

# New Orthodox Church Head Has Reached Out to Vatican

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By VOA News

27 January 2009



Russian Orthodox Church interim leader Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad seen in Moscow's Christ the Saviour Cathedral, 27 Jan. 2009

The new leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Kirill, has met with the pope and made optimistic comments about better ties with the Roman Catholic Church.

But Russian analysts say no one should expect a quick thaw in relations between the Roman and Russian churches.

The 62-year-old Metropolitan Kirill was born in St. Petersburg and was ordained a priest in 1969. He was appointed a metropolitan (bishop) in 1991.

His church duties included a long stint as head of foreign relations.

Metropolitan Kirill has spoken about the need for warmer relations with the Roman Catholic Church.

He met with Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican in 2007.

But he has also made comments echoing those of his predecessor, Patriarch Alexei, who accused the Vatican of attempting to convert Russian Orthodox believers.

The Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches split nearly 1,000 years ago.

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