Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: The Churches are seeking unity on the issue of climate change.



The metropolitan of Volokolamsk Hilarion: The Churches are seeking unity on the issue of climate change.

The "Faith and Science: Towards Cop26" meeting on climate change and attended by representatives of the world's religions, scientists and experts, took place in the Vatican on 4th October 2021. Participating was the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Hilarion. In his interview with RIA Novosti the metropolitan in particular spoke of how he had taken the opportunity to discuss with the archbishop of Canterbury and Vatican representatives how the Churches view the problem of global warming and how the Russian Orthodox Church is guided in her approach to this problem.

Your Eminence, you are in Rome attending the inter-religious summit dedicated to climate change. In the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican at the signing of the joint appeal you sat alongside the pope, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the archbishop of Constantinople. Is this the first time you have met with Patriarch Bartholomew after breaking off relations with Constantinople?

Yes. According to the decision of our Holy Synod, we do not participate in any events presided over or co-presided over by representatives of Constantinople. In this instance, however, there is no such presidency or co-presidency. The meeting was attended by thirty-four religious leaders, of which only two represented the Orthodox Church, that is, Patriarch Bartholomew and myself. If it was not for me, then he would be the sole representative of world Orthodoxy. I remind you that at the last session of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church we stated that he could not represent world Orthodoxy as he had lost the trust of millions of people. He can represent only his own Church and those Churches who want him to represent them. Our Church is not among these Churches.

You mean that there were no other representatives of the Local Churches present?

No. Among the speakers there was archpriest Ioan Sauca from the Romanian Orthodox Church, who was representing not the Church of Romania, but the World Council of Churches in his capacity as general secretary of this organization.

Did you manage to speak to Patriarch Bartholomew?

I had no plans to hold negotiations with him. When we took our seats, he said ‘good morning’ to me in Russian, to which I replied ‘good morning’ in English. Our conversation ended on that.

Have you already spoken with the pope?

We have so far only greeted one another. There will be a separate meeting, although as the Vatican is receiving a huge crowd of guests this meeting will apparently be only a short one. This is what I have been told by the Papal Council for Christian Unity. A meeting with the Council’s chairman cardinal Koch has been scheduled for this afternoon.

And have you had a conversation with the archbishop of Canterbury?

There was a detailed conversation with him yesterday evening at a dinner organized by the British ambassador in Italy. I sat next to him and archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican secretary for international relations. We managed to speak about a great many things. The current alarming situation

in the world has prompted religious leaders into seeking out ways of mutual interaction, in particular, on the issue of climate change. We are unable through our own endeavours to halt global warming which holds the threat of unpredictable catastrophes for all of humankind, but we are able to exert an influence upon political leaders so that their decisions will further the protection of the environment. It is to this topic that the meeting in the Vatican is devoted, and which I am attending at the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill.

Each of the meeting's participants was allowed to speak for two minutes. What did you speak about?

Firstly, I quoted the from the document *The Position of the Russian Orthodox Church on Current Ecological Problems* adopted at the Episcopal Council in 2013 on the subject of how "in a dialogue with representatives of society, government, and international organizations, the Russian Orthodox Church considers it its duty to promote, in people belonging to different social, ethnic, cultural, age, and professional backgrounds, a sense of shared responsibility for the safety of God's creation, and to support their work in this direction." Secondly, I spoke of how the current ecological situation has come about as a result of the desire of some to get rich at the expense of others as well as it being a result of unjustly acquired wealth. I called upon the religious leaders to take upon themselves joint responsibility for the present and future of humankind by working for the salvation of our beautiful planet.

Interviewed by Olga Lipich.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/88180/