

Church Kirill-Style: Blessing the Bombing of the Flock

Outrage from both political and ecclesiastical realms is rising over Russian Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church and his support of Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggressive actions against Ukraine. A growing number of clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are petitioning for a tribunal, or church heresy trial, against Kirill, reports via *Ukrainska Pravda*. And now, via a Friday interview with *The Atlantic*, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has added his voice to the outcry.

The clerics accuse Kirill of "heresy" and "moral crimes" because of his endorsement of Russia's attacks, calling for the primates to "clearly and unambiguously condemn" the actions. Their petition will go to the Council of Primates of Ancient Eastern Churches, to which Kirill's Russian Orthodox Church also belongs, per *The Washington Times*.

As a Jewish president of a mostly Orthodox Christian and Catholic nation, this weekend "marks the first seder of the Passover, the holiday that marks the liberation of an enslaved nation from an evil dictator, Zelenskyy told *The Atlantic* from his compound in Kyiv.

"I do not understand when religious representatives of Russia [Russian Orthodox Church] say they are faithfully empowering soldiers to kill Ukrainians," Zelenskyy said. "Worse, I cannot understand how a Christian country like the Russia Federation, with the largest Orthodox community in the world, will be killing people on these very days," during the Easter holidays. "This is not Christian behavior at all, as I understand it. On Easter they will kill, and they will be killed." As a result, many Ukrainians are going to spend the holy season under siege."

Blessing the Bombing of the Flock

While claiming to be the “patriarch of the people,” Kirill and other Russian priests were responsible for “blessing” the bombs that destroyed and killed thousands of civilians, men, women, children, houses, hospitals, schools and villages in Crimea. The petition says that he “directly blesses the physical destruction of this flock by Russian troops.”

“Kirill’s full-throated blessing of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine has splintered the global Orthodox Church and also the Russian church’s relationship with the World Council of Churches (WCC), which is mulling a debate during its June assembly on the possibility of expelling the Moscow Patriarchate,” according to . “However, the signatories [of the petition] add, ‘this is not enough. We clearly state that it is impossible for us to continue to be in any form of canonical subordination to the Moscow Patriarch. This is the dictates of our Christian conscience.’”

The same problems have emerged in other churches in Europe to one degree or another. Those claiming to be the most “international” are in fact a front for hardline nationalism of one political persuasion or country against another. More churches are becoming unsafe.

Vineyard Church leader emeritus Martin Buehlmann, Bern, Switzerland, has expressed his growing frustrations, stating, “Churches are not doing enough. There is a silence. It should not be tolerated,” calling all churches to stand up against the aggression and to do their share in relief efforts.

Charismatic Churches and Ministries

Catch the Fire Toronto’s Gwen Slade reports via social media that her husband is now on the ground in Bulgaria helping to set up a refugee center there with another Catch the Fire church and members. They have been working closely with Ukraine pastors ministering inside Ukraine with many of them

on the front lines with troops. Like other Christian churches and their humanitarian work, due to Russian intelligence surveillance and monitoring on the internet, relief efforts of what, how much and where cannot be disclosed at this time.

Housing Is Priority No. 1

In meetings with Bonn city officials, housing continues to be the top priority as the first wave of people have now migrated from Ukraine through neighboring EU states of Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova. There are 4.8 million refugees registered with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and another wave of 3 million people are on the way to EU countries.

It also should be noted that officials in cities ranging from Bonn and Berlin in Germany to Warsaw, Poland, have been working 24/7 with Kyiv mayor and former world champion boxer Vladimir Klitschko since the start of the war on the growing humanitarian crisis.

Bonn city officials and others have met the crisis with generosity and compassion, instantly activating preplanned operations that include housing the tens of thousands of people in empty office buildings, homes, schools, tents on air fields and other places. Just getting someone under a roof is a major victory.

Even if the war stopped tomorrow, housing, food and support services for a minimum of two to three years must be found for million people in Western Europe and another 11 million internally displaced people inside Ukraine.

More reports to come on the intensifying refugee situation and crisis inside Ukraine. {eoa}

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