

International conference
"Church care for mentally ill people»
Moscow, Danilov monastery DECR
13-14 November 2018

The conference is organized on the initiative of the Commission for Church education and diakonia of the Inter-Council presence of the Russian Orthodox Church. The co-organizers are the Department for External Church Relations (DECR) of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Scientific Centre for Mental Health and Voronezh Metropolia of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The conference will deal with a very urgent and complex problem - Church care for people suffering from mental disorders. This theme touches upon different dimensions of Church life: liturgical, pastoral, missionary, diaconal. The attitude to mentally ill people in society and in the Church has changed over centuries, as has changed the understanding of the causes of mental illness. The distinction between spiritual and mental disorders has been and remains a very serious problem for the clergy. In today's world, where, according to the World Health Organization, 14% of the population have mental disorders, and depression threatens to become the leading cause of death in the coming decades, an active involvement of the clergy is necessary in helping people suffering from mental illness, and their families. This requires theological reflection and assessment of all aspects of this problem, training clergy to work with different categories of mentally ill, close cooperation of pastors and doctors.

The participants will explore problems, highly relevant for all Christian Churches: specifics of pastoral care for various categories of mentally ill people; the perception of Church sacraments and worship by patients, veneration of icons and relics; mental illness and possession; true and distorted religiosity in the mentally ill; pastoral support of mentally ill families, etc. An important issue to be discussed at the conference is the teaching of pastoral psychiatry for clergy and students of theological schools.

Leading Russian and foreign experts in this field from Russia, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Great Britain, Romania, etc., will speak at the conference. Clergy, psychiatrists, psychologists, representatives of theological schools, members of the Inter-Council Presence will participate in the discussion. In the future, it is planned to publish the texts of reports and contributions presented at the conference.

The conference will host about 40 participants and will be held in Moscow, in DECR. Simultaneous Russian-English translation will be provided during the conference. Nonresident and foreign participants will be accommodated in the hotel "Danilovskaya". Foreign guests will be offered a one-day cultural program after the conference.