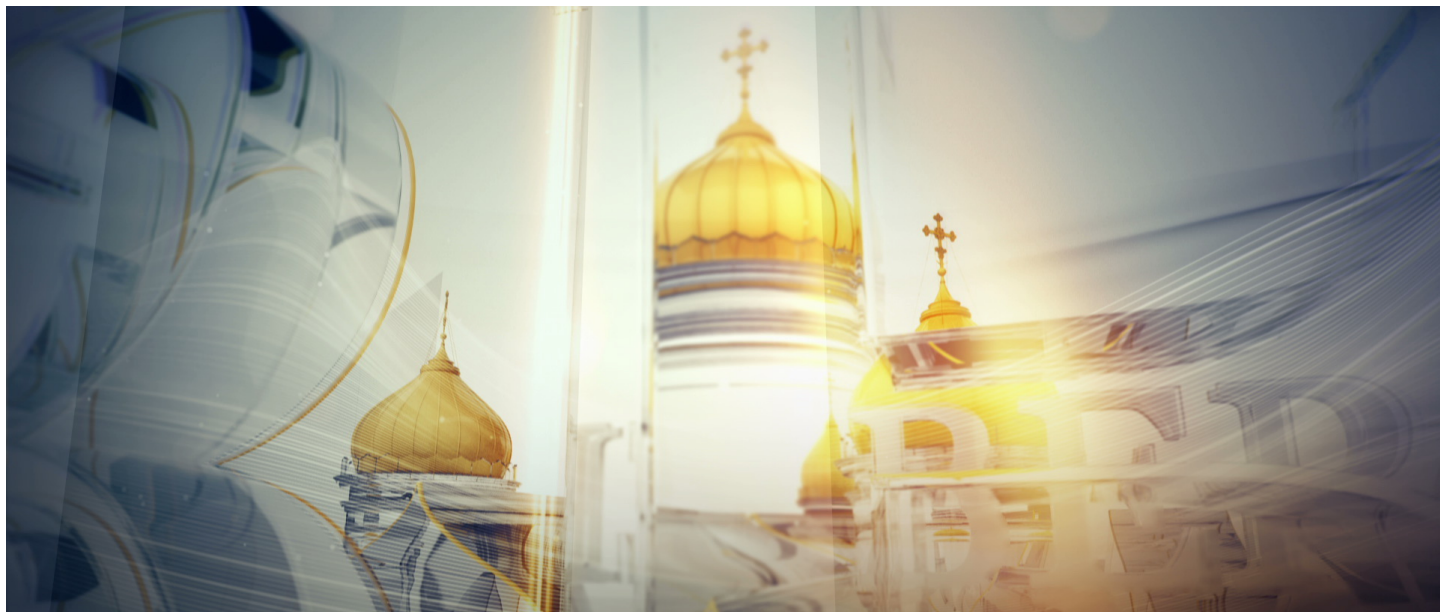




Metropolitan Hilarion: The Church calls for loyalty to civil authorities, regardless of the political system



On March 13th, 2021, on The Church and the World TV program shown on Saturdays and Sundays on "Rossiya-24", Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), answered questions from the anchor Ekaterina Gracheva.

E. Gracheva: Hello! This is the time of the program "The Church and the World" on the TV channel "Rossia 24", where we talk weekly with the Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk. Hello, Vladyka!

Metropolitan Hilarion: Hello, Ekaterina! Hello, dear brothers and sisters!

E. Gracheva: Vladyka, on one of our programs we discussed the introduction of so-called covid-passports. There are certain concerns that a person's lack of such a passport will restrict their movement, for example. There is a recent statement by the head of the European Commission, who says that a bill on the introduction of so-called "green digital passports" will be presented in March: there will be information about vaccination, whether a person has been ill, whether he is preparing for vaccination, and so on. What do you think of this initiative? Do you support it, or do you also have concerns about it?

Metropolitan Hilarion: So far, it causes much more concern than enthusiasm, because, firstly, this violates the principle of voluntary vaccination, which is still declared in most countries, including European ones.

