

Russian Priest Says West Is on Track to Becoming 'Self-Centered Scum'

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Western civilization risks becoming narcissistic "scum" because of its perverse values, a Russian Orthodox Church speaker told a high-profile international gathering on the weekend.

Moscow Patriarchate deputy speaker Roman Bogdasarov cited as an example attempts to legalize pedophilia, which he said were taking place in unspecified European countries.

"We risk turning into a society of self-centered scum by trying to force on humanity a new model of a world without limits," Bogdasarov said, the Patriarchate's website reported Monday.

His claim about pedophilia, while not based on any existing legislation, is popular with Russian ultraconservatives.

It was also perpetuated by President Vladimir Putin, who spoke last year about a drive to legalize child abuse in the Netherlands.

A group campaigning to lower the age of consent to 12 was active in the 2000s in the Netherlands — reportedly the current residence of Putin's elder daughter — but never gained any popular support or made legislative headway.

Speaking at a conference marking the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in the German capital, Bogdasarov promoted the idea of "God-given" dividing lines in society.

Those divides are being uprooted by "hedonistic" modern society, which has "launched the machine of self-destruction" by marginalizing Christianity, the priest claimed.

Attendees at the "World Without Walls" conference in Berlin included Spanish ex-Prime Minister Jose Zapatero, former Mexican President Vicente Fox and former member of pop band Jackson 5, Jermaine Jackson.

Conservative Christianity is on the rise in Russia, embraced by the Kremlin in recent years as the new official ideology.

But while 68 percent of the population consider themselves Orthodox Christians, only one in 10 believers go to church at least once a month, and more than half have never read the bible, a nationwide poll by the state-run Public Opinion Foundation showed in July.

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