



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: the Church believes that her prayer “for peace of the whole world” will not go unheard

In his interview to Interfax-Religion web portal, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, commented on the current explosive situation in the international arena.

– This week has been marked by a heated confrontation between Russia and the USA which threatened to grow into an armed conflict. What advice could you give as an archpastor to those who fear that a war will break out?

– I advise everyone to pray to the Lord that He make wise those in power and that they realize their responsibility for the fate of their peoples and the entire humanity; to pray that leaders of the superpowers sit down at the negotiating table without delay. It is not only Syria, but the whole world that is in danger today. Every human being on the planet must do all he/she can to avoid the tragedy of a third world war.

The world turned into a tinderbox a long time ago. Everyone has heard of the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 which could have led to a nuclear war. Fewer people know of an incident that took place in 1983 at one of the Russian military bases, where the nuclear warning system went into action in error. Had the base commander, Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov, believed what the computer had said and informed the command of missile launches from the U.S. territory, then a retaliatory strike would have been carried out. However, Petrov did not just follow the instruction, but listened to what his heart told him. As the result, millions of lives were saved. If there was another man in his place, the situation could have been different.

Both incidents show how fragile our world is. And it has become even more fragile since the abovementioned incidents, because over this time the nuclear capability has increased. The bombs that the U.S. President Harry Truman ordered to drop on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are nothing compared to the destructive capability of nuclear weapons which the leading world powers have in the inventory these days. A mere accident can lead not only to the death of millions of people, but to the complete annihilation of life on Earth.

The leading world powers are concentrating their armed forces near Syria's coastline. Threats are being

uttered by different sides. On Twitter, President Trump threatens with “smart” missiles, while Russia’s Ambassador to Lebanon says there will be retaliatory strikes. Information warfare is raging on, and we know that information warfare often precedes a real war.

In the 20th century the world went through two world wars. Yet, it seems that either they did not teach us anything or we just forgot about those bitter lessons. How much mud different countries slung at each other before World War I! And how willingly the countries got involved in that war, each of them hoping to solve its own problems... However, no problem was solved and no country won in that war. On the contrary, the war raised to power such forces which twenty years later unleashed a new war, even more bloody and brutal.

We must prevent a third world war. For that, any peacemaking initiatives are important, coming from politicians, religious leaders and common believers. If we cannot do anything to help, let us help by prayer.

– With what sentiments should Christians endure such dramatic historical periods?

– They should pin their hopes on God and His mercy. At every divine service the Church prays “for peace of the whole world,” believing that this prayer will not go unheard. It is to such prayer that she calls her children in moments of crisis.

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