

Bishop accuses Vatican of limited talk with Orthodox

WARSAW, Poland - A Russian Orthodox bishop who walked out of official Catholic-Orthodox talks has accused the Vatican of pursuing dialogue with only part of the Orthodox church.

“Without the Russian church, it will no longer be an Orthodox-Catholic dialogue,” said Bishop Hilarion of Vienna and Austria. “It will be the Vatican’s dialogue with just a part of the Orthodox church. I don’t think all Orthodox churches will accept the outcome of such a dialogue.”

Bishop Hilarion told Russia’s Interfax news agency in mid-November that the Oct. 8-15 meeting of the official Catholic-Orthodox dialogue commission had fallen into a trap by comparing the pope with the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, who within the Orthodox church does not have the same status the pope has in the Catholic Church.

A joint document from the dialogue, published Nov. 15, recognizes the bishop of Rome’s primacy among all the world’s bishops, but calls for his role to be studied further in the next phase of Catholic-Orthodox dialogue.

“The document has a whole series of doubtful conclusions and assertions which are not borne out by historical truth,” said Bishop Hilarion, who heads the Russian Orthodox Church’s representation to European institutions. “In 2006 ... I already disputed these assertions and called them contradictions of the ecclesiological self-interpretation of local Orthodox churches.”

The Russian Orthodox delegation, which left the talks early after objecting to the presence of an Orthodox group from Estonia, did not sign the document.

Bishop Hilarion said the document would be “thoroughly examined” by his church’s theological commission, which would then need to have its assessment approved by the governing synod.