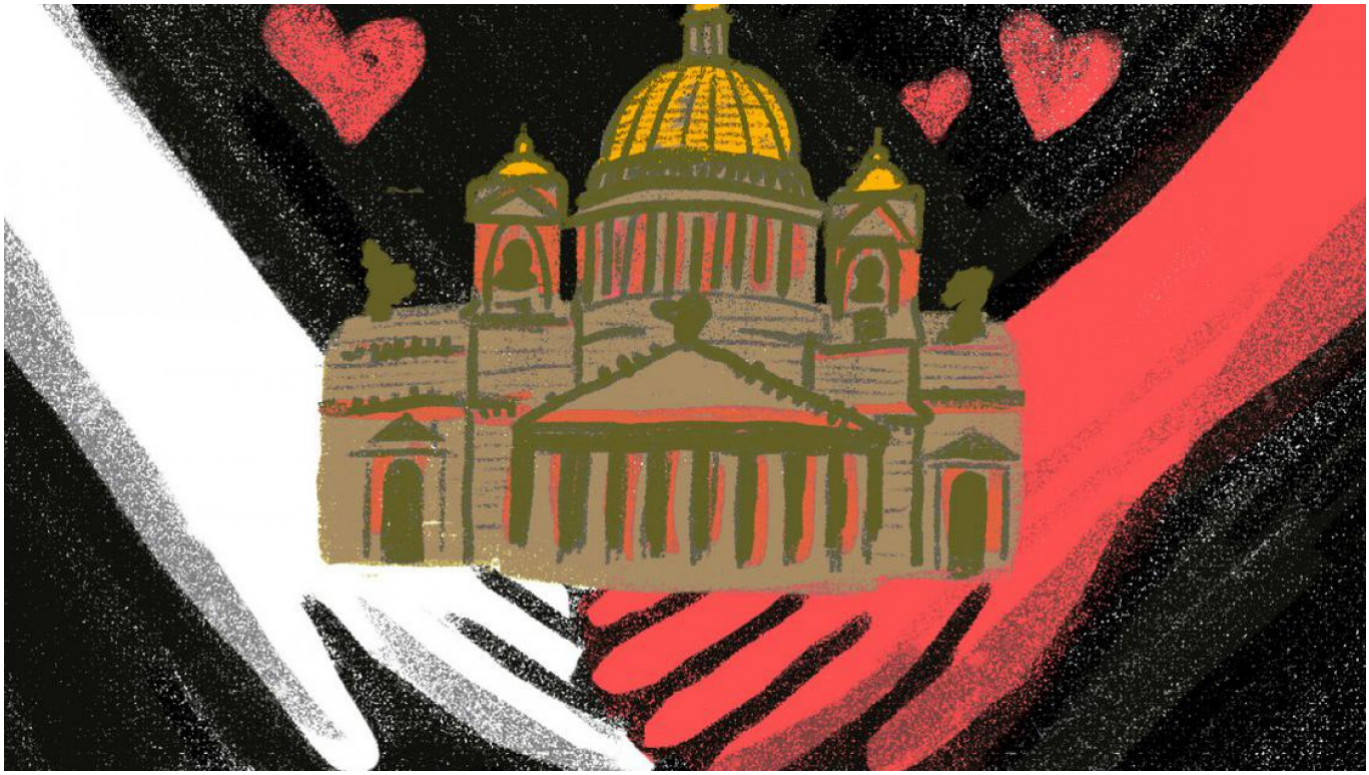
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Handover of Iconic Russian Cathedral to Orthodox Church a 'Symbol of Forgiveness'

February 17, 2017



Dariya Akhmedova / for MT

The decision to return St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg to the Russian Orthodox Church is a symbol of reconciliation at the centenary of the Russian revolution, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church has claimed.

Patriarch Kirill said the church's return would unite "believers and non-believers, the rich and the poor" in the spirit of mutual forgiveness.

"The [Communists'] destruction of churches and massacre of believers has become a terrible chapter of national disunity," Kirill said at a meeting of the Russian Orthodox's Church's Supreme Council. "The return of these churches can become a symbol of harmony and mutual forgiveness."

He said he hoped the decision would stop "the evil thoughts" of those who wanted St. Isaac's

to remain as a museum in the hands of the state.

“We believe that our merciful God will bring peace and dispel all of these doubts created by ignorance,” he said.

Related article: Heavenly Real Estate

St. Petersburg governor Georgy Poltavchenko announced Jan. 10 that the state would lease the landmark to the church in an agreement lasting 49 years.

Church officials have pledged to keep the cathedral open to the public and even scrap the church's 250 ruble entrance fee. Critics fear these promises will not be kept.

St. Isaac’s Cathedral was completed in 1858 having taken some 40 years to build. The building was transformed into an anti-religious museum by the Soviet government in the 1930s, and has remained in government hands since. The UNESCO world heritage site now houses a state museum with a permanent exhibition while also hosting religious sermons.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/02/17/return-of-st-petersburgs-st-isaacs-cathedral-symbolic-says-religious-leader-a57192