

Plenary session of the World Russian People's Council

Vladimir Putin spoke via videoconference at the plenary session of the World Russian People's Council. The central theme of the forum dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the organization's founding is "The Present and Future of the Russian World."

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The work of the cathedral was attended by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and other centralized religious organizations of Russia, government bodies, public associations, scientists and cultural figures.

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Vladimir Putin: Your Holiness! Dear friends!

I greet all participants in the World Russian People's Council. It was established in 1993. We remember what a time it was - a difficult, turning point for the country. Then the cathedral was able to unite around common goals representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, other religious organizations, political parties and movements, cultural figures, scientists, entrepreneurs, people of different views, beliefs, nationalities, but united in the main thing - in their firm patriotic position.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your support, for your contribution to the strengthening of Russian statehood, civil peace and harmony, to the consolidation of society and for the help that you always provide to your compatriots, to everyone united by the great Russian world.

I know that many representatives of the World Russian People's Council are now in the Donbass and Novorossiya among volunteers and volunteers, in the ranks of military

units, together with their comrades in arms defending our brothers and sisters, millions of people in the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, in the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions . I am sincerely grateful to the participants of the World Russian People's Council for the assistance you provide to the front and to the families of our fallen heroes. They fought for us, for our Motherland. Eternal memory to them. [Announced] a minute of silence].

(Minute of silence.)

Dear friends, our battle for sovereignty, for justice, without any exaggeration, is of a national liberation nature, because we defend the security and well-being of our people, the highest, historical right to be Russia - a strong, independent power, a country-civilization. It is our country, the Russian world, as has happened more than once in history, that has blocked the path of those who claim world domination and their exclusiveness.

We are now fighting for the freedom of not only Russia, but the whole world. We openly say that the dictatorship of one hegemon - we see it, everyone sees it now - is becoming decrepit. She has become, as they say, a peddler and is simply dangerous to those around her. This is already clear to the entire world majority. But, I repeat, it is our country that is now at the forefront of creating a more equitable world order. And I want to emphasize: without a sovereign, strong Russia, no lasting, stable world order is possible.

We know what threat we are up against. Today, Russophobia and other forms of racism and neo-Nazism have become almost the official ideology of the Western ruling elites. They are directed not only against the Russians, but against all the peoples of Russia: Tatars, Chechens, Avars, Tuvinians, Bashkirs, Buryats, Yakuts, Ossetians, Jews, Ingush, Mari, Altaians. There are many of us, I won't name them all now, but, I repeat, this is directed against all the peoples of Russia.

The West, in principle, does not need such a large and multinational country as Russia. Our diversity and unity of

cultures, traditions, languages, and ethnic groups simply do not fit into the logic of Western racists and colonialists, into their cruel scheme of total depersonalization, disunity, suppression and exploitation. Therefore, they again launched the old barrel organ: they say that Russia is a “prison of nations”, and the Russians themselves are a “people of slaves”. Have heard this many times over the centuries. We also heard that Russia, it turns out, needs to be “decolonized” today. But what do they really need? In fact, Russia needs to be dismembered and plundered. If you can’t do it by force, then you can sow confusion.

I want to emphasize: we regard any outside interference, provocations with the aim of causing interethnic or interreligious conflicts as aggressive actions against our country, as an attempt to once again throw terrorism and extremism at Russia as a tool to fight us, and we will react accordingly accordingly.

We have a large, diverse country. And in this diversity of cultures, traditions, customs is our strength, a huge competitive advantage and potential. We must constantly strengthen it, protect this diverse harmony, our common heritage. I draw the attention of the leaders of all subjects of the Federation to this and count here on the authority of the shepherds of our traditional religions, on the responsibility of all political forces and public organizations.

I think that we all remember, we need to remember the lessons of the revolution of 1917 and the subsequent Civil War, the collapse of the USSR in 1991. It would seem that so many years have passed, but people of all nationalities living now, even those born in the 21st century, are still, even decades later, paying for the miscalculations made then, for indulging in separatist illusions and ambitions, for the weakness of the central government, for the policy of artificial , the violent division of the great Russian nation, the triune people - Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians. The bloody pockets that arose after the collapse of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union not only still smolder, but

sometimes flare up with renewed vigor. And these wounds will not heal for a long time.

We will never forget these mistakes and should not repeat them. I want to emphasize again: any attempts to sow ethnic and religious hatred, to split our society, are a betrayal, a crime against all of Russia. We will not allow anyone to divide Russia, which we have alone. About her, about our Fatherland, are our prayers, which sound in different languages.

And in this audience I would like to recall the words of St. Gregory the Theologian: "Honoring your mother is a holy thing. But everyone has their own mother, and the common mother is the Motherland."

Your Holiness! Dear Colleagues!

The theme of the current cathedral is "The Present and Future of the Russian World." The Russian world is all the generations of our ancestors and our descendants who will live after us. The Russian world is Ancient Rus', the Muscovite Kingdom, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, this is modern Russia, which is returning, strengthening and increasing its sovereignty as a world power. The Russian world unites everyone who feels a spiritual connection with our Motherland, who considers themselves a native speaker of the Russian language, history, and culture, regardless of even their national or religious affiliation.

But I want to emphasize: without Russians as an ethnic group, without the Russian people, there is and cannot be the Russian world and Russia itself. This statement does not contain any claim to superiority, exclusivity, or chosenness. This is simply a fact, as is the fact that our Constitution clearly enshrines the status of the Russian language as the language of the state-forming people. Russian is more than a nationality. This has always been the case, by the way, in the history of our country. This includes cultural, spiritual, historical identity. Being Russian is, first of all, a responsibility. I repeat, there is a huge responsibility for

preserving Russia, this is where true patriotism lies. And as a Russian person, I want to say: only a united, strong, sovereign Russia is capable of guaranteeing the future and original development of both the Russian people and all other peoples who have lived and are living in our country for centuries, united by a common historical destiny.

