

## **Patriarch Porfirije: Bandic was a friend of Orthodox Serbs, but also a personal friend of mine**



Patriarch Porfirije celebrated in Zagreb for the first time and said: I experienced love at every step

The Divine Liturgy, the first in the Zagreb Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord since he was elected head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Porfirije Serbian Patriarch served on February 28, 2021, on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. His Grace Bishop Sergije of Bihac-Petrovac and the clergy of the Zagreb Cathedral concelebrated together.

Following the Holy Liturgy, the Patriarch addressed the liturgical assembly and expressed his gratitude to God and the council fathers who elected him and raised him to the throne of the saints and great leaders of the Serbian Church, ascetics and servants of God, led by Saint Sava.

“Saint Sava, whom many will not understand, because they interpret him from their perspective, was all of Christ. He longed for Christ with all his being. That longing took him to Mount Athos, to asceticism. Because through prayer in solitude with the living God, he understood that the Church is the Body of Christ, the people of God, and that for the people of God it is necessary not only to take care of their spiritual comfort, their peace, but that the experience of peace and encounter with the living God to bear witness to the whole world, to all nations, for they are all the nations of God. Aware of my weaknesses, I commend myself to your prayers, and I

feel love as an encouragement to courage and readiness not to be heroes and solve the problems of this world, but to witness Christ with brothers bishops, priests and all of you “, the Patriarch said to the gathered people.

His Holiness Patriarch also spoke about his arrival on the throne of the metropolitans of Zagreb-Ljubljana in 2014 and said that when he came to Zagreb he felt fear, because he came to an unknown country and space, “at a time immediately preceded by insanity. May God forgive us all for such delusions. Christ is our mirror, our measure, our criterion. He is also the meaning of our existence. I know deeply, and I have learned from you that the Church of Christ exists not to divide, not to create confrontations, but to gather in Christ. He who understands that with his heart, mind and soul, has decided the meaning of his existence “.

“Coming here then, I was burdened with various information that came from outside, maybe with my personal prejudices, but then I honestly said: I am a Serb and I love my people, but above that I am before that, and I want to be even more Christ’s, to be a Christian, and that means to hear his word That they all may be one. Then I said that I would try to love all nations more and more every day, because I know that God will judge me by that “, the Patriarch said.

“The Lord Himself assured me at every step that He is the master of history and that our gaze must be directed towards Him, that with all our being, our hands and our body we must cling to His feet. When we place Him in the center of our life, everything else illuminated by His presence will get a different content, a different form from the one that is acquired at first sight “, the Patriarch said.

“I have learned that truth from you by hand. I experienced love at every step, above all, of course, from the Orthodox Serb believers. But no less than others, who constantly disarmed me and released both what I was listening to on the outside and what might have come as prejudice from the inside, he said, adding that he was “disarmed” in meetings with ordinary people in cafes. with the workers on Ilica, and with the people in high positions ”.

“I am aware that it may sound strange, but I experienced the same beauty of meeting the image of God in the people I met, and they entered the calendar of saints, in meetings with people from the territory of the Diocese of Zagreb-Ljubljana. I am grateful to God for all these moments, but above all for the wonderful people, both Orthodox Serbs and Croatian Catholics and non-Catholics, and those who are searching for Meaning. I am grateful to God for meeting the Jewish brothers, of whom there are not many, Muslims, Bosniaks, Roma, of various faiths, the Russian brothers, with whom we gathered together in this temple and

prayed to God, " Patriarch Porfirije said.

The patriarch said that because of all that, he feels the duty to say at least one day, God have mercy "for Orthodox Serbs in Croatia and for all people in Croatia, with the desire that Christ's peace, Christ's love be the contents of all people's lives."

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The Patriarch said that he would remain the administrator of the Diocese of Zagreb-Ljubljana as long as it was the will of the Holy Synod of Bishops, and stressed that he had tried before, but that he would try even harder in the future to decide nothing and nothing on his own, but all to be an expression of the conciliar will. Most of them will be in Belgrade, but they will also come to Zagreb, so there will be opportunities for conversation, common prayer and even "to complain to each other".

In the end, the Patriarch said that he heard the news about the death of the mayor of Zagreb, Milan Bandic. "Without entering politics, because it is not peculiar to us, and we do not understand it, we are obliged to say that he was a friend of Orthodox Serbs and all the people of the city of Zagreb and beyond, but also my personal friend. I pray to God for the peace of his soul. May God grant him the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life ", His Holiness Porfirije, Serbian Patriarch said.





