

Pussy Riot

For five months I have refused to write about this incident because I did not want to give publicity to a group of blasphemers. However, the secular media have now picked up on it and, perhaps since they have nothing else to do, the politicians are on holiday and the Olympic Games are over, they have decided to blow this incident up out of all proportion. Therefore, there must be a reply to this wave of hysterical ignorance and xenophobia.

First of all, in Russia today it is perfectly acceptable to protest against the democratically-elected leader, President Putin, and many do. What these women did was not an act of political protest, which they are free to do, but an act of blasphemy against the Mother of God, carried out in one of the most sacred sites in Moscow, its main Cathedral, restored as a victory over atheism which had dynamited it sixty years before.

Some disagree with the severity of the sentence. It must be said that others disagree with the mildness of the sentence. That is a matter of opinion and it is not for me to comment on the verdict of a court in another country. Let us not meddle with the sovereign legislature of the Russian Federation. We have to obey the laws of the land where we live.

In Russia today there are laws against blasphemy, copied from Western European models. They have recently been instituted in a country, where for nearly 75 years the Church was blasphemed against, spat on and cruelly persecuted. 600 bishops and 120,000 priests, monks and nuns and millions of laypeople were tortured and killed for their Faith in that time. Obviously, the new democratic Russia, which emerged after atheism, wanted to introduce laws guaranteeing the freedom of religion and protecting it.

Other countries have anti-blasphemy laws. For example, in England if I incite to religious hatred on Twitter, I can receive not two years in prison, but up to seven. In certain jobs in England, I will be sacked if I wear a small cross around my neck. The situation in the USA is similar. Other countries have laws against expression of religion. In France a Muslim woman who enters a public building with a headscarf will be arrested and fined. If she refuses to pay a fine, she will be imprisoned. The fact is that we have to respect the laws of the country where we live.

Some have said that we should appeal for mercy for the women because the Church preaches forgiveness. Yes, we forgive, but only where there is repentance. 'Go and do not sin again', said Christ. We could certainly plead for mercy for these women, but only if they had shown remorse. They have not.

Some have said that Jesus Christ would have been against this sentence. I am not Jesus Christ, so I cannot say. However, I do know that Jesus Christ turned the money-changers out of the temple, for they were blaspheming. So He was against blasphemy.

It seems to me that the secular media are suffering from hypocrisy, ignorance and xenophobia in their reporting of this case. Why are they not reporting the ongoing historic trip of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church to Poland and his historic call for mutual forgiveness of the sins committed by the Polish and Russian peoples against each other over the last centuries? Why are they not reporting on the 800 churches which have been destroyed in Nigeria over the last year, or the extensive persecutions and blasphemies against Christianity in Syria (see

the photo of the Muslim terrorist below), Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Egypt, Saudi Arabia etc etc?

I would like to receive an answer to these questions. So far I have not.

Archpriest Andrew Phillips

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