# His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: We welcome any mediatory mission aimed to overcome the tragic conflict in Ukraine and to bring about the prompt establishment of a just peace



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On June 29, in the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in the St. Daniel Monastery a meeting took place between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and the president of the Conference of Italian Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi who has come to Russia on a special peace-making mission he has been charged with by Pope Francis of Rome.

They were joined by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, an adviser to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman.

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi was accompanied by Archbishop Giovanni d'Aniello, Apostolic Nuncio in the Russian Federation; Monsignor Peter Tarnavsky, Apostolic Nunciature adviser; Monsignor Paul Butnaru, Vatican Secretariat of State; and Prof Adriano Roccucci, vice-president of the Community of Saint'Egidio.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church cordially welcomed the high guest noting in particular, 'At the time when great problems have emerged in the relations between Russia and the West, when we encounter both a great tension in the sphere of political relations and real threats of the emergence of a major global armed conflict, it is very important that all the forces interested in preservation of peace and justice should unite to prevent such feasible pace of events'.

At the same time, His Holiness pointed out that the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church have an experience of interaction, including amid a very unfavourable political climate: "In the situation of the cold war, our Churches held regular and mutually useful contacts to consider, among other things, the issues that worried our nations'. In this connection, His Holiness mentioned the positive role of the Community of Saint'Egidio, which in a very difficult situation caused by the cold war, which lasted for a greater part of the second half of the 20th century, maintained active contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church.

'I think that in the present situation too, which is also marked by many risks and many dangers, Churches, through common efforts, can prevent the negative development of political conditions and serve for peace and justice", His Holiness said with confidence.

On his part, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi conveyed to Patriarch Kirill a greeting from Pope Francis of Rome.

Mentioning the intensity of the dialogue at the time of the cold war, the guest stressed that in the present complicated situation, the dialogue should not stop but should rather be more intensive. 'As Christians we should help each other to understand how to act', Cardinal Matteo Zuppi assured. 'In face of objective difficulties of this time, we should understand what the Lord asks us to do. And we are very glad today that we can hear you and work to solve the existing problems'.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill expressed solidarity with the thought that at a time when a special tension arises in relations between countries and peoples, Churces should not stay off - they should take part in the work aimed at reconciliation, development and establishment of relations more lasting and most importantly at the development of mutual understanding. 'If countries and peoples understand each other, then the realpolitik is built taking into account the interests of countries and peoples. It is very important that in this very difficult time Christian communities in East and West should participate in the process of reconciliation', Patriarch Kirill stressed.

‘The situation in Ukraine is utterly unhealthy personally for me’, he said, ‘I head the Orthodox Church whose flock lives both in Russia and Ukraine and other countries. Therefore, the suffering of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples deeply wounds my heart. Precisely for this reason, already since 2014 we have lifted up in all our church ardent prayers for peace in Ukraine. We used and will use all the means to end this terrible conflict as soon as possible so that there can be as few as possible victims’.

The interlocutors deemed it especially important in the present situation to concentrate on the solution of humanitarian problems.

In addition, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill informed the high representative of Pope Francis about the persecutions against communities and clergy and laity of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The sides agreed to continue maintaining contacts.

In conclusion of the talk they exchanged tokens of the meeting.

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