



## **His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia celebrates requiem service for those killed in plane crash over the Black Sea**

On 26 December 2016, His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia visited the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity – Metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Belgrade.

His Holiness celebrated the requiem service for those who had died on board the Russian Defense Ministry Tu-154 aircraft. The tragedy occurred near the city of Sochi on December 25. Concelebrating with the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church were the rector of the Metochion, archpriest Vitaly Tarasiev, and the Belgrade clergy.

Among those praying in the church were Bishop Nazary of Kronstadt, vicar of the St. Petersburg diocese, who is currently on pilgrimage in Serbia; Mr. Alexander Chepurin, Russia’s Ambassador to Serbia; Mr. Vladimir Chushev, Ambassador of Belarus to Serbia; Ms Nadezhda Kuschenkova, director of the Russian House in Belgrade; representatives of the Serbian Ministry of Defense; and parishioners of the Russian Metochion.

After the requiem service, His Holiness Patriarch Irinej expressed his condolences to the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, as well as to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, the whole Russian Orthodox Church and all the people of Russia, saying in particular, “The tragedy that has stricken the Russian Orthodox people, the Russian Orthodox Church, is our common tragedy, our common pain.”

His Holiness mentioned the artists of the Alexandrov Ensemble who had also died in the plane crash. As the Primate of the Serbian Church noted, “since its foundation the Ensemble has been bringing beauty and joy into the lives of those who had an opportunity to hear it perform.”

Patriarch Irinej called upon all those present to pray for the repose of the souls of the victims, saying, “They deserve our human gratitude and God’s mercy. May the Lord give rest to their souls in the dwellings of the righteous and grant consolation to the families of the victims in their great sorrow.”

*DECR Communication Service*