

20/11/2020

PATRIARCH IRINEJ OF SERBIA REPOSES IN THE LORD



His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia reposed in the Lord this morning at 7:07 AM in the Karaburma Military Hospital in Belgrade, reports the official site of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The Patriarch was 90 years old. He served as a hierarch of the Serbian Church for 46 years, and nearly 11 years as Patriarch. Though several hierarchs have already succumbed to complications from COVID-19, Pat. Irinej is the first Orthodox primate to depart to the Lord. His repose comes just 5 days after the anniversary of the repose of his predecessor, Patriarch Pavle.

Archbishops Anastasios of Albania and Ieronymos of Greece are currently being treated in Athens for the coronavirus as well.

His Holiness had been hospitalized since November 4 after he tested positive for the coronavirus. His condition fluctuated over the past two weeks as his chronic heart fatigue worsened, and yesterday the Serbian Church reported that his health had seriously deteriorated, after which he was intubated.

Details regarding his funeral will be announced soon.

“It was an honor for me to know,” Serbian President Aleksandr Vučić wrote on Instagram. “People like you never depart.”

May his memory be eternal!

The site of the Serbian Orthodox Church provides a detailed biography of His Holiness:

His Holiness Patriarch Irinej (Gavrilovic) of Serbia was born in the village of Vidova, near town of Cacak, Serbia, on 28 August, 1930. His baptismal name is Miroslav. He finished elementary school in his village, and later on high school in Cacak. Thereupon he enrolled and completed Theological Seminary in Prizren, Kosovo and Metochia, and graduated at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade. Upon graduation, he did his army service for a year and a half. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church appointed him a professor of the Prizren Theological Seminary, but before assuming this assignment he was tonsured by the late Serbian Patriarch Herman (German) and got the monastic name Irinej, at the Rakovica monastery near Belgrade in October 1959.

That same month, on the Feast of St. Paraskeva, October 27, 1959, at the Ruzica church within the Kalemegdan old town of Belgrade, he was ordained hieromonk. While he worked as a professor at the Prizren Seminary he spent a period of time at post-graduate studies in Athens. In 1969 he was appointed as Principal of the Monastic School in the Monastery of Ostrog, Montenegro, from where he returned back to Prizren and became Principal of the Prizren Seminary. From that office he was elected as Vicar Bishop of the then Patriarch of Serbia with the title of Bishop of Moravica in May, 1974. A year later, in 1975, he was elected as diocesan Bishop of Nis and enthroned in the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Nis on 15 June, 1975. As Bishop he headed the Diocese of Nis for the next 35 years.

When the Theological Seminary was displaced from Prizren due to Albanian revolts in 1999, Patriarch Irinej as Bishop of Nis made it possible that a new, large building

of the Seminary was built in Nis, where the Seminary could continue its life.

The Holy Assembly of Bishops elected Bishop Irinej as Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch on January 22, 2010, as successor of the previous Patriarch Pavle (Stojcevic). Consequently, he is the 45th Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The act of enthronement of His Holiness Irinej, Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, was performed on January 23, 2010, during the Holy Hierarchical Liturgy in Belgrade's Cathedral church of Archangel Michael. The solemn Liturgy was officiated by the elected Serbian Patriarch Irinej with the concelebration of his brothers Bishops, priests and deacons, as well as representatives of the Russian and Greek Churches. Patriarch Irinej was formally enthroned to the ancient throne of the Serbian Patriarchs in the Patriarchate of Pec monastery on 3 October 2010, with participation of the representatives of all sister Orthodox Churches.

From the very beginning of His Patriarchal Ministry, though in very difficult time, His Holiness advocated peace and stability in the entire region.

On November 10 2010, he stated in an interview that "the Drina River [between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina] is not a border, but a bridge that connects us. Although, in a way, we are one even today, God willing, we will soon really be one." Patriarch Irinej elaborated that for now "it is enough that we are one as people, as the Orthodox Church, and that we are on the same path of St. Sava and Christ". He praised the Serbs of Banja Luka stating that "[they fight] to preserve the Serbian name. Although this is not at all an easy task, they are succeeding."

On December 15th 2011, His Holiness was decorated by His Royal Highness Prince Davit Bagration Mukhraneli Batonishvilli of Georgia with The Grand Collar of The Order of The Eagle of Georgia and The Semeless Tunic of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

His Holiness Irinej has been considered, both abroad and at home, as a moderate traditionalist, open to global inter-religious dialogue. In an interview he indicated he would not oppose the first-ever visit by the Roman Catholic Pope to Serbia in 2013 as part of celebrations of the 1,700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan, the law under which Roman emperor Constantine, who was born in Niš, ended the persecution of Christians. His Holiness said that "there is the wish of the Pope" for a meeting in Niš and that it would be a chance "not just for a meeting, but for a dialogue".

Regarding the accession of Serbia to the European Union, the Serbian Patriarch

said that: “Serbia should not look with suspicion at the EU, if the EU respects the Serbian identity, culture and religion. We believe that we are an historical part of Europe, and we want to be in this family of peoples. In the accession we will accept everything that is not in contradiction with our cultural and historical identity.”

As the Head of the Serbian Orthodox Church His Holiness represents the highest spiritual authority among the Serbian people in Serbia and abroad.

Serbian Patriarchate under His leadership has published an exceptional number of academic, liturgical, religious, as well as popular books for education and spiritual uplifting of the faithful. His Holiness is well known as a great preacher and uses every opportunity to preach the Word of God to all people. Most recently, the Diocese of Nis has published a collection of his sermons delivered in the Dioces of Nis, while he was Diocesan Bishop there.

orthochristian.com