

Russian Patriarch Mocks Priest for Questioning Church's Patriotism

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Russian Patriarch Kirill. mosmit.ru

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church publicly [ridiculed](#) a priest for criticizing the church's alignment with the Kremlin's wartime patriotic agenda, according to a leaked video recording.

Patriarch Kirill, a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, has been a vocal supporter of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, and the country's Orthodox Church played a central symbolic role in rallying public support for the war.

"I don't agree with such a patriotic trend in church relations," a priest told Kirill at a clergy [meeting](#) on Tuesday. "A priest's duty is to lead people to the Kingdom of Heaven and not to engage in patriotism."

Kirill shot back by asking the priest: "Are you, father, from Western Ukraine by any chance?"

Following laughter and applause from the meeting hall, the church leader told the priest

to “go sit down and think seriously about all that you just blurted out here.”

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Video of the exchange was published late Tuesday on a Telegram channel run by exiled Russian church affairs journalist Ksenia Luchenko. She identified the priest as Alexiy Shlyapin from the Moscow region town of Mozhaysk.

Shlyapin is a follower of Father Daniel Sysoev, an influential fundamentalist priest who preached that Orthodox Christianity transcends national identity. Sysoev, who received multiple death threats, was shot dead in November 2009 in what was believed to be a religiously motivated attack.

Sysoev’s followers hope the Russian Orthodox Church will canonize him in the future. An anti-war Christian group [said](#) Shlyapin raised the issue with Kirill at Tuesday’s clergy meeting.

Russia’s Orthodox Church has framed the war in Ukraine as a “holy war,” urging its followers to fight Russia’s “external and internal enemies.” Dozens of Orthodox priests have been sent to the front lines to support Russian troops.

In 2023, Kirill created a senior ecclesiastical position to oversee church activities in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories. In his book “For Holy Rus,” which was published last year, he promised “eternal life” to Russian soldiers killed in combat.

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