What does sovereignty mean for our state, for every family, for every person? What is its meaning, value, real content? This is first of all freedom. Freedom for Russia and for our people, and therefore for each of us. Because in our tradition, a person cannot feel free if his loved ones, children, and his Fatherland are not free. It is this kind of genuine freedom that our boys, our men, soldiers and officers, daughters of the Fatherland are now defending.

A free people, who understand their responsibility to today and future generations, is the only source of power, sovereign power, which is called upon to serve all people, the entire people, and not, of course, serve someone's private, corporate, class, especially strangers, foreign interests.

A truly free person is always a creator. We will support everyone's desire to benefit the country, society, and people. This is what constitutes sovereign development in national interests.

We have to solve colossal tasks in developing vast spaces from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic and the Black Sea. Our economy, industry, agriculture, new industries, creative industries, national business must increase their potential manifold.

I am now addressing entrepreneurs, of whom I know there are also many in this room. I would like to especially thank you, dear friends, for your well-coordinated work. It was by combining the efforts of the state and business that we thwarted the unprecedented economic aggression of the West; its sanctions blitzkrieg failed.

Russia will increase support for sovereign national entrepreneurship. For this purpose, we now have fundamentally new tools. Invest in Russia, create jobs, develop production, participate in personnel training - and then the growth of the national economy will translate into new successes and opportunities for your companies. National business, working to strengthen sovereignty, itself becomes stronger and more sovereign, and becomes less dependent on all components of today's world order.

The sovereign development of the country, economy, business, and social sphere must bring prosperity to all citizens, all Russian families, and therefore be fair. This is not about primitive leveling, of course not. Justice means, first of all, decent living conditions, modern cultural, healthcare, and sports facilities in all regions of the country. This is a skilled, well-paid job. High social prestige of a worker, engineer, teacher, doctor, artist, cultural figure, entrepreneur, every conscientious specialist, craftsman. Justice also means equal, broad opportunities for education, a start in life, and self-realization for young people.

In the West, they are now practicing not only the policy of "cancel culture," but also the actual abolition of liberal arts education. As a result, both culture and education become primitive. Many classical subjects are simply thrown out of Western curricula, replaced by some kind of gender and similar sciences - pseudosciences, of course. But we, on the contrary, need a real breakthrough in cultural life. And here we have a lot to learn from our ancestors, who, both in traditional and, by the way, in avant-garde art, set models for the whole world. I am convinced that the country's sovereignty and the strengthening of its role in the world are impossible without the flourishing of its original culture in all its manifestations.

And of course, it is important for us to take all the best that the domestic and world system of classical education has

accumulated. At the same time, our schools, universities, colleges must be modern, open to everything advanced. We need a holistic sphere of education in which the family, education system, national culture, the work of children's, youth, sports, military-patriotic organizations, a broad mentoring movement and, I would add, the wise word of spiritual shepherds, are simply necessary.

Yes, the church is separated from the state, and Patriarch [Kirill] has told me more than once, despite this, we have a unique relationship between church and state. What would you like to note in this regard? But it is impossible to separate the church from society and from people. I completely agree with this. And therefore, I again emphasize the importance of the participation of representatives of all Russian traditional religions in the education and upbringing of our youth and, of course, in strengthening spiritual, moral, and family values. It is of lasting importance that our pastors from all our traditional religions participate.

Your Holiness! Dear friends!

You know that a Decree has already been signed to declare the next year, 2024, the Year of the Family in Russia. And I would like to especially note that such a decision is truly based on the position of the absolute majority of our society. I am sure that the World Russian People's Council also unanimously supports it.

And what do I want to say and emphasize here? It is impossible to overcome the most difficult demographic challenges that we face only with the help of money, social payments, allowances, benefits, and individual programs. Yes, of course, the figures for budget "demographic" expenses are extremely significant, but that's not all. A person's life guidelines are much more important. At the heart of a family, in the birth of a child, are love, trust, and strong moral support. We should never and under no circumstances forget about this.

Many of our peoples, thank God, maintain the tradition of a strong, multi-generational family, where four, five or more children are raised. Let us remember that in Russian families, many of our grandmothers and great-grandmothers had seven or eight children, and even more.

Let's preserve and revive these wonderful traditions. Large families and large families should become the norm, a way of life for all peoples of Russia. And the family is not just the basis of the state and society, it is a spiritual phenomenon, a source of morality.

Support for family, motherhood, and childhood should cover the work of all areas of government without exception, our economic, social, infrastructural policies, education and health care, of course. The activities of all public associations and our traditional religions are also necessary precisely to strengthen the family. Saving and increasing the people of Russia is our task for the coming decades, and I'll say more right away: for generations to come. This is the future of the Russian world, a thousand-year, eternal Russia.

Your Holiness! Dear friends!

We are faced with many large-scale tasks, their solution requires truly conciliar work, and we are ready for it. We have become stronger. Our historical regions have returned to Russia. Society abandons everything superficial and turns to true, authentic values.

Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin at one time emphasized that the highest thing is the right, based on the power of the people. And together we showed such a nationwide strength, and such a nationwide will, a determination to defend our own fundamental interests, the fundamental interests of the peoples of Russia, to be guided not by strangers borrowed from someone else, but by our own sovereign worldviews, our understanding of how the family should develop and the entire state, to build Russia for ourselves and for our children.

I would like to thank you again for your support, for your patriotic spirit and, of course, congratulate you on the 30th anniversary of the World Russian People's Council. But I want to say special words of gratitude to its head - Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' Kirill.

I know what tireless work you, Your Holiness, are carrying out for the spiritual revival of Russia. How significant and weighty your position is, I want to emphasize this. How much the Russian Orthodox Church, clergy and laity, is doing under your leadership to implement social, charitable, and volunteer projects. What support is provided to our soldiers and their families. How our soldiers and officers on the front line await the word of the Patriarch.

