



The nuns of the Pyukhtitsa Monastery: Honorable deputies, why are you seeking to compel us to commit a canonical crime?



DECR Communication Service, 04/08/2025.

On April 9, 2025, the Riigikogu (Parliament) of Estonia is set to vote in the third reading on a bill amending the Churches and Congregations Act, directly targeting the Estonian Orthodox Church and aiming, among other things, to force congregations and the Pyukhtitsa Monastery to change their jurisdiction under the threat of liquidation.

In connection with this, the abbess and sisters of the Pyukhtitsa Monastery have once again addressed an open letter to the members of the Riigikogu, to all Christians, and to all citizens of Estonia. The previous two appeals were published in February.

In the open letter signed by Abbess Filareta (Kalacheva) and the sisters of the monastery, it is

stated:

Today, the Riigikogu determines our fate—the fate of the Pühtitsa Convent and its sisters. With deep sorrow, we clearly realize what the outcome is most likely to be: our spiritual unity with the Mother Church is to be deemed a violation of the laws of the Republic of Estonia...

Yet we have repeatedly emphasized that our ties with the Russian Orthodox Church are fundamental to the very existence of our Convent. It is rooted in the sacred canons, which form the foundation of ecclesiastical law. The inviolability of this law for the Church is akin to that of a Constitution for civil society. We are now being asked to arbitrarily abandon this spiritual and canonical foundation and join another jurisdiction, that of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This proposal disregards one crucial fact: the question of ecclesiastical jurisdiction is an internal matter of the Church, one in which, according to the Estonian Constitution, the state must not and cannot interfere. Such a transfer may appear straightforward and rational to members of Parliament, but this is the judgment of those estranged from the Church, who consider this matter only in terms of political expediency. On the contrary, such an act by the sisters of the Holy Pühtitsa Convent would be a canonical crime. It is not within our right to do this!

We are nuns. The very essence of our lives is to follow Christ. It is to Him we made our monastic vows; to Him we swore fidelity—not to political leaders, nor to parties or governments, but to our Lord Jesus Christ. We pledged to remain faithful to Him even unto death. This commitment does not conflict with the Estonian Constitution. Yet, our faithfulness to our monastic vows is now being used against us. In this respect, we would like to ask you a question: esteemed members of the Riigikogu, why do you seek to compel us to go against our conscience? Why are you so determined to force us into a canonical crime? Why is there such a lack of respect for those whose way of life differs from your own—a life that, it seems, lies beyond your understanding? Does not the Book revered by humankind for centuries declare: *"He also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"* (2 Corinthians 3:6)?

If we are to break even a single commandment of the Gospel, we shall cease to be nuns. For it is written: *"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it"* (Matthew 7:26–27).

We, the sisters of the Convent on the Mountain of the Mother of God, assure all citizens of Estonia that the nuns of Pühtitsa do not call for bloodshed, terror, violence, or military aggression. It grieves us deeply that members of Parliament, it seems, hold an opposite opinion, and the Minister of the Interior asserts that if we remain faithful to our vows, we will be forced to leave the Convent. The minister does not seem to understand that for us, it would be tantamount to death.

We wish no harm to anyone. We pray that peace and compassion may reign in every human heart. We keenly feel the pain of the injustice that reigns in this world. As the Apostle of Love, St. John the Theologian, testified: *"The whole world lieth in wickedness."* Such has been the case, and such it shall remain unless humankind heeds God and turns toward truth. This is what we fervently pray for.

From the depths of our hearts, we thank all who have shown us support—especially the Estonian public figures who signed an open letter and offered a Christian reflection on recent events.

We also express our gratitude to the nuns of the Georgian Convent of the Great Martyr Saint Catherine in Chiatura, the sisters of the Monastery of Saint Syncletica of Alexandria in Mtskheta, and the noble parishioners of these monasteries who sent a letter of support to the Riigikogu on behalf of the Pühtitsa nuns.

With love in Christ, we have prayed and continue to pray that the Lord bless Estonia and grant the grace to build a nation founded on Truth: *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32).

With love,
Abbess Filareta and the sisters

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/93074/>