First Enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia takes place in Belgrade

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In accordance with the Statute of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the office of enthronement of His Holiness Irinej, the newly elected Archbishop of Peć, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch, took place after the hierarchal liturgy at the Cathedral of the Holy Archangels in Belgrade on 23 January 2010, the next day after the election.

His Holiness Patriarch Irinej officiated in concelebration with the hierarchs and clerics of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Also concelebrating were Bishop Peter of Cleveland, administrator of the Chicago and Mid-America diocese of the Russian Church Abroad, and archpriest Vitaly Tarasjev, representative of the Moscow Patriarchate and rector of the Russian Orthodox Church metochion in Belgrade.

At the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Amphilohije of Crna Gora and Primorje, who was elected *locum tenens* of the Patriarchal throne after the demise of His Holiness Patriarch Pavle, presented His Holiness Patriarch Irinej with patriarchal insignia: the panagia of St. Sabbas of Serbia, the 18th century staff of Archbishop of Krusedol and Metropolitan Maxim of Karlovci, and placed a white klobuk on the Patriarch's head. Metropolitan Amphilohije recollected the life, exploits and selfless ministry of the former Serbian primates and wished His Holiness to be a worthy successor of St. Sabbas of Serbia, other saints, and his esteemed predecessors.

His Holiness Patriarch Irinej emphasized in his address that the day of Patriarchal enthronement was a great day for him, for the Serbian Orthodox Church and people of Serbia. The Serbian Patriarchs have always presented the entire life of his people before God and history, while sharing the people's destiny, their tragedies and joys. His Holiness said, "my heart trembles as a leaf in the wind, when I ponder over my worthiness of so high a title, such honour and responsibility."

"Therefore I am thinking of God, our Saviour, the Archpastor of the Church Who rewarded my by His kindness and mercy," His Holiness added.

His Holiness Irinej paid a particular attention to the importance of Kosovo to the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people. Having reminded the worshippers of the words from the Psalms, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!" (137:5), he said that his second and the major enthronement would take place at the Patriarchate of Peć, Kosovo and Metochia, the ancient seat of the Serbian Primates.

The enthronement at Peć is expected to take place after Holy Pascha.

Attending the divine service were President of the National Assembly of Serbia Slavica Đukić Dejanović; Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković; Prime Minister of the Republika of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) Milorad Dodik, successor to the throne Alexander Karageorgievich with his wife; minister of religions of the Serbian government Prof. Bogoljub Šijaković; Serbian minister of internal affairs Ivica Dačić; Belgrade Mayor Dragan Đilas; diplomatic representatives of some countries, as well as representatives of churches and religious associations of Serbia, including apostolic nuncio Archbishop Orlando Antonini and Archbishop of Belgrade Stanislaw Hočevar (Roman Catholic Church); reis-ul-ulema of the Islamic community of Serbia Adem Zilkić; Supreme Mufti of the Muslims of Serbia Muhamed Jusufspahić, and other officials.

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