

## **METROPOLITAN FILARET: IT'S TIME TO TAKE A STEP TOWARD UNITY**

By Jesús Colina

VATICAN CITY, MAY 6, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The time is now for the Orthodox and Catholic Churches to take a step toward unity, and for Benedict XVI and the Orthodox patriarch of Moscow to meet, says the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus.

Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Sluck said this Tuesday at the international conference held in Rome on "The Poor Are the Precious Treasure of the Church: Orthodox and Catholics Together on the Path of Charity."

During the conference, which was promoted by the Sant'Egidio Community, participants reflected on the reception of the most frail in our societies, the testimony of the Fathers of the Church, and the challenges dictated by new social problems.

According to Metropolitan Filaret, the time has come to take decisive steps toward unity, reported the country's Catholic news service.

The Orthodox leader added that both Churches seek to establish full unity, and stressed that he has come to this conclusion based on the fraternal dialogue and the meetings that they have held with representatives of the Catholic Church.

If Benedict XVI and Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia were to meet, it would be a first for the two pastors of Rome and Moscow.

Metropolitan Filaret's statements coincide with the announcement of the "Days of Russian Culture and Spirituality in the Vatican," which will be held May 19-20, and which will culminate with a concert offered to Benedict XVI by Kirill I.

The musical event will include compositions of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, president of the Department for Foreign Relations of the Patriarchy of Moscow.

On Wednesday, Metropolitan Filaret visited the Holy Shroud of Turin and Cardinal Severino Poletto, archbishop of Turin.

"The impression is so profound that one cannot express the joy one feels," commented the Orthodox representative after seeing the Shroud.

Metropolitan Filaret, in this post since 1978, received the recognition of "Hero of

Belarus" in 2006, by decision of president Alexander Lukashenko, in recognition of the service to the spirituality of his country.

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