Metropolitan Hilarion: an unhealthy stir around the topic of Church revenues is most often associated with anti-Church speculation



On September 25th, 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 fr om 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, Catherine! Hello dear brothers and sisters!

E. Gracheva: I would like to start with the last State Duma elections. The previous Duma went down in history with such widely discussed decisions as amendments to the Constitution, raising the retirement age, and buildings renovation. What do you expect fr om the new Duma? What would you advise them to focus their energy on first?

Metropolitan Hilarion: Legislation requires constant improvement. There are a lot of holes in the legislation that the new convocation of the State Duma will have to eliminate.

I think we should focus on three main areas where we need to improve. The first is the welfare of people. This applies, first of all, to those people who are at the bottom or close to the bottom of the social pyramid, that is, the poor, the disabled, the elderly – those who do not have enough money. I think that the legislation should be constantly improved so that every person in our country can live at a decent level.

The second area where our legislators can and should apply their talents and abilities is morality. Legislation cannot be considered in isolation fr om morality. If we accept the so-called "moral" values that are very often imposed on us by Western liberal society, then this will be a road to nowhere for our country. We must all ensure that the traditional moral values on which the life of humanity and the life of our country has been built for centuries are promoted in all possible ways and, above all, through the mass media.

Recently, there was a tragedy at Perm State University, when a young man took a gun and shot innocent people. We need to take some legislative measures that will eliminate the possibility of such madmen using weapons in the future. I don't understand why weapons should be sold to ordinary civilians at all. We need our legislators to think about this.

Finally, the third area, which is related to the first, is the birth rate. Our country has a low birth rate, unfortunately, it is falling. The legislative measures necessary to increase the birth rate must be taken immediately. If the population of our country continues to fall, then sooner or later we will be replaced by other people who will take over our country and become masters in it.

E. Gracheva: Vladyka, in continuation of the topic of legislative initiatives. The Ministry of Labor has introduced a draft law according to which, starting from 2022, families wh ere the father is the parent and the spouse is the adoptive parent of a child born to a surrogate

mother will be able to receive maternity capital in our country. Before that, this was impossible. I think this step can probably be regarded as encouraging the state to increase the birth rate in all available ways. How would you rate this legislative initiative? What is the position of the Russian Orthodox Church on this issue?

Metropolitan Hilarion: The Church's position on surrogacy is clearly expressed in its official documents. The Church does not recognize surrogacy and considers it an interference in the God-ordained order of birth of children from the father and mother. Therefore, any measures aimed at supporting surrogacy cannot be approved by the Church. As a representative of the Church, I think that the state should make every effort to reduce mortality and increase the birth rate, but not at the expense of losing traditional moral values.

If we talk about reducing mortality, then we have been living in a pandemic for a year and a half. We were the first to invent a coronavirus vaccine, but so far we have vaccinated just under a third of our country. What does this mean? It means that the campaign to promote vaccination, to promote vaccines, by and large failed. We have not been able to convince our people to get vaccinated. We have not been able to convince very many people that vaccination is necessary, perhaps not so much for themselves, as it is important to save the lives of loved ones and people around them.

I think that legislative initiatives that will help reduce mortality are very much in demand and necessary now, as well, of course, as legislative initiatives aimed at increasing the birth rate. But, I repeat, not at the expense of abandoning traditional values.

E. Gracheva: To other topics. The administrator of the Cheboksary and Chuvash diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church has banned a priest from one of the churches of his diocese. His name is Roman Stepanov. He called on Patriarch Kirill and other ruling hierarchs to tell the public about their income and existing property. Why is the subject of property and income of the Russian Orthodox Church so sensitive, even painful for the Russian Orthodox Church? Why can't this information be made public?

Metropolitan Hilaron: First, as far as I know, this priest was banned not because he called for disclosure of income, but because his moral character did not correspond to his high rank.

Secondly, I think that the income of the Church, church people, and clergy is not a topic that we should be afraid to talk about. We are not afraid to talk about this topic. I was repeatedly asked, and I answered these questions, what my income is, and wh ere it comes from. I talked about the royalties I get for my books. I know that many clergymen do not hesitate to talk about their income at all, because these incomes are obtained through honest labor. A person works and gets an income, this is quite natural.

