Patriarch Kirill meets with Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe, Archbishop of Naples



On April 25, 2014, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Eminence Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe, Archbishop of Naples, at his residence in Chisty Pereulok. The cardinal was accompanied by Prof. Adriano Roccucci, general secretary of the Community of St. Egidio.

In attendance were Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), a vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Archimandrite Anthony (Sevryuk), executive secretary of the administration of the Moscow Patriarchate's parishes in Italy, Archpriest Igor Vyzhanov, rector of St. Andrew's in Naples, and Rev. Alexy Dikarev, DECR secretariat to inter-Christian relations.

During their talk, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church mentioned his meeting with Cardinal Sepe in 2007 in Naples: "You gave me a very generous welcome. At that time, you gave a remarkable church in Naples to meet the needs of the Russian Orthodox community. Now Father Igor Vyzhanov, who you know well, serves in it. He was my staff for many years here in Moscow, and I very much hope

that his stay in Naples will also be of help to the relations between our Churches, between the Orthodox and the Catholics in your diocese".

"I remember", he said, "a year later you came to Moscow and my late predecessor met with you. I am delighted at the opportunity to resume good relations with you".

His Holiness said that there are many shrines in the diocese of Naples, which are venerated by both Western and Eastern Christian. For this reason, Italy has become a place of mass pilgrimage of Orthodox believers. "I believe it is beneficial in all respects because it provides an opportunity for both venerating shrines and getting familiar with the religious life of the Italian people. The Russians take liking to the Italians, just as, I can feel, the Italians to the Russians, which is also manifested on the level of everyday day life. This is said by our pilgrims who visit Italy", His Holiness said stressing the importance of good relations between Churches for building and developing relations between nations.

Patriarch Kirill also noted that the Catholic Church in Italy and in Western Europe on the whole encounters many challenges today. The principal among them is the task to preserve the Christian tradition, culture and faith in people's hearts in a situation of today's secular world.

"It is not at all an easy task", he stated, "We can see it the fact that the winds of radical secularization have begun touching the life of our people as well. It is my deep conviction that neither logic, nor arguments or education but only one's inner religious experience can oppose these trends. In this way we succeeded in preserving the faith in the most difficult years of official atheism in our country. I am sure that in the present difficult situation, too, the faith can be preserved only in this way. When an ordinary person says: Please do not try to convince me. I know for sure that Heaven responds to prayer because I asked and was given, then any propaganda is smashed by this inner experience".

Cardinal Sepe, on his part, addressed to Patriarch Kirill the words: "Thank you, Your Holiness, for the honour of being received by you. I have come to Moscow with a group of pilgrims in which there are also clergy of my diocese, because many asked me to take them to Russia so that they could see with their own eyes the life of the holy Russian Orthodox Church. They were together with me in Moscow and today they are going to St. Petersburg".

Among the topics discussed was also church social service. His Holiness Kirill gave a high value to the work carried out by Pope Francis and the whole Roman Catholic Church in this area.

DECR Communication Service

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