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Joint Declaration of Pope and Russian Orthodox Patriarch

Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill

Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow signed a joint declaration that emphasized the things the two churches have in common. The two met Feb. 12 in a lounge at Havana's José Martí International Airport; it was the first meeting ever between a pope and a Russian Orthodox patriarch. The two leaders embraced, kissing each other three times. "Finally," the pope told the patriarch. "We are brothers," he added. Amid the clicking of cameras and multiple flashes, Patriarch Kirill was overheard telling the pope, "Things are easier now." The pope said, "It is clearer that this is God's will." The

"Much of the future of humanity will depend on our capacity to give shared witness to the Spirit of truth in these difficult times."

joint declaration addressed the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, saying that "whole families, villages and cities of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being completely exterminated." The pope and the patriarch called on the international community "to act urgently in order to prevent the further expulsion" of Christians, to end violence and terrorism, and to ensure that large amounts of humanitarian aid reach the victims of violence. They called those who have died "martyrs of our times" and said they helped unite various churches "by their shared suffering." They spoke of life issues: abortion, euthanasia, new reproductive technologies and threats against the churches' view of marriage. They also spoke about the situation in Ukraine, an area that has long been contentious between the churches, calling on their churches "to work toward social harmony, to refrain from taking part in the confrontation and to not support any further development of the conflict." The joint declaration follows.

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Cor 13:13).

1. By God the Father's will, from which all gifts come, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit Consolator, we, Pope Francis and Kirill, patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, have met today in Havana. We give thanks to God, glorified in the Trinity, for this meeting, the

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