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Russian Church Leader Appears to Blame Gay Pride Parades for Ukraine War

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Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

The head of Russia's Orthodox Church appeared to blame liberal Western values — drawing particular attention to gay pride parades — for Russia's invasion of Ukraine in his Sunday sermon.

President Vladimir Putin ordered the deadly "special operation" in Ukraine on Feb. 24 to "demilitarize and denazify" the pro-Western country after recognizing eastern Ukraine's two breakaway territories as independent republics.

But Patriarch Kirill said the war is about "which side of God humanity will be on" in the divide between supporters of gay pride events — or the Western governments that allow them — and their opponents in Russian-backed eastern Ukraine.

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"Pride parades are designed to demonstrate that sin is one variation of human behavior. That's why in order to join the club of those countries, you have to have a gay pride parade," he said in his Forgiveness Sunday sermon.

The Russian church leader characterized gay pride parades as a "loyalty test" to Western governments, which Ukraine's breakaway republics have "fundamentally rejected."

"For eight years there have been attempts to destroy what exists in Donbas," Patriarch Kirill said, referring to the region where Kyiv has been at war with the separatist republics since 2014.

"And in Donbas there is a rejection, a fundamental rejection of the so-called values that are offered today by those who claim world power," he said.

"We know that if people or countries reject these demands, they are not part of that world, they become strangers to it."

Patriarch Kirill painted the Russian invasion of Ukraine in more apocalyptic colors as a conflict "far more important than politics."

"If humanity accepts that sin is not a violation of God's law, if humanity accepts that sin is a variation of human behavior, then human civilization will end there," send there.

The Russian Orthodox Church has been accused of aligning itself with the officially secular Kremlin during Putin's years in power.

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