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Russian Priest Hospitalized With Coronavirus After Calling it 'Extremely Useful'

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Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov previously extolled the infection's positive impact on humanity **Anvar Galeyev / TASS**

A senior Russian priest notorious for his controversial remarks about women and family life has been hospitalized with coronavirus after he extolled the infection's positive impact on humanity, the RBC news website reported Friday.

Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov earned the dubious title of "Sexist of the Year" this spring for comparing common-law wives to prostitutes, urging girls to prepare for childbirth instead of going to school and saying that women have "weaker minds" than men.

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Smirnov, 69, called the virus "actually an extremely useful phenomenon" during a Sunday

sermon, saying those who have died from it "gave their lives for their neighbor."

"Egotism has gone down, replaced by volunteerism, the wish to do something for one's neighbor and increased understanding of some very important Christian qualities," he said.

This weeks' remarks come after he advised Russians who have lost their jobs and ran out of savings during the coronavirus pandemic to "ask for alms."

A priest at Smirnov's church in central Moscow told RBC that the archpriest has been hospitalized and that his condition is "not serious."

Another unnamed priest confirmed that Smirnov has been diagnosed with Covid-19.

The Russian Orthodox Church, with more than 150 million followers, has been resistant to recommendations to close its doors as the pandemic has worsened across Russia but in late March advised worshippers to stay home.

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