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Church Suspends Priest Who Supported Pussy Riot

By The Moscow Times

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A Moscow region priest who supported Pussy Riot has been suspended from service for five years, ostensibly for repeatedly failing to show up to church and for traveling abroad without the blessing of his bosses.

Dmitry Sverdlov, who was appointed cleric to the Cathedral of All Russian Saints in the Moscow region town of Domodedovo in September, has not attended a single mass since then and hasn't provided a written explanation for it, RIA-Novosti reported Thursday, citing the Moscow Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Sverdlov has been described in media reports as a priest who wanted to apologize on the part of the church to the three female Pussy Riot rockers who were sentenced to two-year prison terms in August over performing an anti-President Vladimir Putin song at a Moscow cathedral.

At his previous position in 2012, as the superior of the Peter and Paul Temple in the village of Pavlovskoye in the Domodedovo district, Sverdlov repeatedly traveled abroad without the blessing of his senior boss, the church said.

As a result, Sverdlov was demoted from a superior to a cleric on Monday, the Moscow Eparchy said on its website Wednesday.

Earlier, in February, Sverdlov asked his boss to relieve him of his post as a superior over "pastoral burnout" and "chronic fatigue" and leave him on part-time as a priest, but his request was turned down.

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