

Briefly noted

News in the [January 15, 2008](#) issue

Roman Catholic missionaries should aim to win souls and not restrict themselves to humanitarian good works, the Vatican said December 14. A new 19-page document, which was personally approved by Pope Benedict XVI, draws on a controversial Vatican declaration he issued in 2000 asserting that Catholics alone have “the fullness of the means of salvation.” The new document, issued by the same doctrinal office of which Benedict was the longtime head, aims to correct a “growing confusion” among theologians who argue that “it is enough [for missionaries] to build communities which strive for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity.” The document also seeks to debunk the notion that it is “possible to be saved without explicit knowledge of Christ and without formal incorporation in the Church.”

Patriarch Alexsy II and other leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church have voiced their support for President Vladimir Putin’s anointing of First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev as his successor. They also approved of Medvedev’s declaration that he would appoint Putin as prime minister after the scheduled March 2 presidential elections. With the backing of Putin and the United Russia Party, which dominates Russian politics, Medvedev, 42, is expected to win by a wide margin. Speaking to reporters after an event at the Russian Academy of Sciences December 11, Alexsy said that Medvedev has been a great supporter of the church in the academic sphere, pushing for state structures to recognize degrees from religious educational institutions. “Before we used to hit a brick wall when we raised this question,” said Alexsy.