

TOPICAL ISSUES OF THE WORLDVIEW FORMATION OF YOUTH IN THE TEACHING OF DISCIPLINES OF SPIRITUAL AND MORAL ORIENTATION IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OF THE ROSTOV REGION

(Speech at the rectors meeting of universities of the Rostov region
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[Меркурий (И.В. Иванов) Актуальные вопросы мировоззренческого становления молодежи в аспекте преподавания дисциплин духовно-нравственной направленности в образовательных организациях Ростовской области]

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Меркурий (И.В. Иванов) – Глава Донской митрополии, Митрополит Ростовский и Новочеркасский, Ростов-на-Дону, Российская Федерация.

Dear Besarion Chokhovich, dear Igor Alexandrovich,
dear members of the Council of Rectors of the Rostov Region,
dear colleagues, highly respected Fathers!

I would like to share my thoughts on education, but I would like you to consider my words in a rather wide worldview context of this topic, because giving a person a religious education is one thing, and forming a person as a citizen is a task much wider and more difficult. Therefore, I will say a few words about what we are doing today, how we try to do this work, about something that works, and something that does not work. Of course, I would like my words to find a response. I would also like this response to be realized in our interaction and in the education of young people who study at higher educational institutions.

Besarion Chokhovich has rightly noted that two years ago we discussed issues of the worldview formation of youth in the aspect of education problems, psychological difficulties of a young person. Today, we continue to consider this topic, but in the aspect of teaching disciplines of a spiritual and moral orientation and interaction between teachers and students.

I would like to remind that a modern student at the time of entering the university should already have a formed system of views and assessments, life guidelines, value meanings, which are the basis of the worldview, as well as competencies developing through activities. These provisions are reflected in the Federal State Standard for General Education. At the age of 14, a young citizen receives a passport, which indicates his social and criminal responsibility. At the age of 17-18 a young citizen receives a school certificate of full secondary education, which opens the way for a young person to enter the profession and the adult life.

The task of higher education is to continue the development of all the good that the secondary school has laid down, namely to improve the worldview, the integral spiritual beginning, the central component of which is the will qualities of the person and the active beginning in a person.

How well is everything with our youth and with those who enters the universities?

On October 19, the Most Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill, speaking to teachers who teach such subjects as "Basics of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics" and "Basics of Spiritual and Moral Culture of the Peoples of Russia," noted a considerable number of pressure points in the education process. Among them there is the presence of adolescents in social networks, including destructive ones, which disorients a person, switches the focus of his attention. According to expert estimates, in 2019, more than seven million young people of school age in the Russian-speaking segment of the Internet were present in destructive groups in social networks and on sites. If we recall that we have about 11.5 million young Russians aged 13 to 20 years, then I would say the size of the disaster is enough obvious.

At the same time, the dynamics, unfortunately, is deplorable. Each year about two million new participants enter this segment.

According to a number of authoritative experts and based on the previous examinations, it can be argued that these problems lie, among other things, in the pseudo-religious sphere: this is a new interpretation of one of the old pagan cults.

Religion is something that must cleanse the human heart and raise the soul, and participation in such groups does not raise, but destroys the soul.

Thus, if at school not enough was done to familiarize adolescents with domestic religious culture, then the universities are entered by those young people whom we need to help to adjust their worldview, focusing not on intelligence or emotions, but on the strong-willed sphere of the individual, on the ability to make moral choices, to act in accordance with the duty of a citizen.

So, today, let's try to turn mainly to topical issues of teaching disciplines of a spiritual and moral orientation in universities of the Rostov region, the interaction of teachers of higher school and students, within the framework of which the worldview is formed.

The information and educational space of modern universities involves a deep integration of educational processes. Implementation of value-oriented forms of work is based on:

- The special educational content, the plot and tasks of which, among other things, are focused on solving educational problems; thus, this content is taken from educational programs for educational plans;
- The active position of the teacher, which forms illustrative effective examples not only in matters of intellectual activity, but also in matters of education of young people;
- The formation of a comfortable and fruitful communication environment in the process of interaction between the teacher and students;
- The formation of a single educational space, which allows not only to transfer knowledge and skills, but also to collectively "experience" the gained experience.

In the educational process, basic educational categories, such as citizenship, patriotism, morality, social partnership, respectful attitude to labour, etc. are immanently implemented.

The integration of academic and educational goals is achieved through the use in the educational process of value-oriented forms of work, which cover both lecture and practical classes, including formats of business games, debates, educational and social projects.

How does this manifest itself in higher education? The modern system of higher education is characterized by the model of religious and secular education integration.

In recent years two existing and parallel main education systems in Russia, secular and religious education, have a tendency to rapprochement and cooperation, interaction and mutual enrichment.

