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NEWLY-ELECTED METROPOLITAN OF MONTENEGRO FESTIVELY GREETED BY THOUSANDS OF ORTHODOX FAITHFUL



The Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church elected His Grace Bishop Joanikije of Budimlja and Nikšić as the new Metropolitan of Montenegro at its session in Belgrade last week. His Grace had been serving as locum tenens since the repose of His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije in late October.

This week, Metropolitan Joanikije returned home to Montenegro from Belgrade, where he was joyously greeted by thousands of Orthodox faithful.

He first went to Đurđevi Stupovi Monastery on Tuesday, the residence of his former Diocese of Budimlja and Nikšić, where he was met by loving parishioners who have known the new Metropolitan for many years, reports the Metropolis website.

Following a moleben of thanksgiving, Met. Joanikije spoke about the proceedings of the Bishops' Council, emphasizing that it manifested and preserved the unity of the Serbian Church.

"When we preserve the unity of our Local Church, we contribute to the unity of all Orthodoxy. We see that the enemies of the Church have already created divisions in some places, as has always been the case in history. But God saved us from this," His Eminence said.

He also assured the faithful of his former diocese that they are in good hands with their own newly-elected hierarch His Grace Bishop Metodije, formerly of Diokleia, who served as vicar to Met. Amfilohije. Bp. Metodije is greatly beloved throughout the Serbian Church, he said, and is fondly remembered for caring for His Holiness Patriarch Pavle in his last years and months. Bp. Metodije is "the embodiment of human kindness and beauty," the Metropolitan said. "I am convinced that a better man than I am is coming in my place, and I congratulate you on that. Axios!"

Met. Joanikije also gave thanks to the faithful for showing their devotion to the Church during the troublesome times of 2020, when the government actively sought to seize Serbian Church property.

And yesterday, Met. Joanikije arrived at the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Podgorica, where he was again joyously met by thousands of believers.

The reception was attended by Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapić, who promised the Metropolitan that he would never do anything to harm the Serbian Orthodox Church, and that he would sign the agreement with the Church concerning its legal status, as a corrective to the previous administration's anti-Orthodox policies.

The PM unexpectedly delayed the signing of the agreement last week, but asked Met. Joanikije's forgiveness if he did anything wrong.

His Eminence thanked the new government for removing the previous socialist administration that "dared to strike at the Church." But even in the hard times, the Church was on Golgotha with Christ, the Metropolitan emphasized.

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