



Metropolitan Hilarion of Budapest takes part in solemn act of canonization of Bishop Irinej of Bačka and Martyrs of Bačka



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On October 2, in Novi Sad, Serbia, His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia officiated at the Divine Liturgy during which Bishop Irinej of Bačka, a confessor of the faith, and the Holy Martyrs of Bačka were canonized.

Concelebrating with the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Basilio of Akkar, Patriarchate of Antioch; Metropolitan Hilarion of Budapest and Hungary, Russian Orthodox Church; Metropolitan Nektarios of Kerkyra, Orthodox Church of Greece; Archbishop Juraj of Michalovce and

Košice, Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia; Metropolitans Peter of Prespa and Pelagonia and Timotej of Debar and Kičevo, the Macedonian Orthodox Church; Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid; Bishop Irinej of Bačka; and other hierarchs from throughout the Serbian Church.

At the Little Entrance, Bishop Nikodim of Dalmatia read out the decision of the Serbian Bishops' Council on the canonization of St. Irinej and the Martyrs of Bačka. During the chanting of the troparion, Patriarch Porfirije and Bishop Irinej (Bulović) took turns blessing the worshippers with icons of the newly glorified saints.

After Gospel reading, Patriarch Porfirije offered a homily in which he told the worshippers about the deeds of Bishop Irinej and the holy martyrs of Bačka and shared reminiscences about his hometown, saying: "I was raised in Čurug, where the martyrs of our nation died for the faith in 1941-42. Imprinted in the city is their suffering, but their victory, too, because their cross was the Cross of Christ. I will never forget the stories that old men and women told me of how people were thrown into the ice stream of the river Tisza. There were twelve hundred residents in Čurug, and one fourth part of them died. But I never heard the lonely old women saying hateful words about those who had committed atrocities. Instead they said: 'May the Lord have mercy on them.' Brothers and sisters, isn't this the true Church of Christ?"

The Divine Liturgy being over, Bishop Irinej addressed the worshippers. He warmly greeted guests from Local Orthodox Churches and expressed joy over recognition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church by Orthodox Christianity and participation of its hierarchs in the celebration.

Bishop Irinej (secular name Ivan Ćirić) was born in Sremski Karlovci in 1884, and graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy in 1906. He defended his doctoral dissertation on semitology at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Vienna in 1908, and shortly thereafter he was tonsured at the Hopovo Monastery and ordained a deacon, then a protodeacon and archdeacon. On June 5, 1919, he was elected Bishop of Timok at the Bishops' Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church, ordained priest, elevated to the rank of archimandrite, and on June 15 consecrated bishop by Serbian Metropolitan Dimitrije (Pavlović) and other hierarchs at the Cathedral in Belgrade,

He was transferred to Bačka in the end of 1921. He studied Serbian, Byzantine, Russian and Romanian Orthodox church singing, made translations from Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French, Russian, German and Hungarian, was involved in translating the Old Testament texts and comments to them. His Old Testament research holds a valuable place in Serbian theology.

During the Second World War, Bishop Irinej saved 2,800 children and 189 mothers with babies from the Šarvar camp and established the Bačka Diocesan Hospital.

After the war, he spent a year and a half under house arrest, and on the Transfiguration of the Lord in 1946 he was severely beaten by communist activists near a church and suffered injuries that permanently damaged his health. He passed away on April 5, 1955, and was buried in the crypt of the Cathedral of St. George in Novi Sad.

The Holy Martyrs of Bačka are clergymen and laymen who suffered for the faith in 1941-42.

Source: Press Service of the Diocese of Budapest and Hungary, Russian Orthodox Church; Press Service of the Diocese of Bačka, Serbian Orthodox Church; and “Orthodox Encyclopedia”

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