

# Popular Russian Theologian Banned for Insulting Priest Who Died From Coronavirus

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Protodeacon Kurayev has been described as an informal spokesman for the church's liberal wing. **Pavel Smertin / TASS**

The Russian Orthodox Church on Wednesday [banned](#) popular theologian Andrei Kurayev from holding services over his criticism of a church official who died from coronavirus last week.

Protodeacon Kurayev [referred](#) to Alexander Ageykin, the head of a central Moscow cathedral who [died](#) from Covid-19 on April 21, as "a dumb careerist." Ageykin's death marked the highest-level coronavirus-related death within the Russian Orthodox Church.

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"Because you publicly insulted the memory of Archpriest Ageykin... and given your previous acts that I have received complaints about, you are prohibited from serving," Church leader

Patriarch Kirill said.

Kurayev will remain banned until an ecclesiastical court rules on whether to excommunicate him, Patriarch Kirill said in a statement published on the Moscow Patriarchate's website.

Kurayev described his ban as a "minor trifle."

"You can't call me a defrocked priest because that's a priest who's been defrocked, and I'm not one of them," he [told](#) Moscow's Podyom news channel.

Kurayev, who has openly [criticized](#) the Church in the past, has been [described](#) as an informal spokesman for its liberal wing.

Ageykin's successor was [hospitalized](#) Tuesday with an as-yet-unknown ailment.

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