



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: While inviting young people to dialogue and using their language, the Church must not lose its integrity

In his address at the Bishops' Council on 29 November 2017, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, while speaking of the mission among young people, raised the issue of limits of the Church's openness.

"What can the Church do, while inviting young people to dialogue and using their language, in order not to lose its integrity and yield to the temptation of blindly copying some on-trend habits?" the Primate of the Russian Church said, "It is often said that churches should become home for young people, that parishes should provide premises where they can spend their spare time. All this is indeed appropriate. Young people are mobile and active, and are keen on sports and intellectual games, flash mobs and quests; the exertion of power and will rallies them. However, when organizing such activities, we should bear in mind that it is not the main aspect of our ministry. A church will become home for people only when they get to know those who live in it... in faith and love for God."

"The church is not a headquarters for organizing mass cultural events. These events can and in some parishes, where there are many young people, should be part of the parish life. However, it is the Eucharist and the commitment to live in accordance with the Gospel that must be in the core of life for Christians of any age, young or elderly. All the initiatives, no matter how helpful and important they might seem, will be of real value only if they help people turn their hearts to God."

Having noted with satisfaction the successful work of the Synodal Youth Department in supporting youth initiatives at church-wide and diocesan levels, the Patriarch emphasized at the same time that "the main way to promote the Orthodox youth initiatives is not to organize some one-time, albeit large-scale, events, but to work day after day in order to engage active young people in the life of the Church."

"No matter what instruments are used, be it congresses, summer camps or trips, the real pastoral care for the youth is of primary importance. Not every priest has a God-given talent of communicating with young people. Yet, perhaps in each diocese there is one or several pastors who will be able to talk openly to young boys and girls, to go on excursions and to the cinema with them, and to hold informal meetings, not forgetting at the same time that the main thing is not to spend spare time together, but to preach Christ in word and, more importantly, by their own example, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said in conclusion.

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