

## **Serbian Patriarch Irinej on social engagement of the Church**



**In his interview given to the leading Belgrade newspaper “Politika” of the 29th September 2019 His Holiness expressed his opinion on the issue of social engagement of the Serbian Church:**

**Is the Serbian Church sufficiently engaged in social issues and efforts to give concrete solutions or responses to the issues of the modern world, starting from: emigration of young people, low birth rates, rise in domestic and family violence and any other type of violence, up to the issues which are posed as global challenges: misuse of modern technologies and invasion of privacy, experiments with biotechnologies, environmental devastation.**

There is the issue of wider social engagement of the Serbian Church, that is – the issue of establishing and maintaining balance between prayer and social activities. The Church works very actively in solving some of the problems of modern society. For example, in my Diocese, in Belgrade as megalopolis, the Church provides daily

food for thousands of the needy ones through the Faith Charity Stewardship organisation, its soup kitchen.

The Church offers health care counselling services – physicians who provide help without charging, then marital and psychological counselling etc. The Church also provides help to many young people, hundreds of them, regarding their addiction problems – drugs, alcohol...There is a multitude of other similar Church social services in other Dioceses as well. We do not point that out. Individuals deal with the issue of misuse of modern technologies, and we have priests who are true experts in such issues. But that is not the main role of the Church.

Naturally, we do not neglect this role; we have been investing efforts into furthering of Church social activities. Some of the issues you have listed have been posed both in local and global environments, not only before the Serbian Church but before some other social factors with increasing speed and intensity. People rightfully expect answers. The Church answers some of them – like personal dignity, birth ethics, violence confronting – relatively quickly and easily, reaching for the existing answers from the treasury chest of its theology.

However, other issues must be considered in a more detailed and more thoughtful manner, since they did not exist previously in the field of theology, both in the form they appear before us today, and in their intrinsic nature. In my opinion, the solution to all the threatening world problems which many people see as apocalyptic ones: wars, nuclear arms race, ecological, climate and other issues etc. can be found only in a clear and definite return to the basic Christian values which the civilisation has forgotten and has deviated from throughout centuries. And in no other manner.

We, as an ancient Christian people, have rich tradition, shining examples from near and distant past, saints, live monasteries and places of prayer, Hilandar...all of that – a true and immeasurable spiritual treasury handed over to us for keeping and using it! And everything else will be added by the Lord Himself – that is the faith of our fathers which has never been shaken. With that faith, with the Lord and Saint Sava as helpers, all the problems of this world become different, easily solvable, insignificant. It is utterly unacceptable to think that we are alone, stuck, that our problems are the biggest ones and without solution. The Church reveals such faith to its people every day, as it has always done, through the Gospel it preaches.

Translated by Ivana Milicic

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