



## **Metropolitan Hilarion met with Rainer Cardinal Woelki, Archbishop of Berlin**

On 25 April 2013, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, who is visiting Germany with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, met with Rainer Maria *Cardinal* Woelki, Archbishop of Berlin.

The DECR chairman told Cardinal Rainer Woelki about the current dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, noting that the relations between the Churches have considerably improved under Pope Benedict XVI.

Metropolitan Hilarion emphasized the significance of theological dialogue between the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and touched upon a number of theological and ecclesiological issues which are on the agenda of joint talks. The DECR chairman expressed his hope for the Orthodox-Catholic cooperation to develop during the pontificate of the newly-elected Pope Francis, including cooperation in defending Christian values in society, social service and in protecting Christians, subject to persecution in various parts of the world.

The participants in the meeting also touched upon the problem of moral relativism which has recently spread over European countries. "Ample opportunities for cooperation open in opposing this destructive tendency," the DECR chairman emphasized.

Also raised at the meeting was the problem of persecution against Christians in various countries which causes deep concern of the Russian Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Hilarion noted the difficult situation of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa, subject to intimidation, persecution and extirpation. Meanwhile, the mass media keep silence or report false facts. The DECR chairman told Cardinal Rainer Woelki about the recent abduction of the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Antioch and of the Syriac Jacobite Church and noted that the information about their release, repeated by a number of mass media in Western countries, was false.

The participants in the meeting acknowledged the importance of joint efforts aimed at opposing the discrimination and violence against Christians.

Among those present were also Archbishop Feofan of Berlin and Germany; Archbishop Longin of Klin,

representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in Germany; archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries, and hegumen Daniel (Irbits), abbot of the Monastery of St George in Götschendorf.

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/52801/>