Today, at the World Russian People's Council, I am glad to congratulate you on being awarded the 2023 Presidential Prize for your contribution to strengthening the unity of the Russian nation. Low bow to you. I wish the cathedral successful work.

Thank you.

Patriarch Kirill: I sincerely thank you, dear Vladimir Vladimirovich, for this wonderful word addressed to the cathedral. And, of course, I was very touched by your words addressed to me.

I would like to emphasize that from the very beginning of your activity as head of state, we, especially people of the older generation who remember different periods of the post-war life of our country, paid special attention to the very fact of the appearance of a person like you at the head of the state. And from the very beginning, I remember this time well, the absolute majority of our citizens began to associate with you those changes in the life of the people, society and the state that were so ripe by that time and which, unfortunately, were in no way amenable to change. A lot has happened in our country over the years. Russia has become a truly modern, scientifically and technologically developed, spiritually rich multinational state, where the

interests of individual peoples and ethnic groups are so harmoniously combined with national interests.

This unity of our people, the unity of our society, I know, primarily puzzles our ill-wishers, because the experience of multinational state entities is not always as successful and as setting an example for others as the experience of Russia.

But all this happens for a reason. Not, as we used to say and people say, using a fairy tale, "at the behest of a pike." All this is accomplished, of course, through the labors of people and with the certainly wise, patriotic, open-to-people leadership on the part of the head of state.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to you, and may the Lord strengthen your strength, the strength of your closest collaborators who form this united team, so that you continue your work for the benefit of our Russian Fatherland and the entire Russian people.

I sincerely thank you for your words and for your good deeds.

And now let me address you with the words that will be presented in my report and in which I will try to share with you my thoughts regarding the main topic - the present and future of our Russian world.

I am cordially pleased to welcome all of you who have gathered at the meeting of the World Russian People's Council, for its current, XXV session, anniversary session. At the time when it was created, our cathedral was not promised a long life. Many considered this a bad experience, which would undoubtedly fail in the conditions of a multinational state or deteriorate, which would unite marginal forces of a quasi-patriotic direction. And then this irony was present in the minds of some representatives of politics and public figures. But then everything began to gradually change, because already from the first council it became clear that the World Russian People's Council has potential that justifies and will justify its name.

The creation of the cathedral, like today's 25th session, brings, of course, a certain line under this quarter of a century, and, undoubtedly, it evokes certain thoughts, hopes, and aspirations for many of us present here. Maybe someone has some concerns, because everything is not so simple in our world, but, on the other hand, there is confidence in the absolute necessity and importance of such a meeting, which is the World Russian People's Council. Over 25 years, of course, a lot has happened: we have seen both good and bad, and therefore I think that, summing up this story, this work, we should have an honest conversation about what happened, what still needs to be worked on, which requires some adjustment when we are talking primarily about issues of great strategic importance for the life of our society and the spiritual development of the people, strengthening all aspects of the life of our Fatherland.

The theme of the current anniversary council—"The Present and Future of the Russian World"—prompts us to these considerations.

I remember how this public forum was created 30 years ago, back in 1993. In conditions of general confusion, the request to search for certain unifying principles was extremely popular and relevant. Only those who tried to create a kind of community that could accumulate the necessary ideas, thoughts that would help the people build their understanding of the future - this was not always crowned with success. Although there have been such attempts. But the topic was so important and the drama around the topic of the Russian world, the future of Russia was so intense and so, at the same time, carrying creative potential, that it could not help but be resolved as a result of many public discussions.

And so, gradually, the idea of establishing a public forum arose, where everyone who felt involved in the Russian people and Russian culture, who was not indifferent to what was happening in society, could discuss emerging issues and share their ideas. It was important to create a space for free and honest dialogue about the fate of the Fatherland in

order to consolidate healthy social forces ready to work for the revival of the Motherland, formulating answers to the difficult challenges of the time, acceptable also for citizens who are not Russian by nationality. This was initially the task of the World Russian People's Council - without renouncing our Russianness and without belittling Russianness in any way, to do everything in order to serve the entire multinational people of our country.

At that time, the topics of the spiritual origins of our identity began to be discussed more and more vividly and persistently, and the combination "Russian World" began to be heard more and more often to express the special cultural phenomenon of Russia.

Giving a report back in 2004, I noted that the appeal to this concept almost 10 years after the establishment of the World Russian People's Council is due, among other things, to the fact that over the past years Russia has finally defined itself axiologically and began to recognize itself as a country that, inheriting a rich tradition, the Orthodox tradition, which has key implications for the formation of relationships, phenomena in the socio-political, economic, spiritual and cultural fields, was able to begin seriously, including within the framework of the World Russian People's Council, to study these problems and openly discuss them.

At the same time, it would be wrong, and we said this right away when creating the World Russian People's Council, it would be wrong to understand the Russian World in a narrow national, ethnic sense and to limit this concept to the currently existing political borders, meaning by the Russian World exclusively the Russian Federation. That is why people living far beyond the borders of the Russian Federation began to take the most active part in our cathedrals.

Let me remind you of the important words spoken almost 20 years ago, which do not lose their relevance even now. I quote: "For us, the Russian world is not an ethnic concept; the Russian world includes all peoples belonging to other

religions, but sharing the same values of social life together with the Russian people. It is Russia, which recognizes itself as Orthodox, that is able to maintain different cultures in unity. Over the centuries, Russia has developed a mechanism for the coexistence of different cultures and religions that accept the same social values, but retain their religious identity.” End of quote.

The use of the concept “Russian World” in Russian public discourse aroused many strong emotions both within the country, among supporters of the liberal model of development, and among our, as they now say, Western partners, who saw in this concept clear signs of a revival of Russian self-awareness.

At the same time, the very idea of a spiritual and cultural world is not some kind of innovation. These are not fabrications of the mind, but a widespread phenomenon that characterizes the development of a certain type of culture, which, in the course of its successful existence, has created a unique value paradigm. I would like to say a few words about this today.

