

The Donetsk Iveron Convent: Awaiting Resurrection

The Iveron Convent was established as recently as April, 1997 with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Donetsk and Mariupol, on a field near the Donetsk airport, north of town—the only monastery in the city of Donetsk. An Orthodox cemetery was also planned near the convent. The cemetery was later considered the best in Donetsk.

In October, 2000, the church and surrounding territory became the metochion of the St. Nicholas Monastery, located in Nikolskaya village of Donetsk province. With Met. Hilarion's blessing, in 2002 the metochion became the Holy Iveron Convent. The sisters, who come from the St. Nicholas Monastery founded by the well-known [Elder Zosima \(Sokur\)](#) of blessed memory, lived a holy life of prayer and labor, and as they said, it was sisterly and amiable. By around 2010 the convent consisted of the Iveron Church with a bell tower, monastic living quarters, and work space. The sisters had an orchard and berry patches, part of which had been donated by the Donetsk botanical gardens. The sisters also ran there a Sunday school for both children and adults.

The church housed a venerated [Iveron icon of the Mother of God](#), painted on Mt. Athos at the blessing and request of Elder Zosima and brought the monastery in 1999. The patronal feast is celebrated on the three different feasts of the Iveron Icon: October 13/26, February 12/25, and on Tuesday of Bright Week.

The Holy Iveron Convent, before the war. Photo: azbyka.ru

In 2014, after the Maidan revolution, there was a coupe in Ukrainian government that ousted President Victor Yanukovich—a Donbas native who sympathetic to the large Russian speaking population in Ukraine. The coupe ushered in a new period of nationalistic policies, and one of the first moves in the direction of total Ukrainization was the removal of Russian as an official language in Ukraine. This among other things triggered a separatist movement in Donbas, which has a predominantly Russian-speaking population—since until the Bolshevik revolution it was part of Russia, having been conquered from a Turkish Khanate by Catherine the Great. Lenin redrew the boundaries of Ukrainian SSR territory. As historians quip, the Soviet Union had to give Ukraine the eastern part in order to get the western part—where a more Ukrainian identity was formed through the centuries following Kieven Rus's fall to the Mongol Tatars. When the Soviet Union broke up in the early 1990s, the Donbas found itself on the territory of the new Ukraine.

Fierce fighting broke out around the city of Donetsk at the end of May, 2014, especially at the airport, and the sisters were under life-threatening artillery crossfire. They were forced to leave the convent and resettle in the St. Nicholas Monastery, having taken the Iveron icon to safety at the St. Nicholas Cathedral in the area of Larinka.

The convent was all but ruined, as can be seen from the photographs below, taken during the celebration of its patronal feast in Bright Week, 2018. Local priests now celebrate the Liturgy three times a year there, on the patronal feasts, but obviously there can be no talk of restoring the convent until the deadly fratricidal war ends and peace comes to this much-suffering land.

Even a half year before the fighting began, the priest gave a sermon in the church, in which he warned that hard times are coming.

Video: "Having slept in the flesh (the ruined Holy Iveron Monastery), from Pravmir.

As author Marina Velikodnaya wrote in an article on the ruined Iveron Monastery in November, 2014:¹

“Sooner or later the war will end. I know that if the Lord wills, He can resurrect His temple from ruins—if not in three days then at least in a short period of time, and perhaps He will make it even more beautiful. If, of course, there will be people left to attend it.

“I will not presume to judge who is right and who is wrong in this story, which has not yet ended. I think that each will find his own both justification and guilt; but all will eventually answer for it—primarily before God the Judge, and not human judgment, which is all too easily deceived.

“Some will have to answer for attacking, others for “defending” and in so doing placing the monastery under fire. But we will have to answer for not praying as we should. And it seems to me that we are the most responsible, because *Except the Lord build the house, they that build labour in vain: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watches in vain* (Ps. 126:1).

¹ “*Having slept in the flesh: The Monastery that no longer is*” <https://www.pravmir.ru/plotiyu-usnuv-monastyir-kotorogo-bolshe-net/>.

In the church



Photo: Sergei Golokha / Pravoslavie.ru



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At the cemetery



At a grave near the airport
Photo: Sergei Golokha / Pravoslavie.ru



There are many such mine shells in the cemetery
Photo: Sergei Golokha / Pravoslavie.ru



The ruined airport

Photo: Sergei Golokha / Pravoslavie.ru



Another mine shell

Photo: Sergei Golokha / Pravoslavie.ru



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¹ *“Having slept in the flesh: The Monastery that no longer is”* <https://www.pravmir.ru/plotiyu-usnuv-monastyir-kotorogo-bolshe-net/>.

*Photos: Sergei Golokha
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