



DECR chairman greets Pope Francis with his 80th birthday

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, sent a message of greetings to Pope Francis of Rome. The text of the letter is given below.

Your Holiness,

Please accept my heartfelt greetings with your 80th birthday!

Holding at varying times the high and important posts, you have been working for the benefit of the Church all your life, showing faithfulness to Christ and selfless love to your neighbours – love that, according to St Ephraim the Syrian, is *a giver of all good things, the fulfillment of the Law and unerring salvation* (St Ephraim the Syrian, On Love). And now, as the head of the Roman Catholic Church, you command great respect and set an example for politicians and religious and public leaders, preaching tirelessly *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness* (Mt 6:33) to millions of your contemporaries.

During your pontificate, the cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Holy See has received a renewed impetus. In this regard, I would like to particularly note your unchanging benevolent openness and consideration for the position of the Russian Orthodox Church. A clear sign of progress in this cooperation at the highest level was the historic meeting in Havana between Your Holiness and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on February 12, 2016, as well as the adoption of the joint declaration – the document that opened a new page in the history of our relations and made its contribution to their further strengthening.

Prayerfully wishing to Your Holiness good health and God's all-generous help in your Primatial service, *for they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength* (Is 40:31), I remain

with love in Christ,

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk

Chairman

Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate

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