So, about the very formula of the “Russian World”. And the formula is this: cultural diversity from the Roman to the Russian world.

The blossoming complexity of human civilization revealed in history is, of course, the action of the wise providence of God, this is the wealth of the historical “garden of God,” as Ilyin wrote about it, who emphasized that Russia is called upon to show the diversity of talents that the Almighty Creator has endowed our people. True, the peoples have disposed of these talents, are disposing of them and, perhaps, will be disposing of them, unfortunately, not always according to their conscience, of which we see many examples today. And of course, these examples existed in the past.

Some cultures tend to go beyond natural national boundaries and, overcoming ethnic isolation, themselves become a

source for the development of other peoples and influence their social structure and spiritual life. This expansion of culture, which often occurred in the past using military-political methods, led to the creation of entire cultural areas, cultural worlds.

History remembers many similar examples. Thus, the famous Pax Romana became a symbol of the highest power of the Roman Empire, Pax Hispanica - the heyday of Spain, which extended its influence to South American lands, and Pax Britannica became a symbol of the period of world domination of the British order and colonialism.

Today they talk about Pax Americana, the established cultural and geopolitical union around the United States of America, which is the core of a special economic, political and ideological system.

Let's not forget that there is also a huge Arab world that unites countries of Arab culture. Moreover, even entire organizations are created on the basis of sociocultural community. For example, the Arab League. Or the Union of South American Nations, uniting the countries of Latin America. The list of these cultural worlds can be continued for a long time. In the end, our Orthodox brothers, the Greeks, have been repeating for many centuries about the existence of the Greek world and chanting the great values of Hellenism. And this doesn't bother anyone. But one has only to state the obvious - about the existence of an area of Russian culture, about the Russian world... How much noise arose when we formulated this idea and began to develop it, how many of the most ridiculous and far-fetched accusations were made by our imaginary friends and ill-wishers!

As popular wisdom says, a thief's hat is on fire. Was it in the depths of the Russian world that the concept of an "axis of evil" or the idea of a "world policeman" was born? Did we come up with the topic of cancel culture, which is striking in cynicism and spiritual barbarism? Are we imposing hegemony on the rest of the world, presenting it as a

universal, uncontested good for the rest of the world? I think the answer is obvious.

I would like to note that, contrary to popular belief, the concept of “Russian World” did not, of course, appear in the 2000s. Many outstanding writers and philosophers have reflected on the civilizational identity of Russia. This is a truly impressive series of titans of Russian culture: Nikolai Danilevsky, Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Lossky, Father Sergius Bulgakov, Lev Karsavin, Father Pavel Florensky, Semyon Frank, Ivan Ilyin, and finally, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, who coined the term “Russian idea” " These are only a very few names from a large list of thinkers who were inspired in their work by the idea of the Russian World.

It is not possible to agree with everything in their reasoning. Each of them placed emphasis in his own way, describing the phenomena of Russia and Russian identity. However, relying on their intuition and insight, we can glean something very valuable, adding to it what we have experienced and understood from our own spiritual and cultural experience of past decades.

What are the key features of the Russian idea, which are, in essence, the value basis of the Russian world as a special spiritual and cultural space? What is the formula of the Russian World? When the term “nation” is used, they usually mean a community of people speaking the same language. But in the case of the Russian people, there is an interesting nuance: Russian migrants, say, already in the second or third generation, can hardly speak Russian, but nevertheless consider themselves real Russians and remember their historical homeland with spiritual longing. I can speak about this from my own experience, because due to my duties I had to live in Western Europe for quite some time.

In addition, not everyone who speaks and writes Russian as their native language thereby declares belonging to the Russian people. Moreover, some openly renounce their

national roots, indicating their rejection of the Russian cultural code. Well, God is their judge. Rejection of the memory of ancestors is a phenomenon that is clearly condemned in our spiritual tradition.

So, the question of language is certainly important, but it is not decisive. What does it have? The unity of culture is of decisive importance, which consists in the people's awareness of a common historical destiny and a common spiritual and moral values, which in turn results in a unity of worldview. Let me emphasize: precisely worldviews, not ideologies. These things should never be mixed. Ideologies can change depending on the political situation, so unity on such a basis is fragile, unreliable and can crumble under unfavorable conditions, and our country knows this well from the sad historical experience of the past century. It is precisely taking into account the negative, but still valuable experience that the current Russian Constitution enshrines a ban on the establishment of a common state ideology, mandatory for everyone.

In response to questions from a number of social forces who absolutely want to have some kind of national idea, I can only repeat again: we already have it. What could be better if you want to more effectively motivate a person to do creative work for the good of society than sincere love and devotion to the Motherland? Those who truly love their country, their people and culture do not need any ideology, they do not need to invent or invent anything.

We already have all the most important things: the richest spiritual culture, the traditions of Orthodoxy, the unique valuable experience of living together peacefully and respectfully interacting with representatives of other nationalities and religions. We just need to be worthy heirs of our ancestors and live in accordance with our convictions, so that deeds do not diverge from words.

Returning to the definition of the Russian World formula, we can say that the Russian World is a community of shrines. Using this word not only in a religious sense,

although this dimension is undoubtedly very important, the commonality of ideological ideas and moral values unites people of different ethnic origins, different religions and cultural traditions. There is something irrational in this, as Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdyaev noted, however, the hatred of opponents of the Russian World is, apparently, just as irrational.

What connects us? What is sacred to us? The key concept, the common denominator in the “Russian World” formula is tradition. Tradition - this follows from the innermost form of the word, because translated from Latin it literally means tradition, transmission - first of all, it ensures the connection of generations, preserves and transmits valuable spiritual and cultural experience to people. Without this experience, neither the existence of the people nor a strong, stable statehood, which is, in essence, a visible expression of the will of the nation for social self-organization, is possible. The break with tradition was always painfully experienced by the Russian people, who later tried to heal these wounds.

