Presentation of the DECR Chairman at the interreligious meeting on Religion and Education



With a blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, took part in the interreligious meeting on Religion and Education, which took place in the Vatican.

Your Holiness, esteemed participants in today's meeting!

Nowadays it is becoming ever more evident that no good education can be provided without thestrong foundation of transcendental values, embodied by the eternal wisdom of religion.

Christians are united by the belief that the uttermost manifestation of God's wisdom became visible in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He himself constitutes the core of our educational values which we need to transmit to the coming generations.

It is the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ that has inspired infinite numbers of writers, poets, painters, composers, scholars who created some of the most beautiful expressions of human spirit and mind. I will give you just one example.

When Dostoevsky, sentenced to hard labor, arrived shackled to the Tobolsk prison, one lady gave him a copy of the Gospel. It turned out that this was the only book that was allowed to be kept and read in prison.

Dostoevsky did not part with this book either in hard labor or in subsequent years. It was not just his reference book - it was the book of his whole life. All of his works are filled with quotations from and allusions to the New Testament. Many gospel images underlie his philosophical views, many sayings of Christ become the starting point in the reasoning of the heroes of his novels. Dostoevsky cannot be understood without understanding the exceptional role that the Gospel played in his work and life. And it was the shining image of Christ which was his highest moral and spiritual ideal. He shared this ideal with his contemporaries and he continues to share it with all of us.

It is the personality of Jesus Christ that is our main treasure, and we are happy to share it with representatives of other religions. Jesus Christ is wider than Christianity. He belongs to the whole of humanity. And he has something to say to every human being.

The recourse to the personality of Jesus Christ can indeed help us in dealing with the paramount task of improving the quality of education throughout the world and making our educational system more balanced, resistant to the challenges of our time while rooted in the desire to find God.

This desire is truly universal. As Saint Augustine of Hippo famously put it, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." In order to satisfy that most profound desire of the human heart we need to understand education in a holistic way: as a path of intellectual and spiritual growth that brings human person to the joy that never ends.

May this understanding remain at the centre of interreligious collaboration and may it continue to bring good fruits in the time to come.

DECR Communication service

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