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Church Official Proposes Labeling Single Mothers With Derogatory Term

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According to a member of the Tomsk diocese, the use of an expletive banned in the media is necessary to denounce women who have babies without being married. **Mike Soloyvanov**

A missionary from the Russian Orthodox Church has proposed "rehabilitating" a common Russian expletive and using it to refer to single mothers and unmarried women who live with their partner.

Maxim Stepanenko, a missionary from the Tomsk diocese, justified his use of the word by saying that it is cognate with an archaic word for "deception" or "adultery" that appears in a Church Slavonic translation of the New Testament.

The modern-day expletive can be translated as "harlot," though it is commonly used as an all-purpose irate interjection by many Russian speakers.

Stepanenko said that the expletive was necessary to denounce the women who have babies without being married and suggested bring it back into common usage.

"Alas, the old Russian word [expletive] and all of its derivatives have become indecent," he said in an article published on a website run by the diocese last week. "This, of course, was no accident. There are so many [expletive] around, and this word is scorching."

The original article was removed from the website on Wednesday, but can still be seen in a Google cache version.

The government has been trying to boost birth rates by offering financial incentives to parents with two or more children, but Stepanenko said the country was doomed as long as children were being born out of wedlock.

Nearly one-third of babies born in the Tomsk region in 2012 were born by single mothers, he said, citing regional government figures.

"So many [expletive] in the Tomsk land!" Stepanenko said, referring to single mothers. "We have no future."

A law signed by President Vladimir Putin last spring prohibits the Russian media from using the word, along with several other crude expletives, in print or broadcasts, with violations punishable by a fine.

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