This was the case in the 18th century, in the era of uncontrolled cultural influences of the West, its absolute dominance in Russian public life. And in the next century, let me remind you, Russian writers made a great contribution to restoring the integrity of Russian culture, and, perhaps, first of all, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin. We can say that this restoration began the powerful flowering of Russian culture, which gave the world many outstanding writers, artists and composers.

However, an even more tragic break occurred in the 20th century, when the new authorities set a course for a decisive rejection of the legacy of the past, declaring that they would destroy the old world to the ground and build a new one on its ruins. The Orthodox tradition, which from time immemorial determined the existence of the Russian people, instilling in them the best moral qualities, was rejected, just as any religiosity was rejected. Unprecedented persecution of the church and believers, brutal repressions against clergy, and

of different religions, not only the Orthodox clergy - these are the sad fruits of the activities of the then government.

We know what happened in the end. A house built on sand cannot stand, as the Gospel tells us, but the country, with all its military-political strength and powerful ideological propaganda, turned out to be an insufficiently strong structure.

This is a visible lesson for all of us, because we were involved in all of this: some were already actively involved in public life, others were still at an age when they could not actively participate. But we all remember that time, from which we also need to learn the right lesson. If you destroy the spiritual foundation of the life of a people, then a catastrophe occurs, primarily in the hearts of people, where, as Dostoevsky put it, the main battle of good and evil is waged, where the devil fights with God. Praise the Lord, three decades after the abandonment of the policy of state atheism, it was possible to gradually level out the situation. Today, Orthodox churches and monasteries are actively being built in Russia and in other countries under the canonical responsibility of the Russian Church. This fact is always impressive and causes undisguised surprise among many believers in the West, where Christian churches, on the contrary, are closed, converted at best into concert halls, and in some cases, into cafes and even nightclubs. I would like to express special gratitude to the state leadership of Russia and personally to Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin for the invariably great attention to the spiritual component of the life of the people, for understanding the special historical role of the Orthodox tradition in the formation and development of Russian culture and Russian statehood.

I have said more than once before and I will repeat it again: we really live in a very favorable time, rarely does the Lord give such a unique chance. We can build constructive and friendly relations between the Orthodox Church and other religious associations and government authorities. This is perhaps the first time in the history of Russia. Even at a time when the country called itself an Orthodox empire, there was

no such mutual understanding and unanimity in resolving important issues related to strengthening the traditional spiritual and moral foundations of the life of the people. I already gave an example once. When Alexander I offered Prince Golitsyn to become chief prosecutor of the Holy Governing Synod, he was embarrassed, surprised, then quietly said to the emperor: "Sovereign, you know that I am a Freemason and an atheist, but how can I be chief prosecutor of the synod?" To which Alexander said: "Go, you can handle it." That's how we dealt with it.

Talking about crisis phenomena always prompts us to remember the etymology of the word "crisis" itself. "Crisis" literally translates from Greek as "judgment." How we respond, react to some serious problem - this will be the real quality of our spiritual life, the judgment of our faith.

As already mentioned, tradition is the common spiritual and cultural denominator of the Russian world. Today tradition is under powerful pressure; they are trying to undermine it both from within and from without. Now let's try to fill this word – "tradition" – with specific concepts.

The family is the basis of Russian national life and the internal stronghold of the tradition of the Russian World, which is of key importance for all religious cultures. Being the most important school for personal development, the family not only helps a person to understand the world around him, but also teaches love, kindness and compassion, and provides the most important moral understanding and appropriate guidelines.

A traditional family was considered a few decades ago as something as natural as air; it never occurred to anyone to encourage people to start families and have children. However, not least thanks to external influences broadcast in the public space of our country, it is possible to convince a certain part of people that the traditional family is an outdated relic.

I am saddened to learn that today in the domestic film industry there are films promoting surrogacy and justifying this method in overcoming childlessness, including through

the emotion of sympathy for infertile couples. It would seem, at first glance, how good it is to empathize with suffering people who cannot have a child. However, we know very well where the road is often paved with good intentions.

Our country once set itself the goal of revealing the secret of the nuclear core in order to protect itself. No resources were spared to solve this problem, believing that without this our people would not preserve freedom and the very right to life. I am sure that in our days it is the preservation of the people, the revival of the traditional family that is the condition for the survival of the country and a goal for the achievement of which no resources should be spared: neither material, nor intellectual, nor organizational.

One cannot spare material resources for the development of the family. It is necessary to create full-fledged conditions for a quality life for large families, in particular, by helping in obtaining housing, education, and so on.

My particular heartache is the unresolved problem with abortion, which I often raise in conversations with government authorities at various levels. Without exaggeration, this is a real national disaster that destroys the future of our society and destroys the idea of the value of human life. However, the solution to the problem of abortion lies not only in the plane of legislative prohibitions. It is very important to carry out educational work, including at school, instilling in children respect for human life, love for their parents, for their native country, for our moral values and ideals. Without love, acting in free moral choice, no prohibitions can radically change the situation. Without love, all this becomes a soulless system of punishment, which a person will always try to circumvent by cunning.

Opposing abortion is, of course, not the only measure to change the demographic situation. I know that by presidential decree 2024 has been declared the Year of the Family. Firstly, I thank Vladimir Vladimirovich for this initiative and I hope that the planned state support for the institution of the traditional family will be extended in subsequent years.

Now a few words about migration. The migration situation is a pain point. Yes, indeed, the topic of the migration situation in Russia is sensitive and not pleasant for everyone. But in fact, this question is extremely important in the light of what has been said about the preservation of Russian culture. Modern migration processes and their current nature pose a serious external challenge to our cultural tradition. An erroneous migration policy can lead to the most dire consequences for the Russian world and for Russia as its cultural and spiritual core. Nowadays, the idea that migrants are a competitive labor force is popular in the public space, and therefore society must come to terms with the consequences that come with the almost unlimited import of foreign labor.

