



## **DECR Chairman: The Church is called to unite people outside depending on their political orientation**



*On May 1, 2022, in the program "The Church and the World" on the channel "Russia 24", the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk answered questions from the host Ekaterina Gracheva and viewers.*

**E. Gracheva :** Hello ! This is the program "Church and the World" on the TV channel "Russia 24". Every week we discuss current news with the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of Moscow, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk. Vladyka, I salute you!

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

**E. Gracheva:** Vladyka, I would like to start with Spain. On April 14, they introduced criminal liability for doctors and other activists who are trying to dissuade women from having abortions. At the same time, there is a Right to Life movement in Spain, they cite figures: only their organization over the past year managed to dissuade six thousand women in Spain from having abortions, and not one of them regretted the decision to have a baby. If you look at this secular decision of the authorities from a church point of view, it turns out that prayer is banned in Spain, because to dissuade a woman from having a child is to pray for the birth of a new life, that is, prayer is now banned. How would you comment on this?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** Moreover, I will say: any priest who will dissuade a woman from having an

abortion can now fall under criminal prosecution. But from the point of view of the Church, abortion is unacceptable, and the Orthodox Church has taught and will continue to teach that abortion is legal murder. If a woman comes to a priest in any country, be it in Russia, Ukraine, Spain, or even Antarctica, the priest will always say the same thing, advising the woman not to have an abortion.

You refer to the experience of people who dissuaded women from having an abortion and not one of them regretted having given birth to a child. But we also have this experience: we know women who have had an abortion and then bitterly regret it all their lives. They come to confession, repent, ten, twenty, forty, fifty years pass, and they still cannot forget these children, whom they killed out of ignorance, out of youth, because someone advised them. That 's what women repent. And when a woman gives birth to a child, so that she repents of it, I have never seen anything like this.

Therefore, of course, the Church will always continue to defend human life, the dignity of motherhood, and let others deal with the right of a woman to kill.

**E. Gracheva :** How then to be these Catholic priests in Spain?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** Not only Catholic, but also Orthodox. I think that they will still fulfill their mission, their ministry, because God commanded us so and we cannot teach any other doctrine.

**E. Gracheva:** And how can you comment from the point of view of the Church, what tempts people in power to pass such laws, that is, who are born again who interfere?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** The fact is that for several decades now the movement for freedom has been growing and expanding in the West. It implies complete emancipation, liberation from moral bonds and foundations, from prohibitions that have existed for centuries. In the course of this revolution that took place in the field of morality, almost all prohibitions were swept away, except for those that still fall under criminal law, but, as we see in this example, it is already being adjusted to these new norms. I don't know how far this can go.

I hope that someday people in Western countries will come to their senses, including legislators, that some kind of reverse movement will begin, but so far everything is going in this direction. That is, it is essentially a movement against human life itself, because we are talking about the murder of children. Not only is this legally enshrined, but now also to dissuade a woman from having an abortion will be perceived as a criminal offense.

**E. Gracheva:** Vladyka, and now let's move on to the questions that come from viewers: "I have been living in the UK for many years. Like my other compatriots, I was here between two openly hostile

information flows. The local press and Russian TV channels gave a completely opposite view of what was happening. Now we are completely cut off from information from Russia. A month ago I had a nervous breakdown, I fell into despondency. Now I am slowly coming to my senses. How to survive in this situation and not fall into despondency? Your program in the UK is unfortunately blocked as well.”

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** We are duplicating our broadcast in its entirety and in cuts on the Internet, so for those who live in the UK, the opportunity to get acquainted with what we are discussing with you still remains. But, of course, we are now faced with an unprecedented situation when, in fact, there are two completely different information fields: one in Russia, the other in Western countries. The possibilities that until recently existed among people, for example, to compare the information they receive from different sources, are now extremely narrowed. Many of our compatriots living in far-abroad countries, and many people who simply would like to get acquainted with what Russia lives, watch Russian TV channels, do not have this opportunity.

