Metropolitan Hilarion: At the heart of dialogue with the Catholic Church is the situation of Christians in the Middle East, culture and charity work.



A few days ago, it was the fifth anniversary of the meeting between the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus Kirill and Pope Francis in Havana. What came before this and what influence this meeting exerted on the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church the Metropolitan of Volokolamsk and chairman of the Department for External Church Affairs Hilarion spoke of to the Church and the World TV programme.

He reminded viewers that this relationship had been developing gradually over the course of a number of decades. “Certain difficulties arose at the beginning of the 1990s when the Catholic Church undertook a number of steps aimed at widening its missionary influence upon the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church,” the Metropolitan stated. “However, a joint commission was set up to examine those instances of dispute which could have had a negative effect on mutual relations. The situation was gradually regulated. There then appeared an agreement on a meeting between Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Patriarch Alexis II. The meeting had already been scheduled, a time and date had been agreed upon, but the two sides could not agree upon a joint statement. As a result, the meeting was postponed. In fact, it had been cancelled.”

Five years ago, in 2016, the meeting took place in Havana. By this time there was a new Patriarch of Moscow and a new Pope, the chairman of the DECR noted.

He emphasized that the conversation between Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis “was not of a theological nature, but rather concerned the situation of Christians in the Middle East.”

“Five years have now elapsed. It cannot be said that the situation of Christians in the Middle East has changed for the better, with the exception, perhaps, of Syria where, thanks to the actions of the Russian army, terrorists have been driven from most of the country,” Metropolitan Hilarion noted. “There is now a gradual and slow return to normality in Syria.”

The Metropolitan also pointed out that projects were jointly being worked out with the Catholics in the sphere of culture, charity and social ministry.

“The fifth anniversary of the Havana meeting was marked by a meeting that this time we held online,” said the chairman of the DECR. “Cardinal Koch, the head of the Papal council for Christian unity, spoke for the Catholic side. I and other representatives of the Department of External Church Relations spoke on behalf of the Russian Church. We discussed the situation that the world has found itself in as a result of the pandemic and shared out experiences in surviving and pastoral care in these conditions.”

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/61445/