Secondly, it is true that the introduction of such passports can cause serious damage to some people, for example, those who for some reason cannot be vaccinated and still have not been ill. Such a person will have to wait until he gets sick and recovers, and until then he will not be able to visit European countries?

Third, we must understand that vaccines are created differently in different countries, and there will not be a single vaccine recognized by the whole world. Accordingly, vaccination passports will include any vaccines or only those that are recognized on the territory of the European Union? In general, there are still many more questions than answers, and therefore the concerns expressed in connection with these proposals are not completely unfounded.

E. Gracheva: In the circles of the Russian intelligentsia, the debate about the so-called "new ethics" is gaining momentum and does not subside. Director Konstantin Bogomolov wrote a manifesto in which he compared the ideology of modern Western society with Nazism. I will quote him: "In some aspects, it is even worse than the Third Reich, because it encroaches not only on the freedom of thought, but also on the freedom of emotions." He suggests that we focus not on modern Europe, but rather build a semblance of "good old Europe" in Russia. Have you read this manifesto of Bogomolov? What do you think about it?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I have read this manifesto and agree with its main points. Indeed, there are processes taking place in Europe that cause great concern, and the old Europe that Russia tried to focus on back in the 90s, I must say frankly, is no longer there. Now Europe is completely different, and the European ideology is basically becoming anti-religious. Many postulates that are unshakable for a religious person are not only subject to revision, but also in some situations they are generally banned. We are hearing more and more often that Christians in Europe are forbidden to publically wear body crosses, and if they wear a body cross under their shirt, they can be dismissed. Such cases have already taken place.

We are hearing more and more often that people are being forced to follow the so-called gender ideology, according to which a person can choose their gender. Then it is very easy to even ban the Bible, where on the very first pages it says that God created man in His own image and likeness, man and woman He created them. That is, we proceed from the fact that gender is something that a person is given from birth, which cannot be changed. Moreover, from a purely biological point of view, it is

impossible to change it. You can perform an operation that will give a person of one sex the appearance of a person of another but he still won't change from a man to a full-fledged woman, or from a woman to a full-fledged man. By the way, we have repeatedly talked about this in our programs.

In fact, this gender ideology is in some aspects an ideology of deception. A whole industry of gender reassignment campaigns, propaganda conducted through the media, and a system of discrimination against dissidents that is gaining more and more momentum are now built on this deception.

E. Gracheva: In other words, you are saying that tolerance at some point crossed the line and turned into intolerance. You gave the example that in Europe people can no longer freely wear body crosses. In 2019, a tax consultant was sued in the UK, and the reason for her dismissal, officially spelled out in the court decision, was her statement: "A person's gender is an immutable biological fact." That is, this topic of cancellation is clearly visible when people with objectionable opinions are being tried to be removed from the discourse. How can this end and how can it be stopped?

Metropolitan Hilarion: When you say "cancellation topic", I would like to make it clear to our viewers: obviously, you are referring to what is now called cancel culture in English, that is, the culture of cancellation, when a person is essentially excluded from the discussion.

We have observed how this cancellation culture operated in relation to the previous US President, Donald Trump. From the very beginning, he faced the fact that the American media (with rare exceptions) not only criticized him, but demonized him, and at the end of his presidency, he was simply canceled, excluded from public space. They closed his Twitter account, closed access to the media, that is, he was canceled, excluded. Like in Orwell's novel 1984, where there was a whole technology to remove people from history – they were simply erased. We had a similar phenomenon during the Soviet era: if the person was persecuted by law, he would simply be erased from memory and never get mentioned again. Something similar is happening now in the West: what was initially passed off as a culture of tolerance is now developing into a very powerful system of discrimination against people who adhere to traditional values, including religious values.

E. Gracheva: You touched on the topic of sexual minorities. The American Gallup Institute published the results of a recent survey, according to which over the past half a century in the United States, the number of people who identify as LGBT has increased several times: in 2012, they were 3.5 percent, and in 2020-already 5.6 percent. What is the reason for such an increase in the number of LGBT people?