This phenomenon reflects the formation of new fundamental knowledge and thinking, based not on the opposition of religious and secular education, but on the understanding of the commonality of tasks in the scientific explanation of the picture of the world around us, the place and role of a man in this world.

What is the situation in our Rostov region?

It should perhaps be noted here that the picture of spiritual and moral education in universities, as in schools in the Rostov region, looks better than in the whole country (almost 80% of the choice of the module of basics of Christian Orthodox culture against 37% in Russia).

We have 21 universities (not counting a large number of branches), three educational organizations that provide professional theological education (the Southern Federal University, the Don State Technical University and the Don Theological Seminary).

In the Southern Federal University, at the Department of Philosophy of Religion and Religious Studies, at the Institute of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences there is a bachelor's degree program in "Theology", the field of "State-confessional relations".

In the Don State Technical University there is a department of Orthodox culture and theology. It has state and church accreditation in the field of "Theology. Culture of Orthodoxy" for bachelor's and master's degree students. The contest for the specialty "Theology" is 3 people per place.

The work of the department is distinguished by high demand, which is expressed in the employment of graduates of this department according to the received specialty. For example, there are 24 priests and 7 teachers, and kindergarten teachers and principals of technical colleges among 41 graduates of 2020.

The Don Seminary occupies a special place in the higher education space of the Rostov region. It educates and prepares for professional activity not only clergy, but also a wide range of the laity: iconographers, church choristers, catechists, social workers, teachers of Sunday schools.

Graduates of DSTU and the Don Seminary bring to society the experience of life and activity in the Orthodox tradition, show an example of combining professionalism and high moral qualities.

The spiritual and moral development and education of students is the primary task of the modern educational system and an important component of the social contract for education.

Thus, the working programmes of education, created on the basis of additions to the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation," indicate the tasks of educational work, namely:

- Development of the worldview and updating of the system of basic values of the individual;
- Introduction of students to universal standards of morality, national values and academic traditions;
- Education of respect for the law, norms of collective life, development of civil and social responsibility.

Educational activity involves a deep integration of academic and educational processes. It is achieved by using value-oriented forms of work in the educational process, which cover both lecture and practical classes, including forms of a "business game."

Let us turn to the universities of the Rostov region, in which disciplines of spiritual and moral orientation are not specialized and do not set the goal of professional training of students, but ensure the effectiveness of education.

An example is the teaching of courses and modules of a spiritual and moral orientation in these universities.

Thus, at the Rostov Institute of the Protection of Entrepreneurship on the basis of the Department of Humanitarian and Socio-Economic Disciplines, the working program of the

educational module "Basics of Spiritual and Moral Culture" was developed and successfully implemented. This program is included in the variant part of the Federal Educational Standard in the preparation of students according to the Bachelor Degree Program. Its development was the result of an agreement on cooperation and joint work of the Rostov-on-Don diocese and the Rostov Institute of the Protection of Entrepreneurship. Teachers of the institute and priests of the church in honour of the icon of the Mother of God of "Tender Feeling" of the city of Rostov-on-Don became direct participants. The program was approved by the Academic Board of the Institute.

In accordance with the program, the teaching of educational disciplines "Basics of spiritual and moral culture," "Ethics in professional activities" is organized.

The practical result of the implementation of this program can be considered the formation of the competences of graduates associated with mastering the main universal and traditional for Russia spiritual and moral values contained in world religions, primarily in Orthodox Christianity, as well as in philosophical teachings and works of literature and art. This contributed to the formation of an understanding of life and the development of the own spiritual and moral position, primarily in the performance of the professional activities.

At the seminar classes of the module, films of spiritual and moral content are watched, followed by discussion and debate, excursions to the churches of the deaneries of the city of Rostov-on-Don are arranged.

In the Platov South-Russian State Polytechnic University, the teaching of the spiritual and moral component is reflected in the disciplines "Philosophy" and "Sociology," which are integrated into the compulsory part of the curricula of all fields of education. Within the framework of these disciplines, a system of spiritual and moral education of young people of the university has been built, which favorably affects the development of communicative, value and social competences of young people.

Within the framework of the discipline "Philosophy," issues of religious culture influence on a person, issues of spiritual and moral development of a personality and a person in the modern world are discussed. In the framework of the course "Sociology," issues of citizenship, patriotism, social responsibility, etc. are mastered.

By the beginning of the new academic year, work was carried out to include in the curricula all fields of education of optional disciplines of a spiritual, moral and sociocultural orientation, which are called: "History and Culture of the Don Cossacks" and "Spiritual and Moral Culture."

It should be said a few words about the search work of students, which is also an effective method and form of educational activity.

