonesi, coordinator of the exhibition of Christmas cribs in Moscow; Mr. Walter Deflorian, President of the "Friends of Christmas Crib" Association; Mr. Piero Degodenz, Counsellor of the Province of Trento; Dr. Maurizio Rossini, Administrator of the Province of Trento; Mr. Raffaele Farella, responsible for international relations of the Province of Trento; Mr. Moreno Tait, head of the cabinet of the President of Trento Province; Ms. Maria Bosin, Mayor of Predazzo; and Mr. Angelo Zambotti, Mayor of Fivavè.

Representing the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations in the meeting were Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Sergy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; and Rev. Alexy Dikarev of the DECR Secretariat for Inter-Christian Relations.

Greeting the guests from Trento, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said that he had special recollections of his attending theological talks between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church in Trento in 1975. "It enabled me to learn more about the real church and even parish life of the Catholic Church and the diocese of Trento," His Holiness said, "Therefore, cherishing very warm memories, I am very glad to welcome you here."

The reason for the Italian delegation to visit Moscow was an exhibition entitled "Messengers of Peace – Cribs of Trentino-Alto Adige," presented at the Patriarchal museum of church art at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. The exhibition, held in several countries and opened in Moscow on 5 January 2018, tells about the art of crib-making in Italy – the country where they originated. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church thanked the President of the Autonomous Province of Trento, Dr. Ugo Rossi, who had initiated the organization of the exhibition in Russia.

As His Holiness noted with satisfaction, after his meeting with Pope Francis in Havana in 2016, the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the cultural sphere intensified. For instance, in the end of 2016 – beginning of 2017, the Tretyakov Gallery hosted an exhibition of masterpieces of the Italian art from the Vatican Museums, which aroused great interest among the Russian people.

Another important aspect of cooperation are pilgrimages and veneration of shrines, Patriarch Kirill noted, mentioning that as a result of the agreements reached in Havana, last year the relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker were brought from Bari, Italy, to Moscow and St. Petersburg. "We bring shrines from the Holy Land, from Athos and from other places, and every time many pilgrims come to Moscow to venerate them. Yet, what happened when St. Nicholas's relics were brought, surpassed everything what had happened before," His Holiness said, "For two months almost 2 million 300 thousand people came to venerate the relics. Here are some other interesting figures: while on the first days some 2 thousand young volunteers helped people to venerate the shrine, by the end there were more than 14 thousand volunteers. To venerate the saint's relics, people would wait in a long queue for eight, ten and sometimes twelve hours."

"I think it is very important that there are such issues on the agenda of our bilateral relations as value of family and morality," His Holiness continued, "You know better than I do what is going on today in the spiritual life of the Western civilization: attempts are being made to force religious values out of people's

everyday life and to introduce secular values instead. We went through it in the Soviet Union, when religious values were driven out, and ideological values were offered instead. And we know that many yielded to the temptation and rejected the faith. However, historically, an ideology lives no longer than four or five generations. When the historical context changes, the ideology goes away. Nobody expected that after four generations, during which atheism was the main ideology in the Soviet Union, the religious revival would begin. I believe that we all have to work today so that throughout the world as well, ideology would be replaced by firm faith.”

Msgr. Luigi Bressan, Metropolitan Archbishop Emeritus of Trento, thanked the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for the meeting and expressed his joy over the revival of faith in the Russian society, as was demonstrated, in particular, by the veneration of the holy relics of St. Nicholas, brought to Russia.

Msgr. Luigi Bressan also mentioned the theological talks that had taken place in Trento and noted that thanks to the meetings in 1975 the diocese of Trento had re-discovered icon-painting. “Now we have our own icon-painters, and we develop this art in contact with the Russian Orthodox Church,” Metropolitan Emeritus of Trento said.

The President of the Autonomous Province of Trento thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the opportunity to hold the exhibition of the Italian Christmas cribs at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and emphasized that it showed the importance of developing the dialogue between the two Churches and between the two peoples.

DECR Communication Service

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