



Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk: We expect the Roman Catholic Church to make concrete steps pointing to the desire to go towards meeting our views

Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, in a talk with the Saturday national news anchorman Sergey Brilev, when asked about what significance the diplomatic relations now established between the Russian Federation and the Vatican have for dialogue between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Catholic Church, answered: 'We can only welcome this step of the Russian State'.

He also noted that in inter-church relations there are problems that cannot be resolved only through establishment of diplomatic relations. These problems should be settled by other ways and means.

He said that the Russian Orthodox Church is not only a Church of Russia but also a Church of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Baltic and Central Asian countries, stressing, 'And this great Church, which I believe is the second largest after the Roman Catholic Church, maintains continued dialogue with it, and there are problems in our relations which need to be resolved. First of all, it is the situation in Western Ukraine where there is still a tension in relations between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics'.

Asked about prospects for a meeting between the Primates of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Pope of Rome, Archbishop Hilarion said, 'I visited the Vatican in September and met with the Pope Benedict XVI of Rome. We talked for an hour discussing the whole range of problems existing in relations between our two Churches. The question about organizing a meeting between the two Primates was also taken up, and our position on it has remained unchanged for many years. We have never excluded a possibility for such a meeting, and the late Patriarch Alexy II said it and the present Patriarch Kirill has said it. But this meeting should be prepared in such a way that the existing tension was removed'.

Archbishop Hilarion stressed that 'we expect the Roman Catholic Church to make concrete steps pointing to the desire to go towards meeting our views, the desire to heal the wounds inflicted by the hard period of the 90s when the Greek Catholics seized over five hundred churches and ousted the Orthodox believers from them. We have proposed concrete ways of settling the existing problems'.

