

Russia Launches Church-Themed Reality Show

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

Sure, you may be verified on Instagram — but are you verified in the eyes of God?

Russia's new reality show might be the first to try and answer that question. Called "The Island," the Orthodox-themed show will bring 10 people to live in Nilov Monastery for one month.

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"Here it's only you and God," a video calling for applicants says.

Boris Korchepnikov, the general director of the religious television channel that will air the show, said he wants the show to put meaning back into the word "reality" that he says has been lost.

"Much is associated with this word on television, but it misses the point. I'm sure that the

project will return the meaning of life to many people,” Korchevnikov [said](#) in a television interview.

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Located on Stolobny Island in the Tver region, the 19th-century Nilov Monastery was one of the largest and wealthiest monasteries in imperial Russia and is still functioning today. Cast members will be filmed as they live the glamorous life of a monastic resident and “find answers to questions that have long troubled them.”

Tasks will include cleaning the temples, making canned goods and candles, working in the monastery’s bakery, pharmacy, vineyards and farm, and of course reading plenty of hymnals. They’ll also have meetings with priests, the monastery’s head and other “famous guests.”

The show is currently looking for candidates, and women will be allowed to join the cast despite the monastery’s men-only status. Filming is set to start in November, Korchevnikov said.

He didn’t say whether the show would have a competitive element like other reality shows — but for entertainment’s sake, it would be fun to see a battle over who can be the best priest.

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