

## Montenegro awards highest state honor to Metropolitan Amfilohije five years after his repose



Montenegrin President Jakov Milatović has decided to posthumously award the Order of Montenegro, the country's highest state decoration, to the late Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The announcement comes on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Metropolitan's repose on October 30, 2020.

"Metropolitan Amfilohije left an indelible mark on the spiritual and social life of Montenegro during his almost three decades at the head of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral," Pres. Milatović stated, reports *Vijesti.me*.

Born in 1938 in Bare Radovića in Donja Morača, Met. Amfilohije pursued theological, philological studies in Belgrade, Bern, Rome and Athens. According to Pres. Milatović, he became "one of the most educated bishops in the Orthodox world." Over the course of 30 years, he revived the Church and spiritual life in

Montenegro, with thousands attending his funeral to bid farewell.

The President noted that Met. Amfilohije's reputation throughout the Christian world contributed significantly to Montenegro's international standing. He also highlighted the Metropolitan's role during the 2006 independence referendum, stating that "his calls for parliamentary democracy and mutual respect contributed to Montenegro going through this process peacefully and without conflict. In doing so, he made an immeasurable contribution to preserving peace and stability in the country."

In his final years, Metropolitan Amfilohije led processions in 2019 and 2020 in response to the Law on Freedom of Religion, which threatened the Church's holy sites. The processions drew tens and hundreds of thousands of participants in defense of the Church's properties. During this period, he faced illegal arrests and persecution from authorities.

"The marches soon took on a broader social meaning and became a symbol of peaceful civil resistance," Pres. Milatović said. "The massiveness and duration of the marches were one of the key factors that contributed to the peaceful change of decades-long rule, which opened the way for Montenegro to full membership in the EU."

The Order of Montenegro is the highest state decoration in the country, consisting of an order star, a large necklace or ribbon, and an order badge featuring characteristic details from Montenegrin history and culture.

Pres. Milatović stated that by awarding this honor, Montenegro recognizes Met. Amfilohije's "contribution to preserving spiritual tradition, building social peace in the most sensitive moments of our contemporary history, as well as his role in improving the international reputation of our country."

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