

UKRAINE: Roman Catholics of Rivne want to repossess their church

A Roman Catholic community wants to regain possession of the church in Rivne, Soborna street, where the Organ Hall of Rivne Oblast Philharmonic now operates.

Religious Information Service of Ukraine (19.21.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2hrilDH> – The building, erected in 1897, was the church of St. Anthony until 50's of the last century. Then the Soviets destroyed a part of it, including the Baroque spiers, opened there a cinema theatre, and in the 80's – an organ hall. Since Philharmonic is the municipal institution of the Regional Council, the Roman Catholics reached out to the council members to regain possession of the church.

Last week a representative of the Diocese of Lutsk of the Roman Catholic Church, Franciscan Father Tadeusz Fostakovskyy, who is rector of the church in Kovel. At the municipal commission before which the father spoke, the council deputies decided that this matter was up to the state administration and staff of the Philharmonic.

Chair of the Rivne Regional Council Mykola Draganchuk makes the case that the building remains in the ownership of the regional council, and the organ hall remained there.

“The council members will decide when they have the opinion of the state administration and staff of the Philharmonic determine the pros and cons of transferring the building,” M. Draganchuk said in a comment to Rivne Vechirne. “In my view, I insist that the building remains in the ownership of the Regional Council and that the organ hall remained, since the

Philharmonic is the people. We cannot dismiss people and close the Philharmonic, as finding new premises will be difficult now.”

Philharmonic Director Mykola Oreshko refused to comment on the situation.

Speech of Fr Tadeusz in the regional council:

“We do not claim someone else’s property, we are just requesting to return the Roman Catholic temple seized by the Soviet authorities, so that Rivne residents could come there again to pray and listen to organ music,” says Father Tadeusz.

“Now the Philharmonic holds 5-7 events a month, and the rest of the time the building is idle. We want to open the church’s doors to spiritual needs of people, so they could come every day, we want to cooperate with youth. Moreover, the church is not the place for singing and dancing, but a place for prayer. The Catholic Church allows to listen to organ concerts in the churches, hold conferences.” As the priest assured, they have benefactors who can help rebuild the temple.

The RCC noted they requested to return the church only now, because “the country has its vector of power changed, in President Yanukovych’s tenure we would be granted consent.” Father Tadeusz has said in a comment to “Rivne Vechirne” that first they came to the regional council, because they did not want to spend too much time and money on the courts. “But we know that there have been such cases in Ukraine and the courts were on the side of the church, returning the temples seized in the Soviet era. So, the Philharmonic will experience discomfort, but initially the church was not build to this end. The regional council has to find some other premises.”

According to “Rivne Vechirne,” the Roman Catholic community of Rivne has its own temple -at the intersection of Soborna and Dubenska streets. However, the architectural value of the church that hosts organ hall today is much higher.

Incidentally, when the Church of St. Anthony was built in Rivne, its organ was one of the best in Europe, however, in Soviet times it was destroyed. The one located in the building now was mounted by the Philharmonic.

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