The unhealthy stir that arises around the topic of Church revenues is most often associated with various kinds of speculation, slander against the Church, which is spread both through traditional media and through various Telegram channels, which, due to their anonymity, do not bear any responsibility either before the law, before people, or before God. Therefore, they spread a wide variety of information with impunity, including a lot of fake information.

I would like to urge our viewers not to trust the distributors of this kind of false information, but to listen, first of all, to the voice of the Hierarchy.

E. Gracheva: Now to the question of Russian education, or rather, the fruits of this very education. A TV presenter and blogger Nastya Ivleeva is thirty years old and has an annual income of $ 2.7 million, according to Forbs. She gave an interview and could not answer the question, for example, who is the author of the novel "Fathers and Sons"? She also could not remember the last name of Peter the I. I must say that at the same time Nastya Ivleeva takes the fourth place in the rating of trust among young people. She herself is not ashamed of her modest knowledge and says that it does not prevent her from earning good money. How then can we convince young people of the need to study, if there is no direct correlation between education and the level of income?

Metropolitan HILARION: The quality of life is determined not only by material well-being. If we do not teach this to our children and students, then we will not convey to them the most important thing: the meaning of life.

Material well-being is only one of the components of human happiness. If a person knows little, if he is poorly educated, then after meeting with people who are more educated, who know more, he will always feel his insufficiency, inferiority. It will poison his life. The more a person knows, the more educated they are, the more fulfilling their life is.

You need to acquire knowledge not only in order to receive a material reward for it. Although the experience of many if not most people shows that the more a person knows, if he knows how to apply this knowledge in practice, the more he gets in the end.

E. Gracheva: Here is a story of a completely different kind: 9-year-old Alisa Teplyakova, who became famous throughout the country for passing the Unified State Exam at the age of eight and entering the Faculty of Psychology at Moscow State University, began her studies, of course, being the youngest among her classmates. They note that it is difficult for her to be in classes, both full-time and online, and that she does not always understand what is happening in lectures. Vladyka, do you think it was worth sending a child at such an early age to study at a university? Of course, the child is gifted, but don't they deprive her of her childhood?

Metropolitan Hilarion: The question of deprivation of childhood should be raised by parents, taking into account, of course, the interests of the child herself.

I can tell you about my childhood. I was never a child prodigy, but I was in a sense deprived of my childhood, because I spent all my free time studying music, and I never regretted it. Other kids were playing in the yard, some were playing soccer, some were playing volleyball, some were just idling, and I was playing the violin for at least three hours a day, right up to eighth grade. But I don't regret it, because in the end it gave me so much. Although I did not become a violinist or a musician, it greatly contributed to my intellectual and cultural development. I learned a lot through these music classes.

I think that if a child has abilities, and especially exceptional abilities, then it is very important to develop them. We can cite many examples of people who started their creative and professional activities at a very early age. It is enough to recall Mozart, who, as a child, already wrote music and performed solo concerts.

I do not think that the development of this intellectual potential of a child, even if he is significantly ahead of his peers, means that he has been deprived of his childhood. It's just that he will have a different childhood, maybe even more interesting and rich than that of his peers.

E. Gracheva: Thank you very much, Vladyka, for answering our questions.

Metropolitan Hilarion: Thank you, Ekaterina.

In the second part of the program Metropolitan Hilarion answered the questions of the viewers received on the website of the Church and the World.

Question: Vladyka, I have repeatedly asked this question on the website of the Church and the World program, but I have not received an answer. Why does the Church equate abortion with murder? Wh ere in the Bible is it written about this? Please provide a quote.

Metropolitan Hilarion: I'll answer you, Olga. There is no quote in the Bible that speaks about abortion, because abortion, as far as we can judge from the surviving evidence, was not widespread among the Israelites of that time, and perhaps even did not exist at all.

The Bible is not a set of recommendations for all occasions. There are so many new things in human life that the Bible doesn't say a word about. But just because the Bible doesn't say something doesn't mean you can do it.

From the Church's point of view, the Bible is a part of HolyTradition. Holy Tradition is no less precious and significant for the Church than the Holy Scripture. And the Holy Tradition of the Church from the very beginning of its existence equated abortion with murder.

