



DECR chairman's message to the first European Russian Youth Forum on 'Preserving the people: What can be done by Russians living abroad'

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations sent a message to the first European Russian Youth Forum on 'Preserving the people: What can be done by Russians living abroad', which took place on 26-27 March 2010 in Brussels. Below is the text of the message.

Dear Participants and Guests of the forum,

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I cordially greet you all as you have gathered at the European Parliament to discuss ways of consolidating the Russian community and promoting and developing the Eastern Slavic spiritual and cultural tradition abroad. It is gratifying that the structure and work of the European Russian Forum is gradually broadening to acquire this year a youth dimension.

It is valuable that this event has involved first of all the young people of Russian tradition who live in the countries of the European Union. You are active, talented, inquisitive and ready to produce and accept new ideas and seek to implement them. These qualities point to your great potential, which I hope will be used only for constructive endeavors.

There are many achievements in store for you. And to avoid becoming like 'the one who walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going' (Jn. 12:35), it is very important for you to be guided not only by your own opinion but also the experience of the generations before you and the spiritual and cultural heritage of your ancestors.

I am sincerely glad that your minds are occupied with pressing problems of today. These days you are to think over an answer to a very acute problem facing not only Russia but also other European countries. It is the preservation of the national and cultural identity of the Europeans.

In the present era we are witnesses to the situation in which the gradual loss of their cultural and religious tradition has led the European nations to various crises in society. A way out of this situation is obvious – it is necessary to strengthen the civilization's self-awareness. It cannot be done without taking

into account the role of religion as it forms the fundamental values of every nation. For an overwhelming majority of people in Russia and the European Union member states it is Christianity that constitutes this life-asserting spiritual tradition.

Those who come from countries nourished spiritually by the Russian Church cherish their religious legacy and for this reason they should become agents of the Gospel's worldview and ethics in Europe. It is important that they show by their own example that faithfulness to tradition helps to rally a nation, to preserve its cultural identity and harmonious development. Only in this way we can make a contribution to the preservation of Europe's Christian soul and thus form a positive image of the Russian world in the consciousness of the Western society.

I hope that with inexhaustible energy you will work for these goals. Remember, you are responsible for the future of Europe.

I wish you, dear brothers and sisters, exciting and fruitful work, God's help and success in dealing with the tasks posed before you. May the Lord's blessing be with you all.

Hilarion

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