There are only two ways out here: one is to come to Russia and live in Russia, if you want to live the life of our people, and the other way out is to get bit by bit the information that you can receive, including through the Internet and social networks, and yet try to always compare what you are told through your media with what you can hear directly from Russia, from Russian citizens.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: “What, in your opinion, is the ratio of good and evil in the universe now? 50/50 or...?”

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** It seems to me that there is still more good. I want to believe it, I want to hope for it. We all live in our own country, in our own city, town, village. We have some difficulties, problems. There are people who suffer. But we still have the will to live. I think if evil outweighed, we would lose this will to live, but we have it. This means that good always outweighs.

Besides, of course, the source of good is God, and the source of evil is the devil. We can never say that God and the devil have equal opportunity or equal influence over people. The devil is trying to steal a certain number of people from God and plant evil in the world, but good still always wins.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: "How to resist the devil's temptations?"

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** The devil's temptations are different for each person. Just as with diseases, we look for specific cures for specific diseases, we go to the doctor, tell him what hurts, and the doctor prescribes the medicine. Similarly, the devil's temptations are very different. One person is tempted by a passion for alcoholism, another by sexual addiction, a third is cheating on his wife, and so on. Each of these sins must be fought. The best way is, of course, to come to the priest for confession, tell him about

these sins, devilish temptations and get advice. There is also a large amount of spiritual literature that allows a person to determine how to deal with specific temptations.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: "I sometimes go to church, but I haven't received communion for a very long time, and therefore I'm a little confused. For my perhaps naive question, I apologize. Can I confess in some church, as it were, separately, almost secretly, in private, since many sins have accumulated?"

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** I think that, of course, this is possible, only this needs to be agreed with the priest. If you do not know the priest personally, then you need to come to some temple, take part in the service, look at the priests and choose for yourself the one with whom you would like to talk. Then approach him, tell him about the accumulated problems, arrange a separate meeting and confess at this meeting and prepare for Holy Communion.

**E. Gracheva:** Have you ever come to you with such requests?

**Metropolitan Hilarion :** Of course , people come to me with such requests all the time. It often happens that a person once went to confession, took communion, and then something happened in life and left the Church, moved somewhere, or circumstances somehow developed differently, for example, the sphere of interests changed. Then, many years later, a person feels the need to return to confession, to the sacrament of Holy Communion, but he confessed for the last time so long ago that now he does not know where to start and whether he will remember all the sins that have accumulated over the years. Such people sometimes have a psychological barrier. It is necessary to overcome this barrier, come to a specific priest - to the one to whom the soul lies, talk heart to heart with him, and it will be like in Lermontov's poem: -easily".

**E. Gracheva :** There is such a category of Orthodox people who go to services, to the Liturgy, take communion, but try to guess the confession so that it is common, and go to confession at this common confession, where conversations with the priest (I explain for those who do not know) do not occur , that is, without exception, they bless everyone for the Liturgy. What would you say to such parishioners?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** General confession cannot be a substitute for private confession. General confession is possible in cases where, for example, a person regularly confesses and takes communion. He comes to take communion on a holiday, there are a lot of people, the priest does not have enough time to meet with everyone separately, then people come to a common confession. But with some frequency, I think, at least once a month, an Orthodox Christian should individually confess to a priest, if there is an opportunity for this. Where there is no possibility for this, general confession is a forced substitute for private confession, but such an opportunity must be sought. I very often resort to this comparison with doctors: it's one thing to come and get advice from a specialist in a specific

disease, and another thing is just to watch a YouTube video on how to cure a disease at home.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: “Why is there no religious political party in the Russian Federation that would represent the interests of our Church and all Orthodox believers?”

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** We are asked this question quite regularly, obviously, our viewers are interested in it. The fact is that the Church is called upon to unite people regardless of their political orientation. If we create some kind of party of our own and say: this is our party, it expresses our interests, then what will happen with people who belong to other parties or do not want to belong to any party at all? The church is open to everyone.

