

Russian Military Priest Killed in Ukraine After Encouraging Women to Send Sons to War

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Archpriest Mikhail Vasilyev. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

Updated on Nov. 22 to add the death of another priest who had been accompanying Vasilyev on the frontline.

A Russian priest who encouraged women to have more babies so they would feel less distressed about sending their sons to fight in Ukraine has been killed on the battlefield, the Russian Orthodox Church [announced](#) Sunday.

Archpriest Mikhail Vasilyev died “while carrying out pastoral duties in the area of the special military operation in Ukraine on the morning of Nov. 6,” the Church said in a statement.

Vasilyev, 51, died from wounds sustained in a shrapnel explosion from a U.S.-supplied HIMARS missile launcher, according to a social media [post](#) by the Airborne Troops’ 76th Guards Air Assault Division.

The archpriest had served in the Church of St. Barbara the Great Martyr and the Venerable Ilya Muromets outside Moscow. The church provides spiritual assistance to Russia's Strategic Missile Forces — which operates the military's nuclear arsenal — and carries out tactical training exercises as part of a local military-patriotic club.

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Vasilyev also served as an adviser to the Russian Orthodox Church's senior official in charge of cooperation with the Armed Forces.

The Church said in a statement that Vasilyev had visited several conflict zones as part of his service, including Syria, Chechnya, Kosovo and Bosnia.

In late October, Vasilyev gained media attention for a television interview where he advised Russian women to "be fruitful and multiply" in the face of President Vladimir Putin's mobilization orders for the war in Ukraine.

"Thus, she would not find it so painful and terrifying to part with her children," Vasilyev [told](#) the Church-affiliated Spas TV channel.

He is at least the [third](#) member of the Russian Orthodox Church to have been killed since President Vladimir Putin ordered troops to invade Ukraine in February.

A second priest who had been with Vasilyev on the frontline at the time of the explosion, Alexander Tsyganov, [died](#) from his injuries two weeks after the shelling Monday, Nov. 21, according to the Pskovo-Pechersky monastery.

The Church has vocally backed the Ukraine war under the leadership of Putin ally Patriarch Kirill, who is under British and Canadian sanctions.

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