



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Issues of defending Orthodoxy discussed at the Section “Diplomacy and Law in the Defense of Russian Orthodoxy” within the framework of the XXVII World Russian People’s Council



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On 18 November 2025, in Moscow, during the first day of the XXVII World Russian People’s Council, a thematic section entitled “Diplomacy and Law in the Defense of Russian Orthodoxy” was held. Taking part in the section were Leonid Slutsky, Chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Head of the LDPR faction in the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, Chairman of the Board of the International Public Foundation “Russian Peace Foundation,” and President of the Faculty of World Politics at Lomonosov Moscow State University, Doctor of Economics; Priest Vasily Losev, Head of the Secretariat of the World Russian People’s Council and Head of the Legal Service of the Moscow Metropolia; Maria Zakharova, Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia; and Vasily Shchipkov,

Associate Professor at MGIMO University (MFA of Russia) and First Vice-Rector of St. John the Theologian Russian Orthodox University, Doctor of Philosophy, reports Patriarchia.ru, citing information from the World Russian People's Council.

In his welcoming address to the participants, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, pointed out that the spiritual heritage of historical Rus' is being targeted for eradication in a number of neighboring countries. "Of particular concern is the church schism in Ukraine, provoked by certain well-known political forces, as well as the discrimination against Russian Orthodoxy in Moldova and the Baltic states," noted Metropolitan Anthony.

The hierarch stated that officials hostile to the Moscow Patriarchate are attempting to deprive the faithful of the possibility to preserve canonical unity with the Mother Church, exerting pressure and at times even openly persecuting hierarchs, clergy, and parishioners. According to Metropolitan Anthony, what is happening requires an adequate response and a fair assessment from the international community.

Leonid Slutsky emphasized the special importance of work to defend Orthodoxy within the framework of diplomatic activity and noted that there is a particular consolidation of the Russian world and Russian civilization around the ideas, approaches, and preaching of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Rus': "About 30,000 completely unfounded, 'twisted' sanctions and restrictions are being applied against our country today, which, on the contrary, have strengthened our society and our Orthodox unity, in which all peoples rally around the ideas of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. This also concerns people who are not Orthodox but who share these values and approaches; therefore, it is important today to preserve and multiply this."

"I must say that our interaction within the coordinates of the World Russian People's Council is intensifying and strengthening," added L. Slutsky, noting that today in the world the principles of diplomacy and law, including international law, are often violated—there are many examples of this. In particular, Leonid Slutsky pointed to egregious violations in the Baltic states, including with regard to the Russian language.

In her remarks, Maria Zakharova noted that a uniquely important area of work for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the protection of the rights of Orthodox believers in Ukraine. According to her, the term "schism" is used with regard to the situation of Orthodoxy in that country; however, she believes it is more correct to speak of the direct destruction of Orthodoxy in Ukraine. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, together with the Russian Orthodox Church, has already prepared two specialized reports on the persecution of Orthodoxy in Ukraine. She said there are no illusions about the

situation in Ukraine, and diplomats understand that there will be a third report on the persecution of believers.

“We have to defend not only rights and constitutional foundations—we have to defend lives, we have to defend the faith,” said Maria Zakharova, stressing that she considers herself not a participant in discussions about the defense of Orthodoxy and traditional values, but a practicing human-rights advocate. “The point is not in discussions. What is there to discuss? There is nothing left to discuss; this is open battle, and there is no possibility of retreat—only forward, and there is nothing to debate anymore.”

Maria Zakharova gave an example of the struggle against Orthodoxy that, she said, continues even now within Russia. According to her, statements have appeared in the press to the effect that the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, the main church of the Russian Orthodox Church, did not need to be restored; that it was poorly built; and that it would have been better simply to outline the footprint of the church on the ground. The Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reminded those present that the Constitution of the Russian Federation explicitly states that Orthodoxy has a special role in the formation and strengthening of traditional values. She pointed out that Russia today is an exponent and defender of universal human values shared by various peoples, cultures, and religions. “This is especially noticeable in contrast to the ultraliberal, destructive attitudes of contemporary Western states,” said the MFA representative.

The Director of the Information and Press Department proposed adding the concept of “love” to the list of domestic traditional values. According to Maria Zakharova, the Russian state is built upon this value, and at the foundation of each of the seventeen traditional values lies “the concept and value of love.” “So let us mention it as an all-encompassing, absolute value. Without any embarrassment—such embarrassment is false; it is caused by an incorrect interpretation of the word ‘love,’ which has been imposed on us not just in recent years, but for centuries,” said Ms. Zakharova, noting that love lies at the heart of the living and profound experiences connected with the history of our country.

For his part, Vasily Shchipkov emphasized that the Russian Orthodox Church remains the core of the identity of Russian civilization. He pointed out that the Russian Orthodox Church is the oldest Russian public organization, whose activity has not been interrupted since the Baptism of Rus’. “Its uniqueness lies in its trans-historicity: it serves as a link between different eras of Russian history, preserving the collective experience of the people,” said Vasily Shchipkov.

According to him, regardless of forms of government, the extent of sovereignty or its absence - as in the period of the Tatar-Mongol yoke or in the 1990s - and regardless of the evolution of the Russian language, which changed from one era to another, the Church preserved the identity of Russian

civilization. “In the West, with which we are in confrontation, they generally love Russia, but they love historical Russia, historical Rus’: lifeless, will-less, museumified,” the speaker noted. “There is a saying that museums are cemeteries of beauty. The Western world would like to see Russia as a cemetery of spirituality.”

“We, however, say that Russia is not merely alive, it is developing spiritually,” added Vasily Shchipkov.

The crisis in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is not a local problem: it is a schism within the one Russian Orthodox Church that affects the entirety of Russian civilization. “The political technologies of schism and persecution tested in one region can later be transferred onto the territory of Russia. Such actions are aimed at undermining the civilizational foundations of Russia within its broad cultural space, where our parishioners live, regardless of their political views,” said the First Vice-Rector of the Russian Orthodox University. “The defense of Russian Orthodoxy abroad must be regarded as an internal task of the Russian Church and the Russian state. This is not an external, but a profound issue connected with the preservation of the identity and unity of Russian civilization,” stressed Vasily Shchipkov.

Priest Vasily Losev noted the importance of defending Orthodoxy for statehood and sovereignty. “Where there is a threat to Orthodoxy, there arises a threat to sovereignty and statehood,” said the priest. This is how the conflict in Ukraine began; today, in Moldova, canonical parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church are being replaced by the structures of the Metropolis of Bessarabia (Romanian Orthodox Church), the priest noted. According to him, this is being done in order to weaken the healthy forces that preserve the spiritual foundations of society and resist the destructive ideology of the collective West.

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