I'll give you a few quotes. Second-century apologist Athenagoras of Athens: "A woman who miscarries on purpose is a murderer and will answer to God, for the fetus in the womb is a living being that God cares for." And here is a quote from one of the canonical rules of St. Basil the Great: "Intentionally destroying a fetus conceived in the womb is subject to the condemnation of murder. Those who give medicine for the eruption of those who are conceived in the womb are murderers, and those who accept the infanticidal poisons are also guilty of murder." There are many other texts that clearly equate abortion with murder.

Question: Dear Metropolitan Hilarion! I have a difficult situation, which I ask you to clarify.

The Church's negative stance on abortion is widely known. A priest will never give a woman a blessing for such an action, in fact-for murder. If she decides to do this, then Church punishments will follow – she'll be refused communion. However, I have heard that the husband who approved of his wife's abortion is also deprived of communion for 20 years. I approved the abortion and, of course, I am very sorry about it. Although I have not told anyone about this decision, I have deprived myself of receiving the Holy Mysteries. Was I right to make such a decision and do I have the opportunity to atone for this sin, or will I be able to approach communion only in 2038?

Metropolitan Hilarion: You are absolutely right that the man who facilitated the abortion is just as responsible for it as the woman who performed it. This is explicitly stated in the Fundamentals of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church. But as for the punishment for this sin, you should consult a priest. First of all, you need to come to confession, tell about what happened, and the priest will determine the punishment. Abstain from communion for 20 years or for one year – this is what the priest will tell you.

Question: I consider myself a religious person, although I only go to church on big holidays. I don't understand why it is necessary to visit the church every Sunday and why it is necessary to attend the all-night vigil before communion.

Metropolitan Hilarion: You know, there is no need to visit the church at all. If you don't want to, you can choose not to visit the church at all. We go to church not out of necessity, but because we are drawn there by our heart. We also take Communion not out of necessity, but because we want to connect with God.

The question of how often to visit church is a question that you should ask yourself and answer it yourself. There are people who visit the church every Sunday. There are those that come only on big holidays. This depends primarily on your location. No one can impose an obligation on you to attend church. But it seems to me that a person who loves another person tends to be with that person as often as possible, and they don't say: what is the need to meet you once a week or once every two weeks? – if they really love this person. If they meet a person only out of necessity, out of a sense of duty, then it means that they do not love tem. Accordingly, if a person puts the question in this way: what is the need to come to

church, then probably the person does not love the Lord and the Church enough.

Try to rekindle your love for the Church, for the divine service. Try to study the service, listen to the words of the service, and understand its meaning, and it will reveal more and more new dimensions for you. Then you will no longer ask what is the need to go to church, but will use every opportunity to go to the Liturgy in order to be in the church, to be with God, to participate in the divine words of the service.

Question: Dear Vladyka, hello! Tell me, is it true that some parts of the Holy Scriptures were lost under the influence of the Vatican or were rewritten and edited in medieval Catholic monasteries? Thanks.

Metropolitan Hilarion: To answer briefly, this is not true. If we answer in a little more detail, then we must say that the Holy Scripture existed only in the manuscript tradition for about one and a half thousand years, that is, it was copied by hand in both Greek or Latin if it took place in the West. Of course, when rewriting the text, certain errors, omissions, and changes could creep in. There is a whole huge scientific field called Biblical studies that deals with Biblical textual studies, that is, the history of the text of the Bible.

I can tell you with full responsibility that no one in the Vatican, in the West, or in the East specifically changed the text of the Holy Scripture and excluded certain fragments from it, but since the text existed in the manuscript tradition, there are really a lot of variants of the same text, the same phrase. Critical Biblical studies focuses just on that. Modern editions of the Bible, as a rule, are based on the achievements of critical Biblical studies, that is, from the entire set of texts that exist in the manuscript tradition, as a rule, the most reliable ones are chosen.

Question: Can a surrogate mother who has kept the child become a godmother to this child, so that the connection between them would become even closer?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I will answer unequivocally – it can't. A surrogate mother cannot become a godmother at all, because she has committed an act that is not compatible with the teachings of the Church. If she knew about it, what can she teach the child? And if she didn't know about it, then what else can she teach the child?

A godmother can only be a woman who trusts the Church, lives according to church regulations and does not allow what is expressly forbidden by the Church.

I would like to conclude this transmission with the words of the Apostle Paul in the epistle to the Romans: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom.6:23)

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

DECR Communication Service

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/88138/