

## Russian Orthodox bishop visits apostolic nuncio in Tokyo

Respective prelates discuss history of their churches in Japan Russian Orthodox bishop visits apostolic nuncio in Tokyo



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A Russian Orthodox metropolitan has met the apostolic nuncio to Japan in Tokyo and exchanged views on the state of Orthodox-Catholic dialogue.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk visited the Apostolic Nunciature Nov. 8 where he talked with nuncio Archbishop Joseph Chennoth. Metropolitan Hilarion was accompanied by two Orthodox clerics, officials from the metropolitan's office and the Russian embassy.

According to Msgr. Pawel Marcin Obiedzinski, secretary of the nunciature, it was possibly the first time the Vatican's diplomatic mission in Japan received a visit by an Orthodox bishop. During their talks, Archbishop Chennoth recalled the historic meeting of Pope Francis and the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill in Cuba in 2016, and the Vatican's Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin's visit to Russia in August.

Metropolitan Hilarion mentioned that Kirill visited Poland in 2012 and signed a document with Archbishop Jozef Michalik, then president of the Polish Catholic bishops' conference. The two prelates discussed their respective churches' missions in Japan.

Archbishop Chennoth described Japan as a "land of martyrs," and outlined Catholic history, including St. Francis Xavier's arrival and the centuries of persecution. In response, the metropolitan mentioned the Martin Scorsese movie *Silence* which depicts the brutal persecutions in Japan about 400 years ago.

The Russian metropolitan introduced a brief history of the Orthodox Church in Japan, especially the contribution of the Orthodox St. Nicholas of Japan who arrived in 1861 as the first Russian missionary to the country.

Metropolitan Hilarion, who is a well-known composer, presented the nuncio a set of CDs of his compositions.

Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, visited Japan Nov. 7-9 in order to take part in a conference — Sts. Nicholas of Japan and Innocent of Moscow: Culture of the Peoples of Russia, Japan, and America — held at the Russian Embassy in Tokyo. The event was organized by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation.

According to Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, there are about 95,000 Orthodox in Japan.

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