

## **MONUMENT TO PATRIARCH ALEXEI II UNVEILED IN HIS NATIVE ESTONIA AT CHURCH WHERE HE SERVED**



His Holiness Patriarch Alexei II of Moscow and All Russia (+2008) served as a priest in the town of Jõhvi in his native Estonia from 1950 to 1957. And yesterday, September 14, the Orthodox faithful of Jõhvi rejoiced as “Alyoshenka has returned home.”

The congregation of the Church of the Theophany celebrated both the 125th anniversary of the church yesterday, as well as the 70th anniversary of the beginning of Pat. Alexei’s priestly there. The elderly parishioners still remember when His Holiness served there, rector Fr. Andrei Suslov said during the ceremony of the opening of a monument to their beloved Pat. Alexei, reports Postimees.

Vladislav Naumov, the initiator of the installation of the bust, explained that it was important for people to remember that His Holiness once served there and that his memory is still cherished there.

The funds for the bust were entirely raised from the local faithful, “so that every resident of the city who donated to the installation of the bust would know that this is his personal contribution,” explained Sergei Ivanov, the technical executor of the

project.

The monument, which was initially announced in January, was made by the Ukrainian sculptor Eldaniz Gurbanov. “We saw the portrait that the artist used to make a sketch,” said Naumov, “and seeing his work, we were blown away. It was incredibly similar to the Patriarch. Fr. Andrei sent photos to Metropolitan Eugene, who then blessed for this work.”

Though the installation of the bust was seriously delayed by the coronavirus, in the end, Gurbanov was able to use his connections to get the bust to Estonia from Ukraine in time for the church’s anniversary.

The official opening of the monument took place yesterday morning after the festal Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

“It’s so similar! Look how the facial features are drawn!” the parishioners exclaimed, unable to hide their delight. “And I can hear in my head the words of my mother-in-law Vera, who saw the Patriarch in those years when he served here in Jõhvi—Alyoshenka has returned home,” said Sergei Ivanov, smiling.

Last month, another monument to the Patriarch in the Tallinn district of Lasnamäe was cleaned and restored.

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