

LITURGICAL LIFE RESUMES IN CHURCH AT ST. PETERSBURG'S ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY LAVRA AFTER 90 YEARS



The great feast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos is lauded in the Church's hymns as the beginning of our salvation. At the St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg, it's also celebrated as the anniversary of the beginning of the monastery.

And yesterday, the monastic brotherhood also had the joy of celebrating the Divine Liturgy for the feast in the monastery's Church of St. Alexander Nevsky for the first time in 88 years. The altar is the only one dedicated to the monastery's patron saint. It is located on the second floor of the Church of the Annunciation, though the first floor, with the altar dedicated to the Annunciation, has yet to be returned to the Church.

The second floor was returned to the monastery by the City Committee for Property Relations on March 16. The Museum of Urban Sculpture that was previously housed

there has been moved elsewhere.

The Liturgy for the feast was celebrated by the monastery abbot, His Grace Bishop Nazary of Kronstadt, together with the clergy of the brotherhood, reports the St. Petersburg Metropolia.

“On the days of commemoration of St. Alexander Nevsky, we were always congratulated with our altar feast, but since 1933, there’s been no altar in honor of the Right-Believing Grand Prince in the Lavra,” Vladyka Nazary said before the service.

“Today, the Lavra regained this altar... Of course, the grace of God never left this church, but has always dwelt here, because God is never desecrated. We have taken the first step towards restoring historical justice. Let us pray that we will continue on this path, closing forever the pages of the terrible events of 1917, which caused the monastery to lose almost all of its churches,” His Grace exhorted.



Following the service, Bp. Nazary thanked the local governor and city administration for returning the Lavra’s first church to it in this jubilee year, of the 800th anniversary of St. Alexander Nevsky, emphasizing what a historic moment this Liturgy was.

And reflecting upon the long years that the church was closed, Bp. Nazary called all to repentance:

While celebrating the Divine service, we called for the Spirit of the Lord and the grace of God to fill both the Gifts and all of us. And although we're not serving in the lower Annunciation Church, the souls of those who are buried on the first floor are with us. I firmly believe that the Annunciation Church will return to us by their prayers. How could our ancestors have sinned, how could they have angered God, that He would stop the Divine Liturgy here for 88 years?! Let us remember that this trouble doesn't come to us from somewhere else—we're to blame for this. Let the years that the church stood as a silent orphan remind us that if we follow the sins of our ancestors, then the Lord can take His grace away from us, not for 80, but for 800 whole years. Let every event in history and in the Church be a lesson for us, so that we may never sin like this again. A church is always a church, even if only one stone remains. If it's God's will, and people accept His order, the church will be restored even from this one stone.

The monastery has been raising the question of the return of all the premises to the jurisdiction of the monastery since its reopening in 1996, including the Holy Annunciation-St. Alexander Nevsky Church.

The upper Church of St. Alexander Nevsky was consecrated on September 12, 1724, the day that the relics of the great saint were solemnly transferred to the Lavra from Vladimir by decree of Tsar Peter I. His relics were located in this church until the construction of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in 1790.

Even after the monastery was closed in 1933, a parish continued to exist in the Annunciation Church for a time, though it was closed later that year and later converted into the Museum of Urban Sculpture.

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