So, in the Rostov State Transport University, as a result of search work in preparation for the 90th anniversary of the university, unique materials were collected about its outstanding graduates. And at the end of 2020, the memorial stand "Heroes of War and Labour" was created. It is dedicated to the graduates of this university twenty-nine Heroes of the Great Patriotic War, Heroes of Socialist Labour, Heroes of Russia.

Another form of educational activity in which the worldview formation of students is carried out is participation in conferences.

The results of regional and search work are shown at student and scientific conferences, including international ones, in which students, bachelors and masters take part along with teachers.

In the Don State Technical University, the scientific and practical conference "Theology of Peace and War" was held. It was dedicated to the 800th anniversary of the birth of the Saint Blessed Grand Prince Alexander Nevsky. The topics of its reports were the role of the clergy in the First World War, the Patriarchate during the Civil War, the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Great Patriotic War. The attention was also paid to the problems of modern life. The report "Suicide: the attitude of the Orthodox Church, spiritual reasons, canonical response, preventive actions" was presented.

This also speaks of the serious interest of students (of technical, it should be emphasized, university) in history, and the connection with the practical problems of young people, they understand their life problems through science.

Dimitriev Educational Readings are also cultural conferences.

Leading universities of the Rostov region invariably participate in them, holding from five to twenty sections, round-table conferences and meetings with the participation of the clergy of the Don Metropolia.

You can emphasize the active participation of students in the work of sections, for example, student reports on local history, art history, and theology are published in one of the collections of Readings.

About twenty sections on a wide variety of topics are held annually by the Rostov State University of Economics.

For five years, on the basis of the Rostov Institute of the Protection of Entrepreneurship, sections of the Eastern Deanery have been held annually as part of the Dimitriev Educational Readings with the participation of faculty and academic staff, students and clergymen of Rostov-on-Don.

A few words should be said about the training and continuing education of teachers. It is carried out both on the basis of faculties of the Don universities and in scientific schools of universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg in the form of internships, continuing education courses, project development together with students.

In 2021, teachers of the Department of Basics of Orthodox Culture and Theology of the Don State Technical University prepared a project "The Impact of New Religious Movements on Society in the Context of Spiritual and Moral Security of Russia."

The successful participation of teachers in competitions is indicative of their high level of training.

Teachers of the Rostov Institute of the Protection of Entrepreneurship have been successfully participating in the All-Russian competition "For the Moral Feat of a Teacher" for two academic years (2019-2020 and 2020-2021). The works presented by them were awarded special prizes by the jury of the Competition. The specifics of these works have reflected the joint activities of teachers and students in the educational process.

The principal of the Platov South-Russian State Polytechnic University has become the absolute laureate of the Southern Federal District of the XVI All-Russian competition "For the Moral Feat of a Teacher," presenting the work "Platov Cossack Hundred."

It is impossible to separate education from actual educational work with students.

The spiritual and moral component of education is a priority in the implementation of the educational work program of the university.

The most effective forms of educational work are those that are most based on a dialogue. Thus, since March 2021, the Rostov diocese, together with the Rostov regional branch of the Russian Society "Znanie," has been implementing a spiritual and educational project, which is called the "Dialogue." The purpose of the project is to teach and involve students in the process of communication with the person, society and the Church. The spiritual and educational project "Dialogue" is a systematic and comprehensive work with young people through educational, scientific, cultural and volunteer events.

At the moment, "Dialogue" is being implemented in cooperation with leading universities of the region. Within the framework of the project, dialogue and discussion platforms are held, etc. The project involves meetings and dialogue of students, including with clergy. On the basis of competencies and personal desire, the group of priests that coordinate various areas of implementation of the project was formed.

The place of informal communication of priests with students is a dialogue platform "Bridge", operating within the framework of the "Dialogue" project, where the priests of the Rostov diocese in real-time format answer actual questions of students about the Church and its life. Each meeting is broadcast live on YouTube.

In just three months since the beginning of the "Dialogue" project, from March to May 2021, more than 15 events have been held both on the basis of the mentioned universities and on third-party platforms, such as the historical park "Russia is my history" and the annual exhibition "Orthodox Don." More than 1,500 people took part in online and offline project's events.

The dialogue with priests takes place in different forms. In universities, permanent educational platforms have been created where meetings between the priest and students are possible. It is also necessary to note the beneficial and positive work of universities, where there is... a student temple (RSTU, DSTU), or a youth association or a club where a priest communicates with young people.

To date, in nine leading universities of the Don Territory, clergy monthly participate in various educational events such as festivals, holidays, classes of project groups, and other joint affairs.

The most important direction of educating young people is the preservation of spiritual and moral traditions, love for the Motherland, and readiness to serve it. Many remarkable examples can be mentioned here.

