

Celebrating 800 Years of the Autocephaly of the Serbian Orthodox Church



His Grace Bishop Irinej served the Divine Liturgy on Monday, the feast day of the Deposition of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos.

As His Grace noted at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, both Constantinople and Belgrade are cities dedicated to the Mother of God and therefore this feast day is uniquely shared by both. This feast has special significance for His Grace as he was consecrated bishop on this day thirteen years ago. As the bishop noted, joining him in celebration were Fr. Radomir Plavsic and Hieromonk Nektarije (Tesanovic), who also celebrate the anniversary of their ordination to the priesthood on this day. Concelebrating with the bishop were a number of clergy.

The morning plenary session began following breakfast and was dedicated to safety practices for parish and family, insurance systems and diocesan/parish policies. His Grace Bishop Irinej introduced Michael Herzak of Insurance Systems who, together with his son, led the discussion. Unlike insurance, risk management is the process of identifying, assessing and controlling threats to an organization's capital and earnings. Additionally, in our day in age there is a growing need for crisis management in the ever frequent tragic events of shootings we hear about in the news, not to mention sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, et. al. The presentation was welcomed by the clergy and laity with numerous questions which led to a lively discussion. Policies and procedures will be promulgated by the Episcopal Council

for implementation both on the Diocesan and parish levels.

Following lunch the afternoon hours were spent hearing reports from various committees. Bishop Irinej took the opportunity to welcome Fr. Metodije, Abbot of Monastery Hilandar and welcomed him to greet the Assembly. In his remarks Fr. Metodije noted how he was pleased to see the work of the summer children's camp which, in fact, was taking place at the same time of the Assembly. He spoke of the endeavors of Monastery Hilandar which, in this same vein, organizes camps in Serbia bringing children from different parts of Serbia. Typically there are 400 children who participate, in two groups of 200. Children are brought from different regions where Serbs are living in dire straits. During the course of the camp they are able to meet one another, knowing that they are not alone but part of the larger Serbian and Orthodox family. Additionally, the monastery has plans of forming an Orthodox high school which, at this point, is in the process of formation.

Fr. Nicholas Ceko spoke on the work of the Standing Committees and the many ministries offered by the various committees. A brief report on the Clergy health plan was followed by Luka Erceg who spoke on behalf of the Clergy Pension Plan. Jim Springborn gave a Treasurer's report on behalf of the Central Church Council. A presentation was delivered on Youth and Young Adult Ministry by Fr. Dragan Petrovic, Fr. Stevo Rocknage and special guest Fr. Cosmas Callas from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago. Naturally, discussion ensued with each report.

A report was given on the St. Sava School of Theology which led to further discussion about this theological institution. The Holy Synod of Bishops is in the process of evaluating the many proposals for the future of the School of Theology.

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