

Controversial Russian Priest Dies During Coronavirus Rehabilitation

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A senior Russian priest notorious for making controversial remarks about women has died at age 69 during his rehabilitation from the coronavirus, a Russian Orthodox Church spokesman [announced](#) Wednesday.

Earlier this year, Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov was [crowned](#) “Sexist of the Year” by Russian feminists for claiming that women have “weaker minds” than men and comparing common-law wives to “unpaid prostitutes.” Shortly before his Covid-19 hospitalization in May, Smirnov [extolled](#) the infection’s positive impact on humanity, saying it encouraged “volunteerism [to replace] egotism.”

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“The death of Father Dmitry Smirnov has just become known,” Vasily Rulinsky, spokesman for the synodal department for church charity, announced on social media. He did not specify the cause of Smirnov’s death.

Rulinsky said a bishop in Far East Russia held a memorial service for Archpriest Smirnov.

Following his recovery from coronavirus, Smirnov's colleagues [told](#) Russian media that he had planned to spend all summer rehabilitating from the illness outside Moscow.

They have maintained that Smirnov did not have a severe case of Covid-19.

Orthodox media [reported](#) that Smirnov was hospitalized in Moscow in critical condition late last month, his second non-Covid-related [hospitalization](#) since 2019.

Unconfirmed reports [said](#) he had been diagnosed with brain disease.

During his chairmanship of the Russian Orthodox Church's commission on family, Smirnov made headlines for advising girls to skip school and prepare for childbirth instead, comparing in vitro fertilization to Nazi experiments and claiming that abortion in Russia is worse than the Holocaust.

He had also publicly [supported](#) the Russian Orthodox Church's controversial practice of blessing nuclear weapons, calling them the "salvation of the Russian people and its culture."

The Russian Orthodox Church had initially resisted recommendations to close its doors to its more than 150 million followers, a move that led to [infections](#) and [deaths](#) among the clergy. The church eventually advised worshippers to stay home in late March as the pandemic worsened across Russia.

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