

Russian cosmonaut says he has taken relics of saint to space

April 12 2017, by Nataliya Vasilyeva



Russian cosmonaut Sergey Ryzhikov uses a sat phone shortly after landing near Dzhezkazgan, Kazakhstan Monday, April 10, 2017, on the treeless Central Asian steppes Russia's Soyuz MS-02 space capsule carrying the International Space Station (ISS) crew of Andrei Borisenko and Sergey Ryzhykov of Russia and NASA astronaut Robert Shane Kimbrough landed in a remote area in Kazakhstan. (Kirill Kudryavtsev/Pool photo via AP)

A Russian cosmonaut who has returned to Earth after a mission on the

International Space Station said on Wednesday he had taken a relic of a Russian Orthodox saint with him.

Astronauts and cosmonauts routinely take small items such as their children's toys or CDs with them as reminders of home.

Sergei Ryzhikov told Russian news agencies that he would give the tiny relic of St. Serafim of Sarov's body, which he received from its home monastery last year, to an Orthodox church in Star City outside Moscow, home to the cosmonaut training center.

Serafim of Sarov, one of Russia's most revered saints known for his hermitical lifestyle, died in the early 19th century.

Ryzhikov, who came back with two other crew members on Monday after six months in [space](#), said he would celebrate the relic's return at a church service in Star City on Thursday.

"We always wait for some sort of miracle, but the fact that a piece of the relics traveled to the orbit and blesses everything onboard and outside, including our planet, is a big miracle in itself," he said.

Space exploration in atheist Soviet society was often portrayed as debunking the existence of God. A popular Soviet-era propaganda poster showed a [cosmonaut](#) floating in space and declaring: "There is no God!"



The Soyuz MS-02 spacecraft is seen as it lands with Expedition 50 Commander Shane Kimbrough of NASA and Flight Engineers Sergey Ryzhikov and Andrey Borisenko of Roscosmos near Dzhezkazgan, Kazakhstan on Monday, April 10, 2017. Kimbrough, Ryzhikov, and Borisenko returned from the International Space Station. (Bill Ingalls/NASA via AP)

Russia has since experienced a religious revival, with the overwhelming majority of Russians now identifying themselves as Russian Orthodox.

In what would have seemed an absurdity to fiercely atheist Soviet space pioneers, Soyuz spacecraft now routinely receive pre-launch blessings from Orthodox priests and Russian cosmonauts have put up small icons at the Space Station.

Cosmonauts have taken tiny relics of at least six Orthodox saints and a piece of the Holy Cross into space with them.

Russia celebrates Space Day on April 12, exactly 56 years after Yuri Gagarin became the first human to travel into space.



Russian cosmonaut Sergey Ryzhikov rests in a chair shortly after landing near Dzhezkazgan, Kazakhstan Monday, April 10, 2017, on the treeless Central Asian steppes Russia's Soyuz MS-02 space capsule carrying the International Space Station (ISS) crew of Andrei Borisenko and Sergey Ryzhykov of Russia and NASA astronaut Robert Shane Kimbrough landed in a remote area in Kazakhstan. (Kirill Kudryavtsev/Pool photo via AP)



Ground personnel carry Russian cosmonaut Sergey Ryzhikov shortly after landing near Dzhezkazgan, Kazakhstan Monday, April 10, 2017, on the treeless Central Asian steppes Russia's Soyuz MS-02 space capsule carrying the International Space Station (ISS) crew of Andrei Borisenko and Sergey Ryzhykov of Russia and NASA astronaut Robert Shane Kimbrough landed in a remote area in Kazakhstan. (Kirill Kudryavtsev/Pool photo via AP)

© 2017 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Russian cosmonaut says he has taken relics of saint to space (2017, April 12) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-04-russian-cosmonaut-relics-saint-space.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.