



## **Metropolitan Hilarion meets with Cardinal Koch in St. Petersburg**

On 27 July 2017, Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), met with Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity who arrived to St. Petersburg as head of the delegation of the Roman Catholic Church to accompany the relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker to Bari.

Discussed during the meeting, which took place at the Novodevichy Resurrection Convent in St. Petersburg, were various issues of bilateral relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Roman Catholic Church. The extraordinary event of bringing the relics of St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, from Bari to Russia was noted. Metropolitan Hilarion said that over two million believers venerated the relics of the most revered saint in Moscow and St. Petersburg and underscored that it has happened thanks to the agreement between Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Pope Francis reached at their historic meeting in Havana in February 2016. Metropolitan Hilarion thanked Cardinal Koch and his associates for their help in arranging this event so important for the entire Russian Church.

Cardinal Kurt Koch expressed joy and deep appreciation of the believers' enthusiasm and added that it has demonstrated the big part played by the veneration of saints of the early Church in the overcoming of differences and prejudices among Christians. Metropolitan Hilarion and Cardinal Koch agreed that cooperation among Churches should be continued. The work of the Joint working group for cultural cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church was also considered.

A festive dinner was offered that same day at the Novodevichy Resurrection Convent. Attending it were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk and members of the Roman Catholic Church's delegation: Cardinal Kurt Koch; Mgr Francesco Cacucci, Archbishop of Bari-Bitonto; Rev. Ciro Capotosto, rector of the Basilica of St. Nicholas in Bari; Rev. Hyacinthe Destivelle of the Pontifical Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity; Rev. Carlo Cinquepalmi, head of the communication service of the Archdiocese of Bari-Bitonto; as well as hegumeness Sofia, abbess of the Novodevichy Resurrection Convent; Rev. Alexy Dikarev, a DECR staff member; and Orthodox benefactors from the PhosAgro holding company Mr. Andrey Guriev Sr.; Mr. Andrey Guriev, Jr; Ms Gurieva; Mr. Kuzmuk; Mr. Goloschapov and president of the Baltic Board of Lawyers Mr. Vadim Zhimirov.

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