

Signals about coronavirus are coming from the St. Elisabeth Monastery. We talk about Andrey Lemeshonok, who created this empire

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The closed space of a monastery is a suitable place to hide information. However, for more than a week now, not the most joyful news has been coming from the St. Elisabeth Monastery on the outskirts of Minsk (Novinki district) about the epidemic situation in the monastery.

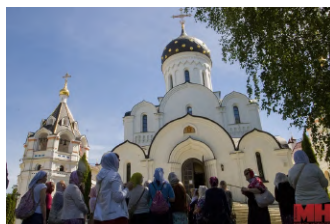


Photo "Minsk-News"

Alexander Shramko, an Orthodox priest who was banned from serving for criticizing Patriarch Kirill, as well as theologian Natalya Vasilevich, wrote a lot about the situation in the monastery. But, unfortunately, as often happens in Belarus, the story gained loud publicity after it was written about in Russia.

An extremely resonant and emotional post on Facebook about the situation in the St. Elisabeth Monastery was published by the deputy editor-in-chief of the Russian Reporter, Marina Akhmedova. She claims that on the morning of April 23, the novices of the monastery called her.

And the first thing the journalist heard from them was: "It's all a lie." This meant the official statement of the St. Elisabeth Monastery that the epidemic situation was under control.

Read. St. Elisabeth Monastery: Two nuns with coronavirus, an archpriest in intensive care with pneumonia, but the epidemic is fake

"The nuns began to tell us: Mother Alexia is in intensive care with positive covid pneumonia. Father Vasily is also in the hospital. Of the 130 sisters, 100 are sick. The sick were moved away from the still healthy ones from the buildings into a hotel, but they were severely punished - "When the doctors arrive, you will say that you were resettled because the buildings are being renovated," writes Akhmedova.

“Food for the sick is left in the corridor, and they go out to get it wearing masks. But at the same time, the monastery is working, and the flock comes to it in droves. For example, on Easter alone, 970 people received communion from one spoon overnight. The spoon was not processed, and when one of the girls who wanted to receive communion burst into tears and asked for the spoon to be processed, she was told that she should go to another church and receive communion there, but this is the only way here,” continues the Russian journalist.



All-night vigil for Easter at St. Elisabeth Monastery. Screenshot of video on youtube.com

Indeed, footage from the Easter service at the St. Elisabeth Monastery convinces us that the temple was filled with believers. There was no talk of any social distancing.

Further, Akhmedova writes that a real cult of personality has developed in the monastery of Archpriest Andrei Lemeshonok, the rector of the temple.

“We shouldn’t listen to the patriarch, but we should listen to Father Andrei, he is a saint, and through his prayers no one will get sick. In his sermons, he says that grace disinfects and heals everything, and you can’t get sick in church, sick people can come to church and be healed,” Akhmedova reports the words of the nuns.

Why did the information leak through the Russian journalist? There is a version that the nuns could have contacted Belarusian independent publications, but then the monastery would have responded that this was “opposition” and there would have been no effect.

What is known about Andrey Lemeshonok? For a more complete understanding of the situation in the monastery, a few words should be said about it.

Andrei Lemeshonok was born into a family of party leaders from the times of the BSSR; the family lived in the very center of Minsk. Lemeshonok was a representative of this kind of golden youth, he went through the hippie craze. And in the late 1970s - early 1980s he became a watchman at the Cathedral in Minsk.



Andrey Lemeshonok. Photo minsknews.by

“Few people came to church back then, especially young people. There was no literature either, you go into the church, and there are some money there. Andrei then immediately approached the person: “Are you interested? Let me tell you what’s what.” He even gave me samizdat to read. Although not political, it was still risky. There he brought many people to Orthodoxy. Some became priests, others remained at churches,” says Alexander Shramko.

They say it was strange that many whom Lemeshonok brought to church became priests, but he himself did not. The decisive role here was played by Father Georgy Latushko from the Peter and Paul Cathedral, who persuaded Lemeshonok to take the rank. Nevertheless, Lemeshonok did not limit himself to the role of an ordinary priest, but became one of the leaders of the Orthodox community.

He conducted services, and after them held conversations at the “Inexhaustible Chalice” icon. Who mainly attended these services? Women who had drinking husbands and sons, and therefore were unhappy in their personal lives.

People say that there were queues for confession to Lemeshonok. People waited until late at night to confess to Father Andrei. He found an approach to everyone, could cheer them up, find the right word.

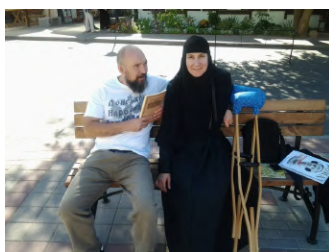
From these services and meetings, the Orthodox sisterhood was born, which later transformed into the St. Elisabeth Monastery.

Lemeshonok first found support from the doctors of the psychiatric hospital in Novinki. Often, to start the construction of a church or monastery, priests look for rich sponsors. Lemeshonok did not limit himself to this, he also placed women throughout Minsk who collected money for construction. Readers have probably seen them near metro stations or in stores.

As the monastery was being built, Father Andrei Lemeshonok developed a strong business streak. Today, the St. Elisabeth Monastery is perhaps the most profitable Orthodox project in the vastness of not only Belarus, but throughout the CIS. They organize Orthodox exhibitions, sell Orthodox paraphernalia, and publish spiritual literature. Moreover, the products of the St. Elisabeth Monastery are well known to Orthodox believers outside of Belarus. Several thousand people work in the monastery. They have been engaged for a long time not only in the production of religious products, but also in everything else that brings in money - from honey to horse breeding.

Andrey Lemeshonok has many influential friends and acquaintances. He adheres to “Russkomir” views, although he does not actively advertise them, as does his son Dmitry, who walks around the monastery courtyard wearing T-shirts with the inscriptions “DPR” and

“Russia”. Previously, Dmitry also professed Nazi views, but now, he says, he has abandoned them. Events of the “Russian world” were also held in the monastery.



Dmitry Lemeshonok in a “DPR” T-shirt with a nun of the St. Elisabeth Monastery

Read: [Who is he, Dmitry Lemeshenok? A man in a “DPR” T-shirt, close to the convent in Novinki](#)

And although they note that Andrei Lemeshonok is a very educated person, recently he has chosen for himself the role of a blessed elder. They say that he adopted this image from [Father Nikolai](#) from the Russian Island-Zalit, whom Lemeshonok often visited and talked with.

After publications in the media and social networks, the monastery was forced to respond to information about numerous sick people. The monastery said in a statement that the epidemic was a fake, but admitted that several novices actually fell ill with the coronavirus and that the priests were hospitalized. Lemeshonok himself, they say, has no symptoms of the disease.

It is impossible to contact Andrei Lemeshonok; finding his contacts is more difficult than calling Metropolitan Pavel.

“Nasha Niva” turned to the press secretary of the BOC, Sergius Lepin, for comment on the situation in the monastery. “We are waiting for the results of the inspection carried out in this monastery by the sanitary and epidemiological services. And based on the results of this check, we will draw our conclusions.”

Regarding Akhmedova’s post, Father Sergius Lepin said: “This greatly worried us, but this is not the only information coming from this monastery.” There are also diametrically opposed points of view on this problem. We need to figure it out, and we will do it. In the near future you will learn about the results of the inspection. The nuns themselves confirmed that coronavirus was detected in individual novices, but I cannot give the numbers,” notes Sergius Lepin.