



A particle of relics of hieromartyr Platon of Banja Luka presented as a gift to Moscow Theological Academy



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On November 5, faculty and students of the Moscow Theological Academy, clerics and parishioners of the Intercession church at the Academy, and numerous guests of the Lavra of the Holy Trinity and St.Sergius witnessed and attended a historic event in the life of the theological school. With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Porfirije of the Serbian Orthodox Church, a particle of relics of hieromartyr Platon (Jovanović), Bishop of Banja Luka, an academy graduate of 1901, was presented to the MThA as a gift from the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The Serbian Orthodox Church also donated to the Academy an icon of hieromartyr Platon painted on the occasion with the blessing of Bishop Jefrem of Banja Luka.

The MThA press service reports that the ceremonial reception of the reliquary with a particle of relics took place at the entrance to the Intercession church. The shrine was brought to the Academy by Bishop Antonije of Moravica, representative of the Serbian Patriarch to the Moscow Patriarchal Throne, Bishop Sava of Marca, and two clerics of the Diocese of Banja Luka.

Bishop Kirill of Sergiev Posad and Dmitrov, the MThA rector and abbot of the Lavra of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius, greeted members of the Serbian delegation. Accompanied by clergymen of the Academy, faculty and students they proceeded to the church, where the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Kirill together with Bishops Antonije and Sava, the academy clergymen and guests in holy orders.

After prayer before the ambo, glorification to hieromartyr Platon was celebrated in front of his icon and a particle of his relics placed on lecterns in the centre of the church for worshippers to venerate them.

The divine service being over, Bishop Antonije conveyed His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije's blessing to all those present and explained that the delegation had brought the shrine at the request of the MThA with the blessing of the Primate of the Russian and Serbian Churches. He added that hundreds of Serbs had graduated from the Academy, but fate would have it that one of them, Bishop Platon had been martyred and become confessor of the Orthodox faith during World War II. The Serbian bishop thanked Bishop Kirill for kindness he had shown to the Serbian students as a lecturer of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and is showing now as the MThA rector.

Bishop Sava expressed his joy over an opportunity to take part in the divine service and glorification of hieromartyr Platon. He said, 'As we glorify the martyrs we pay homage to all people who had witnessed their faith by their own life.'

In his address, Bishop Kirill recalled the circumstances of Bishop Platon's martyrdom and said that the awful events of that time should serve as a reminder to people of what nationalism could do with them as it is totally out of keeping with Christianity, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek. "Time and again, the Lord reminds us that Christ has granted an entirely different worldview to humanity, but people are trying to change Christ and the Gospel as they see fit. Yet we hope for the prayers of the holy martyrs, including hieromartyr Platon," said the MThA rector.

Accompanying the delegation of the Serbian Orthodox Church during its visit to the Lavra was Mr. Andrei Yu. Khoshev, a DECR staff member.

Hieromartyr Platon (secular name Milivoje Jovanović) was born in Belgrade in 1874. He completed his primary and secondary education in Vranje and Niš and enrolled in the Orthodox Seminary in Belgrade where he took his monastic vows. After graduation and ordination he was sent to the Serbian Metochion in Moscow. Soon after, he enrolled in the Moscow Theological Academy and graduated as candidate of theology in 1901.

Upon his return from Russia, he was assigned to the Rajinovac Monastery, taught theology in Aleksinac and Jagodina and was raised to the rank of archimandrite.

During the Balkan Wars and World War I he served as a military chaplain in the Morava Brigade of the Royal Serbian Army. In 1932 he was appointed manager of the monastery printing press in Sremski Karlovci and entrusted with editing the Gazette of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate. In 1934-36 he served as archimandrite of the Krušedol Monastery.

Archimandrite Platon was ordained bishop in 1936, elected to the Diocese of Ohrid and Bitola in 1938 and transferred to Banja Luka in 1939.

The suffering of the Orthodox Serbs in Bosnia began when the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was occupied by the Nazis. On 10 April 1941, the new authorities of the 'Independent State of Croatia' ordered Bishop Platon to leave his diocese as he was an ethnic Serb from Serbia, but he firmly refused and expressed his readiness to stay with his flock. On May 4, he was again ordered to leave immediately under the threat of arrest. On the night of May 5, he and the Rev. Dušan Subotić were arrested by the Ustaše and driven out of the city to the bank of the river Vrbas. The clerics were tortured and killed, and their bodies were thrown into the river.

The mutilated body of Bishop Platon was found in the village of Kumsale on 23 May 1941. The next day he was buried at the military cemetery in Banja Luka. In 1973, his remains were reinterred at the city Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity.

Bishop Platon (Jovanović) was canonized at the session of the Bishops' Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1998.