Metropolitan Hilarion: There are even scarier numbers in this survey. The fact is that this is an average percentage for all generations, including older people, among whom there are very few who

consider themselves to be in this category, but there are much more than 5.6 percent of young people in American society who consider themselves to be LGBT. These are really frightening and disturbing figures. I believe that if we were talking exclusively about biological parameters, about how certain inclinations develop in a person in a normal situation, then the percentage would be much lower.

I think that the increase in the number of people who identify as LGBT is a direct consequence of the propaganda in favor of LGBT that has been conducted in the West for many years, and this propaganda begins from childhood, preschool age. People are beginning to be taught that gender is not something that you received from God, but something that you can choose yourself, that you can change it.

An entire industry is working on this. First, the psychologist inspires the person who comes to him and says: I'm a boy, but I feel like a girl, and the psychologist responds: this is wonderful, so you are a girl, we will help you become a girl. A person undergoes psychological training, in fact, it is brainwashing. Then they begin to stuff him with hormones, then they perform a surgical operation, turning him outwardly into a creature of a different sex, although his primary sexual characteristics still remain the same. A man turned into a "woman" will never be able to get pregnant and give birth to a child. But then there is yet another problem: such people are already allowed to adopt children in a number of countries. Therefore, we are now facing a very terrible phenomenon and, thank God, these trends have not yet reached our country. I really hope they don't.

E. Gracheva: Patriarch Theophilus of Jerusalem called on representatives of the Orthodox Churches to meet in the same format as last year's meeting in Amman. Is such a meeting possible now, in the context of a pandemic?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I think such a meeting is possible. Apparently, we will have to wait until the restrictions related to the pandemic are eased, but such a meeting is necessary, because it is very important for representatives of Local Orthodox Churches to meet and discuss existing problems.

The mechanism that was in effect until recently, when such meetings were initiated by the Patriarch of Constantinople, is no longer in effect, because the Patriarch of Constantinople joined the schism, concelebrated with schismatics, and lost his legitimacy as the first among equals in the family of Primates of Local Orthodox Churches. Therefore, even if he calls for such meetings, it is possible that some Churches will attend them, but many will avoid them under various pretexts. This will be due precisely to the fact that he violated the fundamental principle of coexistence of Local Orthodox Churches.

This principle is called conciliarity in Church language, meaning that all decisions must be made in a conciliar fashion. If decisions are made at the inter-Orthodox level, then the Local Orthodox Churches

should participate in them. If one of the Primates, even if he is the first among equals, makes decisions to the detriment of other Local Churches, against the will of these Churches, then things will go as they did now. Now there is a schism that is deepening, and the Patriarch of Constantinople is working to further deepen it. In this situation, it is important for the Orthodox Primates to meet.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem heads the oldest Orthodox Patriarchate. As we know, it is from Jerusalem and the Holy Land that the history of Christianity began, and it is no coincidence that the Church of Jerusalem is called in our liturgical texts the mother of all Churches. That is why last year we were grateful to the Patriarch of Jerusalem for such an initiative, and this year we will also accept this initiative. I hope that such a meeting will take place.

E. Gracheva: This week, a new interview with Pope Francis had been published, where he tells many facts about his youth spent in Argentina. In particular, he revealed such details that during the military coup he was experiencing severe stress and turned to a psychoanalyst. When asked by a journalist how he usually copes with stress, Pope Francis said that he listens to Bach. In this regard, I was wondering: Have you ever had experience working with a psychoanalyst and what kind of music do you listen to to relieve stress?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I listen to classical music. I was brought up on classical music and Johann Sebastian Bach is always the first composer in my life.

As for the psychoanalysts, I generally don't trust them. The very method of psychoanalysis as formulated by Freud and practiced by many modern psychoanalysts, in my opinion, is based on false attitudes. Therefore, I think that religious people should not go to psychoanalysts.

However, there are certain mental problems that need to be addressed with a professional psychiatrist – not a psychoanalyst, but a psychiatrist. If we find such problems among believers, we refer them to such specialists. Moreover, we already have Orthodox psychiatrists who combine professionalism with a deep and sincere Orthodox faith in their practice.

