

Vietnam and Vatican move closer: Monsignor Parolin

A senior Vatican official said on June 11 that Vietnam and the Vatican have listened to each other and in some issues, the two sides' points of view have moved closer.

The visiting Vatican Undersecretary of State for Relations with States, Monsignor Pietro Parolin, made the remark in an interview with the Vietnam News Agency during the Vatican delegation's annual visit to Vietnam from June 9-15.

"We spent all day in a dialogue with the Vietnamese Government Committee for Religious Affairs," Monsignor Parolin said.

"We think the dialogue itself is a result and believe the two sides will find solutions through dialogues, meetings and exchanges."

He also said in addition to dialogues with Vietnamese government agencies, his delegation's visit is aimed at calling on Catholic dignitaries and parishioners at a number of churches in localities.

Following two working days in Hanoi, the Vatican delegation on June 11 left for central Thua Thien-Hue and Quang Tri provinces, Central Highlands Lam Dong province, Ho Chi Minh City and southern Binh Duong province.

Monsignor Pietro Parolin said the end is in sight in the process of establishing diplomatic ties between Vietnam and the Vatican, especially through visits by Vatican delegations and a visit to the Vatican by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung last year.

"We have agreed to set up task groups to discuss the issue and once established, the groups will have specific work calendars," he said.

Regarding Vietnam's implementation of policies on religion in recent years, Parolin said facilitating religious activities is the government's duty and also the execution of religious freedom policy.

During a meeting with the Vatican delegation on June 10, the director of the Vietnamese Government Committee for Religious Affairs, Nguyen The Doanh, said Vietnam considers religion a spiritual demand of the people and a social phenomenon in the community. The country also views religious followers as its unseparated part.

According to Doanh, the government's religious policy is manifested in a number of related legal documents, including the Ordinance on Belief and Religion, promulgated in 2004 to serve the people's legitimate demand for religion and facilitate their legal religious activities.

So far, 10 religions with nearly 30 religious organisations have been officially recognised in Vietnam.

Catholicism alone saw the establishment of 300 parishes last year, bringing its total to 3,000 nationwide.

Doanh recognised the contributions made by Catholic followers in many areas, particularly their humanitarian activities. Last year, Catholics donated VND 11 billion to the nation's underprivileged. (VNA)

Source: Vietnam News Agency (VNA)