

R E L I G I O U S N E W S S E R V I C E

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PATRIARCH TALKS WITH POPE,
VISITS CHURCHES, CATACOMBS

By Religious News Service (10-27-67)

VATICAN CITY (RNS) -- Patriarch Athenagoras I, spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodoxy, met privately with Pope Paul VI for approximately an hour on Oct. 27, second day of his historic visit to the Vatican.

No official report was given on the subjects covered, but unofficial sources said that the Pope and the Patriarch discussed Christian unity and the establishment of a mixed commission to study the theological differences between Catholics and Orthodox.

Other subjects mentioned by unofficial sources were the future of the holy places in Jerusalem and the implications of the ecumenical tour which Patriarch Athenagoras is presently making.

The Ecumenical Patriarch has already visited the Serbian, Romanian and Bulgarian Patriarchs and plans visits to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Geneva headquarters of the World Council of Churches before his return to his residence in Istanbul.

He will visit Russian Orthodox leaders in Moscow and Tiflis in May, 1968.

During his 55-hour stay in Rome, Patriarch Athenagoras was lodged in a tower in the Vatican Gardens which had been renovated by Pope John XXIII, shortly before his death, as a private retreat.

Besides joining the Pope in private conversations and in a 90-minute service of prayers, hymns and sermons, he was taken by the Pope on a tour of the Vatican Palace and visited a number of churches and shrines in Rome, including the Catacombs of Priscilla, the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, and the Basilica of St. Mary Major.

At the Basilica of St. Paul, accompanied by officials of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity and the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Church, he gave his blessing to an enthusiastic crowd estimated at more than 10,000.

With the four Orthodox metropolitans who have been accompanying him, he was given a reception by Augustin Cardinal Bea at the Secretariat for Christian Unity.

His final activities before flying to Zurich, Saturday, Oct. 28, were to include a morning reception for the Orthodox community of Rome and a last conversation with Pope Paul.