



## **Metropolitan Antony of Borispol and Brovary: Metropolitan Amfilohije was surrounded with love of all Montenegrins**

*Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović) of Montenegro and the Littoral passed away in the Lord on October 30, 2020. Metropolitan Antony of Borispol and Brovary, chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, told about his personal contacts with the hierarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church and his ministry in the interview given to 'Orthodox Life' web portal.*

### **Vladyko, you have met Metropolitan Amfilohije many times. What is your main impression?**

He was a saint. It is difficult to find a more recognized authority in the Church. He was a real national spiritual leader! His demise is a great loss for the people of Montenegro, Serbia and South America for which he had cared as well as for many Orthodox Christians living on all continents.

### **Have you made your acquaintance in Montenegro?**

I have learned about Metropolitan Amfilohije when I was a student. He was an outstanding contemporary theologian. We read his books and had an opportunity to meet him when he visited the Laura of the Holy Trinity. A more close acquaintance happened when I was rector of the Kievan Theological Academy. Metropolitan Amfilohije was awarded an academic degree of doctor of theology. Alas, we missed an opportunity to present it.

When I visited Montenegro I saw with my own eyes his love of his people and his anxiety about the situation in the country. It is well known that Metropolitan Amfilohije was surrounded with love of all Montenegrins, from child to old man. He was called a father, a grand-father and an apostle. The secret of such appreciation and reverence involves his being a real father of the nation. Metropolitan Amfilohije sermons were always permeated with evangelical love and power and were so topical and timely that people took his words as addressed to them personally. He loved people and cared for his flock.

A year ago Metropolitan Amfilohije invited me to the celebration of the feast of Archangel Michael. There are no traditional name days in the Serbian Church as we understand them, but there is Slava – glorification of one's family patron saint. This custom is passed from generation to generation. Radović family's patron saint is Archangel Michael. After the Divine Liturgy I saw him, aged eighty-two, standing the whole day surrounded by people who wanted to congratulate him. I was told later that he received

congratulations the whole week through.

He was a part of the Montenegrins. Orthodoxy in Montenegro is inseparably linked with Metropolitan Amfilohije. He became hierarch after the fall of the socialist regime and began to revive the life of the Church. Church buildings were built, monasteries were open. Over seven hundred churches and monasteries after the years of devastation and desolation! The monasteries were open not as buildings or architectural complexes, but as real monasteries. Knowing his spiritual zealotry and love of monasticism many people came to Montenegro from various corners of the world to take monastic vows. There were many people from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus among them. He made all tonsures himself.

His monastic way is unique because he was conversed with people who were canonized later. He was a spiritual son of St. Justin (Popović) and St. Paisius of Mount Athos. They all had in common the unity of the spirit and friendship of souls.

Metropolitan Amfilohije was a zealot of our time, a sincere and audacious opponent of any church schism. Certainly, we wish such courageous, strong and authoritative people – and he was a most authoritative theologian and hierarch in the whole Orthodox world – to stay with us much longer. His words in defense of canonical order, concerning our situation in Ukraine in particular, were always effective and had precise value. Many hierarchs of other Local Churches took their lead from him.

His demise is very sad to us, yet I believe that he will remain a defender of the Orthodox Church in Heaven praying at God's Altar and beseeching the Lord to make us wiser and grant us unity, correct understanding and responsibility for the destiny of the Orthodox Church.

**Vladyko, you attended the funeral service for Metropolitan Amfilohije. Please share your impressions with us.**

It seemed to me that the whole country attended. The people's love was seen in this doleful hour when the Lord was receiving his soul. But this hour was mournful only in terms of the earthly life as the Lord knows when to give us life and when to take it away.

The main feeling at the funeral was that the unlinkable was linked. It was the weeping crowd of thousands, including children, young people and adults, but there was no despondency. The weeping that tears your soul because of frustration is one thing, but weeping at this funeral filled the soul with hope, because Metropolitan Amfilohije managed to educate the Montenegro flock in correct understanding of life and death.

This weeping and lamentation was a spiritual joy and triumph for Montenegro when it was paying last respects to its son and its father. Metropolitan Amfilohije had been the father for the people, not afraid to endure anything for the sake of the Church and devoting his energies to its revival and flourishing.

A lot of people have come to see Metropolitan Amfilohije to his last journey. The whole square in front of the Cathedral that he had built was filled with people. Everything Metropolitan Amfilohije had done, the construction of the cathedral including, had been done thoroughly and has a spiritual meaning.

### **What is the meaning of the construction?**

Looking at the beautiful large Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Podgorica, we see its lower part consisting of rude stones, the worked stones higher, and fine tiles of exquisite workmanship atop. I would like to add that the stones for construction had been brought from all parts of Montenegro.

The lower rude stones can be compared to people who have just come to church, being rough, uncut, with their irregularities and inequalities. The worked stones are like people being transformed in the Church by the grace of the Holy Spirit that cuts away all their inequalities. The stones atop can be compared to those who are really growing in the Church thus becoming a work of art.

### **The Orthodox world is so divided at present. What can be done for its unity?**

Just stick to the truth courageously. St. Mark of Ephesus said, "O man, whatever concerns the Church can never be put right through compromise; there is nothing in between truth and falsehood."

It is a difficult time in the history of the Church now. Both the Ukrainian Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro are suffering persecution and seizure of church buildings. Let us recall Metropolitan Amfilohije's behavior all that time. When the previous authorities of Montenegro decided to seize the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church, he courageously rallied to its defense, and people have heard his voice. It was a real miracle to see enthusiasm of the tens of thousands believers who defended their faith and their Church.

Once Metropolitan Amfilohije learned of the arrest of some people. He went to the police station and said, "Arrest me and release them, I am the ringleader." Despite his age and all his health problems he did not hide but was ready to be imprisoned for the release of those people.

Metropolitan Amfilohije's courage and integrity are an example to follow. He was a kind-hearted and steadfast warrior of Christ! Let us remember him in prayers and hope that he will pray for us at God's Altar.

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