



Metropolitan Hilarion greets organizers and participants of the International Conference on “Christian Charity in History, Historiography and Contemporary Culture”

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, sent greetings to the organizers and participants of the International Conference on “Christian Charity in History, Historiography and Contemporary Culture” being held in Moscow on 16-17 June 2011. The text is given below.

Your Graces!

Dear organizers and participants of the Conference!

I wholeheartedly greet all the participants in the International Conference on “Christian Charity in History, Historiography and Contemporary Culture” sponsored by the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, and the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. Common work of secular academic science, an authoritative scholarly institution of the Roman Catholic Church and a Synodal department of the Russian Orthodox Church make this conference a significant event in the life of academic community and for the development of inter-Christian relations. It is even more gratifying to see that these common efforts are undertaken for considering charity – a main subject matter for Christians.

The notion of charity is a dominant feature in Christianity characterizing the relationship between God and man, relations among people, and between man and all God's creation. “God is love,” St. John the Theologian teaches us, “God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him” (1 Jn 4:8-9). As charity is an essential property of God who has self-emptied and sacrificed himself for the salvation of human beings, so the life of a Christian is first of all defined by charity. “Be merciful, as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). The Saviour addressed this call to all his disciples, whose eternal life directly depends on their active love of the neighbours (cf. Mt 25:34-40).

The writings of the Holy Fathers and all history of Christian asceticism and church charity in the East and in the West bring witness to the profound understanding by the Church of the value of charity integral for Christian life. St John Chrysostom wrote that nothing likens us to God as charity. Therefore, it is not fortuitous that the Church has always venerated the ascetics who distinguished themselves by

their sacrificial love of the neighbours. Suffice it to recall St John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria; St Martin, Bishop of Tours; and St Philaret the Merciful.

I wish the conference dedicated to Christian charity in its historical aspect to help Christians of the East and the West to discover invaluable treasure of Christian witness of love as an inspiring example for personal participation in the salutary ministry of charity never interrupted in the life of the Church. May God's blessing be with you all.

/+Hilarion/

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk

Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's

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