

POLISH CHURCH PROCESSES IN HONOR OF WONDER-WORKING BIELSK ICON OF MOTHER OF GOD



The Polish Church festively celebrated the miraculous Bielsk Icon of the Mother of God on Saturday and Sunday in Bielsk Podlaski in northeastern Poland, with the participation of several hierarchs, including the primate His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa.

The feast began in the city's oldest church—of the Nativity of the Mother of God—on the eve of the feast, with the All-Night Vigil celebrated by His Eminence Archbishop Gregory of Bielsk and His Grace Bishop Barsanuphy of Siemiatycze and clergy of the Bielsk Deanery, reports the press service of the Polish Orthodox Church.

The Bielsk Icon is permanently kept in the Church of the Nativity, where akathists and molebens are prayed before it weekly.



The celebration continued on Sunday, with the Divine Liturgy being celebrated in all the parishes in Bielsk. The faithful then processed towards the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin to venerate the holy icon. The gathered faithful then processed through the city streets, carrying the icon in pious devotion to the Church of the Holy Protection, where this year's main celebrations were held.

The clergy carrying the icon and the pilgrims were greeted at the gate of the Church by Met. Sawa, where they all sang hymns to the Theotokos. "The Mother of God has walked through the streets of this city today in her icon, to look into the heart of each of you ... to listen to the people talk about their joys and problems," the Polish primate preached. "We have gathered in this city to thank the Triune God and the Most-Holy Theotokos, that she is with us, that her omophorion surrounds the city and its inhabitants. We are grateful to her for that!"

Met. Sawa then celebrated the Divine Liturgy together with Abps. Gregory, Paul of Hajnowski, and Andrew of Suprasl, and Bp. Barsanuphy together with the clergy who arrived for the feast. In his homily following the Gospel, Abp. Andrew preached on the life of the Theotokos and stressed that all mankind is called to achieve holiness and is inscribed in the rhythm of the life of the Orthodox Church.



Following the Liturgy, Met. Sawa again addressed the faithful, noting that the Holy Eucharist is the most important thing on earth. "Living in the modern world, filled with the power of the Eucharist," he said, "we must have a positive impact on the world around us and always bear witness to our faith. And our faith should bear the expected fruits, strengthening our Orthodoxy, which has its source in the tomb of the Risen Christ."

The Bielsk Icon is of the Hodegetria type, painted in the Georgian-Jerusalem style. It is famous for many miraculous healings and other answered prayers. The icon was gifted to the city 500 years ago by Princess Elena, the wife of King Alexander Jagiellon. The icon's feast, celebrated annually on the second Sunday in June, was established in 2007. Solemn processions with the Bielsk Icon have been held in the city since 2016, reports Polskie Radio Białystok.

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