



Primate of Russian Orthodox Church points to positive tendencies in dialogue between Moscow Patriarchate and Roman Catholic Church

'The positive tendencies, which have begun to show in the dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, have been further developed last year. Joint activities and numerous meetings with representatives of the Catholic Church have confirmed that our positions coincide on many problems the modern world poses before Christians. Among them is the aggressive secularization, globalization, erosion of the norms of traditional morality', His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia said in his report to the Bishops' Conference on 2 February 2010.

His Holiness noted that the Pope Benedict XVI of Rome has a consistent position close to that of the Orthodox on these issues. 'Evidence to this are his statements and messages as well as views expressed by high-ranking representatives of the Roman Catholic Church with whom we maintain contacts', His Holiness informed the gathering.

The common understanding concerning the defense of human dignity in Europe was confirmed in particular during the meetings the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, Archbishop (now Metropolitan) Hilarion of Volokolamsk, had with Pope Benedict XVI and leaders of the Roman Curia in September 2009 in Rome and during the 6th theological talks between the Russian Orthodox Church and the German Bishops' Conference last December.

The Patriarchal report also pointed to the existence of prospects for cooperation with the Catholics in the UN and UNESCO and in international European organizations. According to Patriarch Kirill, it is manifested in particular in the common position taken by the Orthodox and Catholic representatives during the round-table conference organized by the OSCE last March on the discrimination of Christians in Europe. In connection with the November ruling of the European Court of Human rights against the presence of crucifixes in Italian schools, which was a downright attack against Christian European tradition, the Supreme Authority of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed solidarity with the Roman Catholic Church in Italy. 'We stated once again that the European civilization has Christian roots. Therefore it is absolutely inadmissible that Europe and its social institutions should be deprived of symbols expressing its traditional spiritual identity, so that liberal and atheistic standards could be accommodated', he said.

At the same time, efforts were continued to settle problems existing in the bilateral relations. In contacts

with the Roman Catholic leaders, especially those of the Congregation for Oriental Churches, the difficult situation in Ukraine was discussed, as Orthodox believers had been deprived of their churches as a result of forcible actions by the Greek Catholics in the 80s and 90s. They feel deprived of their rights to this day. This problem was posed once again during the meeting between the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations and the prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, which took place last year in Rome.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed hope that the Catholic side would undertake concrete and practical steps to settle the problem of Orthodox-Catholic relations in Ukraine.

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