



Moscow Patriarchate representatives participate in Pope Benedict XVI's talk with bishops of Orthodox and Oriental Churches

On the initiative of Pope Benedict XVI and on the invitation of the German Bishops' Conference, a meeting took place on September 24, 2011, between the Pope of Rome and members of the Orthodox Bishops' Assembly in Germany and representatives of Oriental (non-Chalcedonian) Churches, at the Seminary of Freiburg.

Participating in the meeting from the Russian Orthodox Church were Archbishop Longin of Klin, ROC representative in Germany, and Archbishop Feofan of Berlin and Germany.

In his welcoming speech, Pope Benedict XVI pointed in particular to closeness between the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodoxy, referring among other thing to the fact that they have preserved the old church structure through centuries. He also spoke of the age-old division between Christian East and Christian West and the primacy of the Pope of Rome as one of the serious reasons for this division.

Pope Benedict XVI gave special attention to the common efforts made by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to protect human life from conception to natural death and to the value of marriage and family.

According to Pope Benedict XVI, he came to know and love Orthodoxy as far back as the time of scientific studies in Bonn and later when he was Archbishop of Munich and Freising. Since that time he followed with interest and sympathy the development of Orthodox parishes in Western Europe including Germany, where there are 1,6 million Orthodox and Oriental Christians. The Pope welcomed the active cooperation among the Orthodox in Germany including the establishment of an Orthodox Bishops' Assembly a year ago, which unites bishops of the canonical Orthodox Churches in Germany.

In his response, Metropolitan Augustine of Germany (Patriarchate of Constantinople), president of the Orthodox Bishops' Assembly in Germany, pointed to the common veneration of the Most Holy Mother of God as uniting the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

In his talk to the bishops representing the Russian Orthodox Church, Pope Benedict XVI asked them to convey his sincere fraternal greetings to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Pope Benedict XVI was on an official visit to Germany on the invitation of the German Government from

September 22 to 25, 2011.

His visit began in Berlin where he was received by President Christian Wulff and Chancellor Angela Merkel. On the same day, the Pope delivered a speech at the Bundestag. In the evening, a service was held at Olympic Stadium. Among those present was Archbishop Feofan of Berlin and Germany.

In the days to follow the high guest visited Erfurt and Freiburg, where he officiated at services attended by scores of thousands of the faithful. In the course of his visit, the Pope of Rome met with representatives of the Evangelical Churches in Germany, as well as Judaism and Islam.

On Sunday, September 25, the Pope celebrated Mass at Freiburg airport in the presence of one hundred thousand believers. Among honorary guests were representatives of Orthodox and Oriental Churches including Archbishop Longin of Klin and Archbishop Feofan of Berlin and Germany.

In the speeches he made during his visit to Germany, the head of the Roman Catholic Church put a special emphasis on the need to preserve common Christian values and morality in the modern world. Catholics make up over 30% of the population in Germany.

*Russian Orthodox Church Permanent Representation in Germany/
DECR Communication Service*

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