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Relations between Russian Church, Vatican have potential, says Alexy II

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Moscow, Russia, Oct 3, 2006 / 12:00 am (CNA).- A positive step was made this week in relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church during a meeting between Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop of Milan, and Alexy II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

The two churches' positions on key contemporary issues coincide, and there are many avenues for cooperation, the patriarch said.

According to a report by Interfax, Alexy II said he is "convinced that good relations and mutual support will contribute to the further development of cooperation on key modern issues between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church."

The two prelates met at St. Daniil Monastery, the patriarch's residence in Moscow, on Monday at the initiative of the patriarch. The high-ranking delegation led by the cardinal arrived in Moscow Sept. 29.

Cardinal Tettamanzi presented the patriarch with a silver reliquary for the ashes of St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Marcellina and Bishop St. Dionysius, as well as a collection of St. Ambrose's books in Latin and their version in Italian.

"Common worship of these martyrs will unite us and our two churches in common prayer ... and serve as a bridge," the cardinal said in presenting the gift.

The patriarch expressed gratitude, saying the books "will doubtlessly prove useful to the theologians of our church."

Alexy II also praised long-time good personal contacts between priests of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Milan archbishop's office.

Cardinal Tettamanzi expressed regret for the Roman Catholic Church's missionary activity in Russia in the 1990s, saying it may have been insulting to the Russian Orthodox Church, "which had historically and continues to have the gift to proclaim the Gospel on this earth and the mission to bear witness to it."

"It gives us anguish to realize that some Western Christians, including Catholics, failed to discern and recognize the incomparable spiritual richness of Holy Russia and to appreciate and respect the religious and cultural heritage of the great Orthodox tradition," the cardinal reportedly said during the meeting.

He said this activity was increased due to the initiative of various individuals from the West, but it "does not always appear proper from an ecumenical viewpoint." He added that proselytism today "is condemned by many among not only the Orthodox but also Catholics."

"There must be no room for confessional competition in the name of the Gospel," the cardinal stated.

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Noera Aistesei · 2 years ago
 Tettamanzi must be kindly reminded that the Russian Church is NOT the Holy Church headed by the Pope. And this is not OK. He must also be kindly remembered about the meaning of the expression "sister Churches".

Allan Gibb · 2 years ago
 As Our Lady of Fatima asked the conversation of Russia to her immaculate heart or Russia will spread her errors, I cannot agree in a sense with the Cardinal. The Catholic mission must go forward in Russia, given the continued effects of atheism and communism. It is clear the Russian Orthodox need our help, and I for one am glad to help. The Cardinal seems to be alluding to the proselyzing of Protestants, Mormons and no doubt Jehovah's Witnesses. I would agree in all cases, the spiritual heritage of Russia must have a prime place. Clearly Protestants, J.W.s, Mormons and the like lack sensitivity.

G. De Feo, since the Russian Orthodox have apostolic succession, and have maintained the necessary matter, form and intention for Mass and Blessed Sacrament, their Mass is equivalent to ours in its sacramental character.

Jack Leone · 2 years ago
 I'm glad to hear of this! This is joyous news, thanks to Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima! I have hope in Patriarch Alexy III! Mary's Immaculate Heart will triumph and perhaps, is already maybe! Great to hear of this.

I might add that I don't fully agree with Cardinal Tettamanzi on apologizing for missionary work in Russia. Missionary activity is the way the Gospel gets spread. Anyway, glad to hear of this news. It looks good!

G. De Feo · 2 years ago
 I cannot agree with the Archbishop of Milan's stance on proselytism.

The Catholic faith was securely founded on it; and while I am not familiar with its particulars, could the Russian church's priests be considered qualified by Rome to perform a Mass considered by her to be equivalent to its own--that culminates in an identical Eucharistic celebration?

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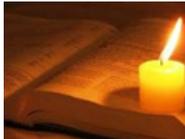
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