



Metropolitan Ioann of Belgorod and Stary Oskol meets with Serbian Patriarch Porfirije



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With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and at the invitation of the supreme authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Ioann of Belgorod and Stary Oskol, head of the Belgorod Metropolia, arrived in Serbia.

On June 11, Metropolitan Ioann began his trip by visiting the Church of St. Sava on Vračar Hill in Belgrade. There he **met** and had a brief conversation with the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Metropolitan Nicholas of Eastern America and New York, who had brought to Serbia the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God – the most treasured shrine of the Russian Orthodox community abroad.

As website of the Belgorod Metropolia **reports**, on June 12, the eve of the Feast of the Holy Ascension, Metropolitan Ioann met with His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Porfirije at the Patriarchal residence. During the meeting held in the spirit of brotherly love, the Primate of the Serbian Church expressed his deep sorrow over the persecutions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the tragic developments dividing the fraternal peoples.

On behalf of the citizens of Belgorod, Metropolitan Ioann presented to His Holiness a gonfalon with the Icon of the Saviour “Not-Made-by-Hands” and the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, as well as chalice veils made by Belgorod seamstresses. During the conversation, the Primate of the Serbian Church made a special mention of a book by Metropolitan Ioann entitled *The Heaven of Our Life*, which had been translated into Serbian by a graduate of the Belgorod Seminary, Nenad Bojko.

On June 13, the Feast of the Holy Ascension, Metropolitan Ioann of Belgorod and Sary Oskol, at the invitation of Bishop Vasilije of Srem, took part in the celebrations marking the patronal feast of the Beočin Monastery.

The ancient monastic abode is located near Beočin village, in a valley surrounded by treed slopes of hills not far from the city of Novi Sad. For more than 500 years, the monastery has been the home to the miracle-working Beočin Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. Numerous pilgrims flock to the monastery from all over Europe to pray before this icon, to ask the Mother of God for help, in particular, to be blessed with children. The monastery is always full of children brought there by their parents to give thanks to the Most Holy Theotokos.

On the patronal feast, Bishop Vasilije of Srem and Metropolitan Ioann of Belgorod and Sary Oskol celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Ascension. Praying with them were the local clergy and numerous pilgrims.

After the Liturgy, Bishop Vasilije greeted the guest from the Russian Orthodox Church. He mentioned that a hundred years ago Sremski Karlovci had welcomed the Russian hierarchs who had emigrated from Russia. To commemorate their joint prayer, he presented to Metropolitan Ioann a panagia and a book on the history of the Diocese of Srem and relationships between the Russian and the Serbian Orthodox Churches.

The head of the Belgorod Metropolia thanked Bishop Vasilije, saying in particular, “A hundred years ago the Russian hierarchs were welcomed here with peace and love, and today Vladyka Vasilije has welcomed me with the same love and peace in the hospitable land of Srem.”