DECR chairman takes part in the opening of Giotto exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery

[gallery]

On 19 December 2011, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, took part in the opening of "In Christo" exhibition at the State Tretyakov Gallery.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Italian President Giorgio Napolitano were initiators of the exhibition which is being held under the auspices of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in the framework of the Year of Russian Culture and Language in Italy and of Italian Culture and Language in the Russia.

The exhibition is a result of the unique cooperation between Italian and Russian experts. The Tretyakov Gallery exhibits rare monuments of Old Russian art at the Cathedral in Florence. They include "Hodegetria" Icon of the Mother of God from Pskov (13th c.), "The Ascension of the Lord' icon from the iconostasis of the Vladimir Cathedral of the Dormition (dated 1408 and attributed to Andrei Rublev school), and the Crucifixion of Christ by Dionysius (1500).)

Exhibited at the Tretyakov Gallery for the first time are pieces by Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337): 'Madonna and Child (late 13th c.) from San Giorgio alla Costa and polyptych (*c.* 1305) from the Church of Santa Reparata.

The third part of the project is the catalogue "In Christo. Exchange of artistic and spiritual masterpieces between Russian and Italy" published in the Russian and Italian languages. Heads of the two states wrote introductions, while the theological part of the catalogue presents an article on the theology of icon in the Orthodox Church by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

Greeting were delivered by Dmitry Kozak, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Tretyakov Gallery; H.E. Antonio Dzanardi Landi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Italian Republic to the Russian Federation; Russian Minister of Culture Alexander Avdeyev; Archbishop Giuseppe Betori of Florence, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

The DECR chairman noted that close cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations and the Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Florence has played a great part in the realization of the project. 'The exchange of the masterpieces of iconography has not only cultural,

but also spiritual dimension. A wonderful opportunity is afforded to Orthodox Christians in Russia and Catholic Christians in Italy for seeing the best pieces of religious art created in spiritual traditions of Eastern and Western Christianity,' he said.

Ensemble San Felice from Florence performed medieval hymns from the archives of Santa Maria del Fiore, including hymns in Latin sung at divine services and hymns in Italian sung during people's processions.

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