Of course, I don't know all the aspects of this problem, and I admit that it is indeed quite difficult to do without migration flows in economic terms today, but this does not mean that these flows should not be regulated and limited in any way. The massive influx of emigrants who do not speak Russian, do not have a proper understanding of Russian history and culture, our traditions and customs, and therefore are unable and often unwilling to integrate into Russian society, is changing the appearance of Russian cities, leading to the deformation of a single legal, cultural and linguistic space of the country.

In some of the largest cities, closed ethnic enclaves are emerging and actively developing, which are breeding grounds for corruption, organized ethnic crime and illegal migration. There is no need to hush this up. We don't offend anyone; among the people who came to work in Russia, there are a lot of respectable people, by the way, who respect the Russian people, our traditions, the Orthodox Church and faith. But there are also people with other interests and other goals.

News reports, unfortunately, are replete with reports of aggressive behavior of emigrants towards our citizens. Cases of violence against women and insults towards them, disrespect for the elderly - all this causes

justifiable indignation of many of our compatriots, who want to see a more strict and attentive attitude to this problem on the part of law enforcement agencies and government authorities.

To no less an extent, social tension and the growth of mistrust are promoted by the fact that Russian citizenship is increasingly being obtained by migrants from countries whose cultural and civilizational characteristics are seriously different from those that exist in our Fatherland. At the same time, the procedure for obtaining a passport for Russian-speaking people who are culturally close to Russia remains bureaucratically complex. And the question arises: why is it quite simple for some, but due to the influx of this kind of migrants, the problem that was mentioned arises, and for some reason it is very difficult for others? I am in no way against those people who want to work honestly in our country. But they must clearly understand that neither the profit they bring to Russian entrepreneurs nor the presence of a Russian passport frees them from respect for Russian society, the Russian people and our traditions.

I would like to emphasize: in addition to economic benefits, there are the most important strategic issues of the existence of the state and society, our traditions, language, laws, culture and customs. The value of profit cannot be higher than the value of a state that is ready to defend the interests of the state-forming people.

Let me emphasize that the point here is not that the majority of migrant workers are non-Christians, no. If they were Christians, for example, of a different denomination, arriving from another region with their own customs, traditions and cultures, this could also create certain problems.

I am sure that the Orthodox, as well as the Muslims of our country, with whom we have lived side by side for centuries, want to preserve Russia in the form in which it has developed over the centuries of its existence. If we replace a significant part of the Russian multinational people with other peoples who follow their own historical path and do not

accept our identity, then our country will become different, very different, not much like Russia.

In these conditions, Russia, I am convinced, needs significant adjustments to its migration policy. Life practice has shown the ineffectiveness of solving problems with migrants through attempts to come to an agreement with national diasporas and clans, who are ready not only to stand up for their representative in order to save him from fair punishment under the law, but also to take revenge in every possible way on those who dared to contact law enforcement agencies, reporting about crimes.

What could be the solution to the migration problem - we need to think and seriously analyze, including the experience of other countries that have faced similar challenges. But, most importantly, we need a process of studying this problem. Under no circumstances should you push her into some corner and say that nothing is happening or simply answer: otherwise we can't, we don't have enough labor reserves. This problem should be on the table for public discussion, and, of course, when making government decisions.

Returning to the words I said 20 years ago, I would like to emphasize again: Russia is capable of maintaining different cultures in unity if and only if it recognizes itself as Orthodox. These words should in no way create a feeling of discomfort among non-Orthodox people. And here's why: being the core of Russian culture, the Orthodox faith has nurtured in the Russian people all those moral qualities that today constitute our identity and thanks to which we can talk about Russian identity and the Russian world, a multinational community.

The guardian of Orthodoxy, the support and stronghold of the spiritual tradition of the Russian people is our church, which not only educated and instructed its faithful children, but also always shared with them all the hardships and trials. Russian culture, as Ivan Ilyin aptly put it, is the hard-won child of historical catastrophes and national disasters that have befallen our country every now and then. Overcoming

these severe trials with the spiritual support of the church helped to form a sense of solidarity among the people - the most important component of Russian culture, which even today determines the actions of many of our compatriots who strive to help even unfamiliar people in difficult situations. The assimilation of the high Christian ideal of brotherhood has developed in our people that same worldwide responsiveness, the all-humanity of the Russian spirit and the desire for unity, which both Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov wrote about.

The natural kindness of the Russian people, tolerance and ability to live peacefully with other peoples, not to impose their beliefs, have formed a unique model of state and social structure based on multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism, mutual respect among representatives of different religious traditions.

The sense of high moral responsibility characteristic of the Russian people also gave rise to an awareness of the inseparability of the fate of Russia from the fate of the whole world, and hence the desire to harmonize and, as far as possible, resolve conflicts outside the Fatherland. Therefore, if trouble came, for us both Syria, which suffered from terrorists, and Italy, which had a hard time experiencing the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, turned out to be close, and we helped them as much as we could. And the starving countries of Africa are not strangers at all. This is the "cultural type of worldwide pain for everyone," as Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky wrote.

All these important components, multiplied by loyalty to tradition, give the final formula of the Russian world, cultural space, high spiritual and moral values. It is not enough just to be proud of history, victories and achievements of ancestors, to admire the culture and rich heritage of the past. If such feelings are not supported by the experience of experiencing a tradition, immersion in culture and specific deeds, then this is a dangerous counterfeit of traditions. The time has come for the church to take special responsibility for our people and our country. Today, when

many forces have risen against us, my duty is to call for prayer for our church, for our President Vladimir Vladimirovich, for the Motherland, which is going through very difficult life circumstances, as well as for the fraternal peoples of historical Rus'.

