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Tears of joy as iconic Greek Orthodox Church opens its doors after catastrophic fire



“This is our history, part of our migration story, and we owed it to our children and grandchildren to bring our church back to life,” says Alexandra Vakitsidou, who has been one of the longest standing members of the Port Adelaide community. There was not a dry eye in sight during last week’s Palm Sunday service, as parishioners of the Greek Orthodox church of The Nativity of Christ in Port Adelaide entered the building for the first time since the popular Greek church was destroyed 18 months earlier due to a catastrophic fire.

When the 60-year-old church - one of the most iconic and aesthetically beautiful Orthodox churches in SA - went up in flames, the whole Greek community in SA devastated.

“The last eighteen months have been extremely difficult for us and our community. We were not able to welcome our parishioners into our church and the COVID-19 pandemic made it even harder for people that needed the support of the community and the church. Nevertheless, we all focused on working hard so that we can have our church ready to welcome our parishioners and their families this Easter,” father Ioannis Choraitis, the church’s parish priest for the last nine years,

told Neos Kosmos.

With the recent renovations, many additions have been made to the building. White SA marble and mosaic, a new roof and decorated dome, crystal chandeliers, make the temple a fine example of divine architecture.

I would just like to take this opportunity to extend a massive thank you to each and every one of our parishioners that took time out of their busy lives and worked hard towards our goal. None of this would have been possible without their efforts and support. We are forever indebted and grateful to them,” Father Ioannis said, sharing his dream of turning the Port Adelaide church and hall into a spiritual centre for parishioners, community members, and the 170 students of the Port Adelaide Community Greek School.

The repair cost from the fire that ravaged the Greek Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ exceeded the \$1million mark.

Despite the intensity of the fire, the sanctuary of the temple, the alter and all valuable artefacts were somehow spared from the glaze and suffered no damage whatsoever in what Father Ioannis described as “a miracle, a divine intervention”.

Built by early Greek migrants, the Greek Orthodox Church of The Nativity of Christ, is one of the most loved and popular Greek churches in SA.

“We built this church with blood sweat and tears, and despite the fire destroying six decades of history, we managed to restore our jewel to its former glory and make it more beautiful than ever. This is our history, part of our migration story, and we owed it to our children and grandchildren to bring our church back to life,” said Alexandra Vakitsidou, who has been one of the longest standing members of the Port Adelaide community.

“The support from everyone has been really touching and live proof that when we all work together united and with love, anything is possible,” Father Ioannis said.



  **Saint Joseph the Hesychast** 
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