When we have the World Russian People's Council chaired by the Patriarch, representatives and heads of all our leading political parties speak there: United Russia, the Communists, and the Liberal Democratic Party. All of them rally around the Church and speak at this church-people's forum. Our task is to unite people, not divide them, so we do not create our own political parties, political structures.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: “I heard that in the Department for External Church Relations, which you head, employees work “for thanks”. Is it true? How much do you pay your employees?”

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** Our employees do not work “for thanks”, they receive a salary, but a rather modest one. This salary starts somewhere from 30 thousand, it can grow depending on the position of the person and his length of service.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: “Very often on the Internet and on TV there are requests to donate money for the construction of Orthodox churches or to funds to help sick children. I would like to respond to every request, but two points confuse me: how much can such appeals be trusted? What should a Christian do if his family itself is barely making ends meet?”

**Metropolitan Hilarion :** If your family is barely making ends meet, then God will not condemn you, and no one will condemn you for not being able to help someone, because there is nothing to help. But if there is an opportunity to help, at least to make a small contribution, then, of course, it is better to use this opportunity.

Now all sorts of requests are actually sent out supposedly on behalf of monasteries, churches, and in order to distinguish real requests from the so-called fake ones, you need to check - as a rule, there should be a phone number for feedback. Maybe it's worth a trip to this monastery, because it is always better to provide targeted help. You don't have to go far to help. There is always a temple or an orphanage nearby, those in need of help are often within walking distance. You can see each of them in

person, communicate with them. When you provide such targeted assistance, it is a completely different feeling, because you see the eyes of the people who receive this assistance, thank you. These people become part of your life.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: "Hello, Metropolitan Hilarion! In my prayers, I ask the Lord and His saints for wealth, help in order to win on bets in the sports betting. Can God give me this money? The money is needed to pay for a major operation, and I also planned to help poor people. Is it a sin to ask in prayer for easy money?"

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** A difficult question, to be honest, I find it difficult to answer it. I personally think that we can ask God for everything we need, because He, as a merciful Father, hears our prayers. Sometimes children ask their fathers and mothers for something that, perhaps, they do not need at all, but they want it and they ask. Another thing is that God may not respond to such a request. Then do not be offended by Him and say: I asked, but God did not give me. Because, indeed, easy money does not belong to the category of goods that can be included in the words "give us our daily bread today." "Our daily bread" is what we really need. We turn to the Lord with this prayer every day, both at home, when we pray, and at divine services.

If we are talking about an operation, then, probably, you should think about how to earn this money or borrow it, and not just rely on chance or luck.

**E. Gracheva:** Question: "Vladyka, why is there such a negative, one might say, negative attitude towards pets in our Church? There are many cases when cats and dogs are driven out of the temple grounds. The same dogs - faithful, devoted to man beings, are considered "dirty animals." I also heard the opinion that some priests bless keeping cats at home or on the territory of monasteries and temples, but dogs are called dirty animals. Where did it come from?"

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** The Church has no teaching that some animals should be clean and some unclean. Animals are God's creations. Therefore, every animal has the right to life, but whether an animal needs to be on the temple grounds is another question. If people with children come there, and at the same time there will be dogs running around that can bite one of them, will it be right or not? I think that when priests or church workers drive stray or homeless animals from the temple grounds, it is done primarily to protect people, and not at all because someone considers animals unclean.

If someone really considers animals to be unclean, then this is definitely not the teaching of the Church, but this is just some kind of prejudice.

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

**Metropolitan Hilarion** : Thank you , Ekaterina.

I would like to end this transmission with words from the first letter of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians: *“They curse us, we bless; they persecute us, we endure; blaspheme us, we pray; we are like rubbish to the world, like dust, trampled down by all until now ”* (1 Cor. 4.12-13).

I wish you all the best and God bless you all.

*Service DECR communications*

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