We pray for the support of those forces that are today at the forefront of the struggle for the freedom of our Fatherland, no less than for the freedom of our Fatherland.

And if there is no free Russia, then there will be no Russian church; there will be those who will betray from within, and those who will absorb from without.

Let there be no tacos.

Thank you for attention.

P. Tolstoy: Dear Vladimir Vladimirovich! Your Holiness! Venerable participants of the cathedral! The Russian People's Council is taking place today at a turning point in history. There is a war going on against us: economic, ideological, informational – and a war on the territory of the former Soviet Ukraine.

You know, I was wondering where to start. And I want to say that on my phone, I'm sure, like many people sitting in this room, there are several chats where literally every minute, every hour, ordinary Russian people, residents of villages, towns, rectors of churches, municipal employees collect 100 or 300 rubles each to help our soldiers, to help military doctors, to help those who were left homeless. This is the Russian world today, this is the Russian idea of helping others, solidarity and unity in the face of the trials that Russia is now going through.

Rallying around the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, around the army, our defenders, for the sake of freedom and sovereignty of our Fatherland, for the sake of preserving our faith and history, for the sake of victory in the battle for the survival and development of our unique Russian civilization.

Russia always won. He will win this time too. Moreover, we will only become stronger. Just as in a moment of danger a person's previously dormant powers are activated, the same thing happens with the people.

In 1945, our country lay in ruins after the bloodiest war in the history of mankind and in Russian history, and just 12 years later the world learned the Russian word "sputnik".

What will we do after the victory? Where should we direct our energy? Where will the country be in 10–15 years? These questions, of course, require answers today. I would like to draw attention to something without which, in my opinion, the development of the country is impossible.

Today, both the head of state and the head of our church spoke about the family as the basis of life, the basis of the state. It is not for nothing that the Russian Orthodox Church calls the family a small church. Everything - both good and bad - is laid down in each of us, in a person, in the family. And it is very important that the President proposed making next year the Year of the Family. It's good when the family is friendly, loving, and has many children. But, unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly rare to find families with three or more children. But sometimes you can't dream of more. People don't want to give birth, they doubt it, and often they don't have time. There are a lot of reasons, and we all together urgently need to correct the current demographic situation. Many measures have already been taken to support families with children, this was discussed today. But more is needed, we need to qualitatively change the state approach to supporting motherhood of many children and, importantly, fatherhood.

His Holiness the Patriarch came forward in the Duma with the initiative to introduce maternity leave for women not from the 30th week of pregnancy, as now, but from the moment of registration in the antenatal clinic, that is, from the first day when the expectant mother learned about her unborn child. This initiative can be very effective.

Thank you for your applause, we can count on you to support this. In fact, this is a truly effective measure for

increasing the birth rate in the country, because all the abortions, which His Holiness just now spoke of as a terrible phenomenon, a terrible sin, are being done precisely during that period, which is now in no way covered by either maternity leave or support states. And not least of all, a woman's decision to have an abortion is associated with the fear of losing her job. The state needs children today. Why don't we start paying benefits to expectant mothers during this most difficult period, at the moment when she makes a decision: to give birth or to go and have an abortion?

Another initiative could improve the status of fathers of many children in society. Recently the President spoke about fathers with many children. Our employers pay contributions to the Social Fund for their workers, which in the future will use these funds to pay pensions to these workers. It turns out that contributions from bachelors and fathers with many children are the same. Indeed, in the future, it will be the grown-up children of these parents with many children who will feed the elderly bachelor with their taxes. A person who has raised three or more children has already more than compensated for his pension contributions. And if we exempt employers from paying into the Social Fund for an employee with many children, such fathers with many children will become needed by everyone. They will be guaranteed a job; employers will find it much more profitable to hire a father with many children than any other employee, by 30 percent. And having many children should become synonymous with prosperity and public respect in Russia.

Of course, dear friends, all these measures need to be carefully thought through and discussed. For this purpose, with the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch, an inter-factional deputy group for the protection of Christian values was created in the State Duma. There is an inter-factional group on family issues. We are working on it. Many regional heads have already begun work on saving people. This is one of the important criteria of the main capital of power - the trust of our citizens.

Everything must be done to ensure that each new child is not a new problem for the family, but a new opportunity. It so

happens that for many, having many children is synonymous with poverty. It's time to make having many children synonymous with prosperity.

I am sure that large families need a unified federal status. There is another important problem that His Holiness the Patriarch just spoke about. Effective protection of Russian families is impossible without changing current migration policy. The uncontrolled massive influx of foreign labor leads to understatement of wages for Russian citizens and their subsequent replacement by migrants in certain sectors of the economy, because there is no control on the part of employers. The relocation of migrant families creates an additional burden on the social sphere and provokes domestic conflicts.

The influx of people who do not speak Russian and do not want to integrate into Russian society creates ethnic enclaves in our cities, which are breeding ground for extremism and corruption, and create tension among people. We need a new migration policy. Perhaps it is worth adopting the basic principles of state policy in the field of demography, which will spell out the basic principles of family support, measures to increase the population and our priorities in the field of migration.

Now I would like to return to where I started. It has happened for centuries that in the face of the enemy, Russian people forget their differences and stand up for the defense of their Motherland. It's the 21st century - nothing has changed, and, like our ancestors, today we are fighting for our future, for the lives of our children, for the right to be Russian and live in Russia. As Suvorov said: "We are Russians, God is with us." The idea of victory, uniting the country under the slogans "We are together", "Everything for victory!", should become the cause of every citizen of Russia, regardless of his social status, nationality or religion. Only then, I am sure, victory will be ours.

Thank you for attention.

M. Popova: Dear Vladimir Vladimirovich! Your Holiness! Your Eminence and Most Reverend Bishops! Venerable fathers, brothers and sisters!

Thankful for the honor of being here.

My name is Maria, I have ten children.

