Metropolitan Hilarion: Unia remains the major stumbling block to Orthodox-Catholic dialogue

On 16 September 2016, the 14th plenary session of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church began its work in Chieti, Italy.

In compliance with the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate taking part in the meeting includes Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (head of the delegation), and Archimandrite Irenei (Steenberg), abbot of the Monastery of St Silouan the Athonite in Sonora (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia). Rev. Alexy Dikarev, a staff member of the DECR Secretariat for Inter-Christian Relations, attended the session as a consultant.

Prior to the plenary session, representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches held a separate meeting to discuss the agenda of the forthcoming plenary session. Metropolitan Hilarion reminded those present about the necessity to raise again the topic of Unia. The discussion of this issue began in the 1990s, but

was broken off in 2000. “The actions of the Greek Catholics in Ukraine and their aggressive rhetoric aimed against (targeting) the Orthodox Church indicate (show) that the Unia remains a bleeding wound on the body of Christendom and the main stumbling bloke in Orthodox-Catholic dialogue,” the DECR chairman said, in particular.

Since Metropolitan John of Pergamon cannot cannot continue to fulfill his duties as co-chairman of the Joint Commission, the Orthodox delegates at their meeting considered the possible candidates as his successor at this post and elected Archbishop Job of Telmessoss (Patriarhate of Constantinople).

The plenary session of the Joint Commission attended by representatives of all generally recognized Local Orthodox Churches except the Bulgarian Patriarchate began with a greeting speech by Kurt Cardinal Koch, Commission’s co-chairman from the Catholic Side, President of the Pontifical Council ofor Promoting Christian Unity; by Archbishop Job of Telmessoss, co-chairman from the Orthodox side; and Msgr. Bruno Forte, Archbishop of Chieti.

During the plenary session, the Commission members set about considering a draft project on conciliarity and primacy in the Church of the first millennium, which was approved at the meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Joint Commission held in Rome in October 2015.

DECR Communication Service

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