

## Dostoevsky Days Concluded in Optina



147 years ago, on July 7, 1878, the great Russian writer Feodor Dostoevsky first visited Optina Monastery, where his meeting with Optina elder St. Ambrose changed his life and brought meaning to his long spiritual search. For this reason, Optina monastery was chosen as the venue for the “Dostoevsky Days” festival. 2025 marked the fourth annual festival in Optina.

Last Friday the festival officially began with a prayer at the grave of Archimadrite Iliiy (Nozdrin), Russia’s beloved elder who reposed in the Lord last March. Bishop Joseph (Korolev) of Mozhaisk celebrated, and stated that because Elder Iliiy reposed this year, it was appropriate to open the “Dostoevsky Days in Optina Monastery” with a prayer at his grave, which is located at the chapel dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ on the monastery grounds.

The festival went from July 11 to 13, with events taking place in several locations in Kaluga province—in Optina Monastery, the village of Gubino, and Kozelsk. It was attended by as many as 30,000 people.

The program included discussions on culture and art, concerts, theatrical performances, film screenings, and a literary segment titled, “Stars Read Dostoevsky.” Politicians, public figures, experts on Dostoevsky’s work, clergy, and performers were invited to engage with the attendees.

According to the festival’s press service, participants included: Russian Federation Deputy Speaker of the State Duma Anna Kuznetsova, Governor of Kaluga Oblast Vladislav Shapsha, the writer’s great-great-grandson Alexey Dostoevsky, priests Artemy Vladimirov and Andrey Tkachev, actors Evgeny Knyazev, Sergey Migitsko, Alexander Marshal, Olesya Zheleznyak, as well as soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre Alexey Tatarintsev and Agunda Kulaeva. Guests also enjoyed a performance by the A.V. Alexandrov Ensemble.

Additionally, on July 11, under the chairmanship of Anna Kuznetsova, there was a meeting of the State Duma’s inter-factional working group on the legislative implementation of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values.

The festival also hosted the opening of the 2nd International Student Camp, with 200 participants from 13 countries: Russia, Kenya, Malawi, Congo, Benin, Ukraine, Iran, China, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Latvia.

The aim of the spiritual and educational project, “Dostoevsky Days in Optina Monastery,” which is being carried out with the support of the Presidential Fund for Cultural Initiatives, is to “help society, especially the youth, to withstand the new challenges of our time and to lay a solid foundation of spirituality and morality,” the organizers added to RIA News.

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