2024 has been declared the Year of the Family, I really support this decision. The main support of Russia is the family, and we want everything possible to be done this year so that we have more Russians, Russian large families. And I will say this as a simple mother of many children who does not make government decisions, but feels their consequences.

When a beautiful flower grows in a suitable place, it is supported, watered and weeds that get in the way are removed. The experience of our family and others shows that a good life for a large family is impossible in the cramped conditions of city apartments. A normal large family needs its own comfortable home on its own land.

This is not a whim, but a basic need. Otherwise, where will these “flowers” grow? My husband and I, Muscovites with a university education, moved to the Yaroslavl region and cannot stay in the capital with our ten children, because this is unthinkable in a city apartment. And all our familiar large families either live in their own houses or dream of moving into them.

For the real revival of Russia with many children, we need individual housing construction, and not “human housing”, but low-rise suburban villages with all the infrastructure: schools, clinics, playgrounds and the like. And installing a preferential mortgage on houses is much cheaper than on city apartments. After the birth, for example, of a third child in a family, the state can write off half of the mortgage, after the fourth - two-thirds, after the fifth - to pay off this debt in full. In general, the family should be supported as a model. Of course, in order to change social stereotypes, since images are formed by the media, therefore on the radio, on the Internet, on TV - everywhere people should see a good, happy, large family. You can't do without good

propaganda. And it is important that reasonable censorship removes the unnecessary and harmful, like weeds.

Separately about the anti-human problem of abortion. The church equates this grave sin with murder, and we ask the Government to protect us from the abortion killing of children.

A terrible situation: for me, a healthy, socially prosperous, married young mother, while managing my pregnancy in a commercial clinic, the doctors told me that so many pregnancies were bad, and advised me to stop it. Although it is profitable for them to provide paid pregnancy services, they prefer a monstrous inclination towards abortion and small children. And this activity cannot be counted or controlled.

Therefore, the state must: first, introduce a ban on propaganda and inducement to abortion; and second, to legally prohibit surgical, medical, and all types of abortions, to begin with, in commercial clinics. And encourage in every possible way all doctors who refuse to perform abortions, that is, save the lives of children.

Further. It is unfortunate that government benefits are based on family income. As a result, the majority of large families who are allocated these funds cannot receive them. And parents seem to be faced with a choice: either be below the poverty line in order to receive subsidies and benefits, or cope on your own. That is, it turns out to be a choice: children or money. It's not fair. And only the state can provide financial assistance to families with many children, regardless of the family's financial security, and protect us from juvenile laws. And so it should be.

It would be good, as has already been said, to approve a unified status for families with many children. This is, of course, what most Russian large families expect. And it is imperative to support young student families, so that our students are not afraid to have children and be left without money, without education and without a place to live.

And mothers are busy with very hard, but noble work - creating future generations. If a mother received a decent child care allowance, which increases with the number of children, then instead of being forced to go to work, many women could devote themselves to their husbands and children.

A large family is creative freedom to be yourself, an image of heaven on earth. This has been forgotten a little, but we don't need new values, it's time for us to return to ourselves. I wish there were more of us, because we have the best people and the best country in the world. Thank you for your attention.

Vladimir Putin: Your Holiness! Dear friends!

If I may, just two or three words about what was just said.

Firstly, I agree that we still need to do a lot in order to improve the living conditions of large families and, in general, families with children. As you can probably see, the government is constantly paying attention to this. It is no coincidence that we are declaring next year the Year of the Family: in order to look for the most effective, necessary, important and possible for the state in today's conditions measures to support families with children.

Here, of course, is the continuation of preferential mortgages - and not only, here is unification or focusing on the most effective ways of support in the form of various benefits, benefits, and so on, combining something with something. But I won't repeat it now, we have a whole big program built - one that has probably never happened in the history of our country. But, of course, there is something to work on, I understand perfectly well what my colleague speaking just said.

Of course, a large family with a large number of people needs separate houses, and this housing construction needs to be developed. That's what we do. The question is that all this, everything that is being done, should be accessible,

more accessible than today. This is an obvious thing. This also applies to various options for supporting families. But, I repeat once again, I am very grateful to His Holiness the Patriarch for organizing events like today, because this gives us the opportunity to talk, discuss, hear each other, and so on. We will certainly work on this.

Now regarding the fact that 12 years after the end of the Great Patriotic War, the whole world learned the Russian word “sputnik”, because this speaks of the progress that the country has achieved even in very difficult times for it. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this became possible because even at the most critical moments of the Great Patriotic War, our nuclear and rocket scientists continued to work on these topics, on what was then, at that time, strategically important and necessary - although at the moment. At that moment in time, nothing was more important than, say, holding the front or winning another victory on the battlefield. Nevertheless, the country has always thought about the future.

And you and I, of course, must do exactly this: always, under any circumstances, think about the future of the people and our state. This is what we do, and this is what we will do in the future.

(Applause.)

Thank you for your applause.

And finally, I want to draw attention to some things that His Holiness the Patriarch said. He remembered the Soviet song: we will destroy the old world, and then - and so on, on the rubble, as His Holiness said, we will build a new building. This is what the Soviet authorities planned after the socialist revolution of 1917. And it seemed that all this was in ruins. In fact, it seems to me that these were not fragments, these were the seeds on which the new Russian Soviet statehood at that time grew. Because after 24 years, despite all the attempts to uproot religious consciousness, to uproot our cultural roots, still after 24 years... Let me just remind you: the Great Patriotic War began, and what happened? Molotov, remember, addressed how, informing

the Soviet people that the war had begun? How did he turn? "Citizens and Citizens". And Stalin a few days later said differently: "Brothers and sisters." We immediately remembered God, the church, and our eternal traditions. And today this continues. This cannot be "uprooted". This is the basis, the essence of Russia and the essence of our people. We will always look forward, move forward, but we will always rely on our age-old traditions and our spiritual roots.

Thank you for doing just that. Thank you. Best wishes!