His Holiness Patriarch Kirill receives Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family

On 26 November 2013, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia received Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family. They were joined in the meeting, which took place at Danilovskaya hotel, by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, and Prof. Adriano Roccucci, general secretary of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

His Holiness warmly greeted the high representative of the Holy See, who takes part in the international conference on Bible studies as head of the International Catholic Biblical Federation. His Holiness highly appreciated the position of the Holy See on peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in Syria and noted great importance of the letter of Pope Francis to Russian President Vladimir Putin of September 4 with an appeal to the leaders of G20 countries to lay aside the pursuit of a military solution and seek a peaceful solution through dialogue and negotiations.

His Holiness talked about his visit to Syria and Lebanon in 2011 when the conflict had just begun. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church paid this visit to bring witness of spiritual support to Christians in the Middle East. The Russian Orthodox Church has consistently came out in defence of the suffering Christians of Syria and insisted on a peaceful settlement of the Syrian conflict. His Holiness mentioned his letter to the USA President Barack Obama with an appeal to listen to the hierarchs of Christian Churches in the Middle East, who warned against catastrophic consequences of a possible military strike against Syria.

His Holiness noted the efforts made by the Moscow Patriarchate for the release of abducted Christian bishops and underscored that the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church should act together for the restoration of peace and defence of Christians in the Middle East. This cooperation is even more urgent on the eve of the conference eon Syria due to take place in Geneva.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said that defence of the traditionally perceived family was a major aspect of cooperation among Churches. As the positions of the two Churches on this matter are very close, the Orthodox and the Catholics can uphold traditional family values in the secular European society.

Archbishop Paglia said that Pope Francis considered family a priority topic. Therefore the Extraordinary Synod of Catholic Bishops due to take place in 2014 will focus on the problems of family. The Archbishop is convinced that Churches should closely cooperate in this area.

The Conference ‘Orthodox and Catholics Together for the Family’, which was held in Rome on November 13 by the Department for External Church Relations and the Pontifical Council for the Family, was mentioned as an example of cooperation. Archbishop Paglia believes that cooperation should be developed, also at the United Nations, which proclaimed 2014 the Year of the Family.

At the end of the meeting, the participants confirmed that the defence of Christians from persecution and discrimination, as well as the upholding of the family and other traditional values in society were the priority aspects of the Orthodox-Catholic cooperation.

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