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Russian Orthodox Leader Calls on Clerics to Forgo Luxurious Lifestyles

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Patriarch Kirill on the Feast Day of St. Sergius of Radonezh in the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius.
patriarchia.ru

Russia's clergy should forgo displays of "provocative luxury" at a time when citizens are making sacrifices and limiting themselves, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church has said.

According to Patriarch Kirill, a cleric has the right to decently "furnish his life," but his lifestyle should not "demonstratively contrast with the way of life of the flock."

"There should be no flashy and provocative luxury. Especially now, when the whole country is making efforts and limiting itself, sacrificing for the sake of others," Patriarch Kirill said at the annual Bishops Conference on Wednesday.

The Patriarch urged bishops to "be modest when visiting parishes," so their visit is not perceived by the clergy and parishioners as a "source of expenses creating an irreparable 'hole' in the budget."

"The arrival of a bishop should be a joyful, uplifting, inspiring event in the life of the community, solving its difficulties, occasionally including material ones," he said.

He reiterated that providing funding for the Church's needs "is a statutory duty of every community," but that "these deductions should not turn into an unbearable burden."

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Patriarch Kirill, who has been a staunch supporter of Russia's war in Ukraine, praised priests who organize collections of donations for the Russian military in their churches.

He went on to say that the war "is a reflection of a more global clash of civilizations: one that increasingly departs from divinely ordained norms of life, and the other that strives to preserve them."

In 2020, the Proekt investigative website reported that Patriarch Kirill and his relatives owned property in Moscow and St. Petersburg worth 225 million rubles ($2.5 million at the current exchange rate).

In Moscow, the Patriarch directly owns a 145-square-meter apartment in the famous House on the Embankment and a 38-square-meter apartment on Nikoloyamskaya Street, while in St. Petersburg he owns an 83-square-meter apartment on Bolsheokhtinsky Prospekt on the right bank of the Neva River, Proekt reported.

Patriarch Kirill does not fly on commercial flights and instead uses private aviation, media have reported, such as a Gulfstream G450 jet worth $43 million. The Russian Orthodox Church also owns a $4 million luxury yacht which is used for river cruises by Patriarch Kirill himself and the high-ranking guests he receives on Valaam Island in northern Russia's republic of Karelia.

The Bell news website reported in 2019 that a personal residence costing 2.8 billion rubles ($30.9 million) was being built for Patriarch Kirill near St. Petersburg.

In perhaps the most famous example, the Russian Orthodox Church blurred out a 30,000-euro Breguet watch that the Patriarch wore in a 2012 photo. However, the watch was reflected on the table below his wrist.

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