E. Gracheva: Many thanks, Vladyka, for this interview.

Metropolitan Hilarion: Thank you, Ekaterina.

In the second part of the program, Metropolitan Hilarion answered questions from viewers that were sent to the website of the Church and the World program.

Question: There is a common expression "all authority is from God." More than once I have come

across sermons by priests of the Russian Orthodox Church on this topic. In one of the latest videos, it was said that authority is from God only as long as it meets certain criteria, in particular, it maintains order and compliance with the law. Can a power be considered from God if it itself commits crimes in an obvious way in front of an astonished public?

Metropolitan Hilarion: In Christian theology, there is the concept of God's providence, and there is the concept of God's permission. There are things and phenomena in people's lives that correspond to the will of God, and there are phenomena that contradict the will of God, but for some reason He allows them, that is, permits them to happen. Power can be delivered from God, or it can be permitted by Him. The Church has to exist in this world regardless of what political power is out there. During the two millennia of its existence, the Church has lived in different countries, both under the authorities that persecuted it and under the authorities that favoured it. However, the Church always called for loyalty to the civil authorities.

On the other hand, the official document "Basics of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church" states that if the authorities call for actions that contradict Christian morality and Christian self-understanding, then the Church can take a position of civil disobedience. In other cases, the Church obeys the authorities, regardless of what system exists in the country: a monarchy, a republic, or some other form of government.

Question: On the episode of the Church and World broadcast on February 13, you spoke negatively about people who organize and / or cause protests. It turns out that you are speaking out against people who defend the commandments of God: love your neighbor as yourself, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not commit adultery.

Metropolitan Hilarion: Of course, I do not oppose people who call for the fulfillment of God's commandments. In the program in question, I spoke out against breaking the law. I am deeply convinced that it is necessary to achieve changes in society for the better, but only by legal means, we must act within the framework of the law. If people, including young people and children, begin to be involved in illegal activities, then I think that the Church cannot support such activities.

I said on that program and now I am ready to repeat it: in my opinion, the state should develop not in a revolutionary way, but in an evolutionary way. I consider the revolution a great tragedy in the history of our country. I think that if Russia had developed in an evolutionary way, we would now live in a completely different country: more prosperous, richer, with a different population. Historians studying the 20th century say a lot about this. Therefore, I think that we should not call for revolutions, but for changes to take place within the framework of the law and in an evolutionary way.

Question: I am very concerned about the cooling of my daughter's soul. Any conversations on this topic lead to her aggression. How can I get my former kind, understanding daughter back? She used to be a religious person, but now, according to my feelings, she doesn't have spiritual awe in the church either.

Metropolitan Hilarion: I do not know your daughter's age. One thing I can say: everyone should have the right to develop independently, including developing their personal relationship with God. You must not interfere with your daughter's relationship with God and the Church. You probably did everything you could to bring her to God, to become a Church member, but as she grows up, she must discover both God and the Church for herself, and the older she gets, the less she will need your participation. If you try to inspire her with something, or even provoke her to aggression, it will be counterproductive. What you can and should always do is pray for your daughter, love her and help her in everything, and leave her to determine her own personal religious life.

Question: Please tell us what role did St. Maximus the Greek play in our country and why was he treated this way when he was imprisoned. Where are the relics of St. Maximus the Greek?

Metropolitan Hilarion: The relics of St. Maximus the Greek are located in the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius. Why was he treated this way? If we look at the history of Russia, we will see that very often foreigners were treated with distrust and suspicion. In this case, this monk was invited to help with translation work, but it so happened that errors were found in the translations. In addition, he himself was suspected of treason. He wanted to return to his homeland in Greece, but they wouldn't let him go. In the end, he stayed in Russia, achieved personal sanctity, and wrote a number of remarkable theological works. The Holy Church many centuries later, during our time already, canonized him as a saint.

I would like to end this program with the words of the St. Apostle Paul: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3.12).

I wish you all the best. Take care of yourself, take care of your loved ones, and may the Lord protect you all.

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