



AS IT IS

## Pope Welcomes Russia's New Ambassador to Vatican

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Pope Francis has officially welcomed Russia's new ambassador to the Vatican.

The leader of the Roman Catholic Church met with Ambassador Ivan Soltanovsky Monday in Vatican City as the diplomat presented his official documents.

Soltanovsky is replacing Ambassador Alexander Avdeev. Avdeev met with Francis in February 2022 at Russia's Embassy in Rome, the day after Russian forces invaded Ukraine.

Soltanovsky's visit came shortly after Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the government was ready to meet again with the Catholic Church's Ukraine peace **envoy**, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi.

"The Vatican is continuing its efforts. The papal envoy will come back (to Russia) soon," Lavrov said last Friday. He was speaking to a group of diplomats and ambassadors during a discussion about Ukraine in Moscow.

Zuppi was appointed by Pope Francis in May. Since then, he has visited the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, as well as Moscow, Washington D.C. and Beijing.

At first, Zuppi's efforts seemed centered on a program that seeks to reunite Ukrainian children taken to Russia after the invasion of Ukraine. However, the diplomat also discussed restarting grain exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports during talks with Chinese officials in Beijing.

When he returned to Italy, Zuppi said his talks in Beijing resulted in an important sharing of ideas. He also expressed hope about Lavrov's comments about a second visit. During a trip to Moscow in June, Zuppi met with Russia's minister for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, and an adviser to President Vladimir Putin.

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant in late March for Lvova-Belova and Putin. The court accused them of kidnapping children from Ukraine. Russian officials have denied organizing any forced **adoptions** during the war.

Zuppi spoke to the TV2000 broadcaster of the Italian bishops conference over the weekend. He said Lavrov's openness to a second meeting was "important because peace is made through **dialogue** and finding the possible and necessary spaces."

Francis has followed the Holy See's tradition of neutrality in conflicts by trying to keep open paths of negotiation with both Ukraine and Russia.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

*The Associated Press reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English.*

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## Words in This Story

**envoy** -*n.* someone sent to represent their government in another country

**adoption** - *n.* a legal process in which individuals officially become the parents of someone else's child

**dialogue** - *n.* a official discussion between countries or groups of people