Thus, the Rostov State Transport University, together with the Rostov Regional Patriotic Social Movement "Roads of Glory – Our History," with the support of the Presidential Grants Fund, held teleconferences "Patriotic Youth Education – the Future of the Country," "Peacemaking as a Point of Contact of States," "Khatyn's bells, Tragedy and Memory," in a mixed format a round-table meeting on "Historical vector of Russia: past and present," a plenary meeting and a round table of the Second International Patriotic Forum "Peacemaking of Generations in the Historical Memory of the Russian State."

The living historical memory of students was manifested in their participation in the International Historical Dictation on the events of the Great Patriotic War "Dictation of Victory-2021"; in the All-Russian educational and patriotic event with international participation "RusFest Essay Festival"; in the propaganda campaign "We are the Army of the Country; we are the Army of the People" at the Rostov-Glavnyi station; in the intellectual online quiz "Songs of the Great Victory."

The order of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill and the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin to create Russian literature societies in the regions aimed at preserving the traditions of the Russian language and literature on the Don Land is fulfilled: the Regional Center for Russian literature operates on the basis of the journalism department of the Rostov State Economic University, collaborating with the Rostov-on-Don diocese in the spiritual and moral education of youth.

Love for the Don Territory and its traditions is brought up to a large extent through local history material, which is represented by the departments of the Rostov-on-Don diocese.

For students, visits to unique cultural monuments of federal significance are organized, these are the restored Cathedral of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Rostov-on-Don, the Military Cathedral of Christ's Resurrection in Starocherkasskaya, the Ascension Cathedral in Novocherkassk, the Azov Cathedral, the Cathedral of St. George the Victorious in Rostov-on-Don, the Cathedral of Paul of Taganrog in Taganrog.

Thinking about the formation of a young person's worldview, we first of all see that this process occurs through activity. "Faith without works is dead," said the apostle, and "...I will show you faith from my works" (James 2: 18-20).

Thus, activity is present in the worldview at all stages: in its formation, in the "verification" of the ethical terms, adopted by society, by a young person, in their interiorization, when morality in society becomes an internal guide for actions, that is, morality; finally, the act is the result of the worldview, the factor by which the educator can see the fruits brought by his efforts.

A few words should be said about volunteer activities. The Most Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill spoke about its importance, speaking to the participants of the Parliamentary meetings held as part of the International Educational Readings of 2021: "Developing volunteer movements inspire hope, and I consider this an important indicator of the moral state of society. It is probably no accident that we all have recently spoken about a certain moral crisis because the symptoms of this phenomenon are evident, but the trials that we are going through now give us new, more positive information about the moral state of people and society."

"... we must seek support in active solidarity with each other, which can become an effective means against both fear and despondency. Through this kind of action, we gain support in our neighbours and, thanks to this support, we become stronger and freer..." added the Most Holy Patriarch.

Considering the situation in universities of the Don Territory, we see that the range of volunteer activities of students is expanding, its participants develop social, cultural, environmental, event and media areas of volunteer activity. Thus, volunteer students of the Rostov State Transport University for the 2020-2021 academic year, taking into account the rules for holding events in the conditions of COVID-19, prepared and held more than 30 offline and online events in all areas.

The interregional forum of volunteers "To the Future Together" was held on the Don Land, in which more than 450 people from 7 regions of Russia took part. The forum was co-organized by the Rostov State Transport University, the Committee on Youth Policy of the Rostov Region and the state autonomous institution of the Rostov Region "the Don Volunteer Center."

Here I specifically spoke to especially emphasize some events, but, of course, we also need to talk about the issues that face us.

Let me propose a problem that directly follows from the topic of today's meeting and my message: the solution to the problem of the worldview formation of student youth in the Don Territory can be illustrated by a large amount of specific material, but there has been no scientific and diagnostic generalization of this material yet. And, it seems, our universities have all opportunities to carry out such a study, systematize it and start working in this direction systemically.

Dear friends, dear colleagues! Today we are speaking about the fact that social networks greatly affect the formation of a young person's worldview. And just on the eve of our meeting, we exchanged views on this subject, and dear Igor Alexandrovich said that more than 50% of the Russian population draws information from social networks and almost 100% of young people, starting at the age of 12. And that's true. But social networks will not answer the life questions that life poses to people. Young people will seek answers to these questions in people, in concrete examples, in specific cases, through a dialogue. No social networks will replace people's live dialogue. And if this interaction is replaced by social networks and answers on social networks, then we have a very unpromising future. Therefore, I really hope that all university rectors, vice-rectors for educational work, all clergy will perceive such tasks as the formation of a spiritual and moral climate in the university environment, the formation of a civil position, the education of a person, as the largest task after the one that they solve in terms of professional training of specialists.

We must not only train professionals, but we must prepare high-quality citizens for our country. And without each other, we can never do that. I am looking forward to our further fruitful work and thank you all for your attention.

24 January, 2022