

## Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church awarded highest order of the Republic of Serbia



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On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić presented to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' the highest award of Serbia – the Order of the Republic of Serbia, First Class, on a grand collar.

The award ceremony took place in the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow after a **meeting** between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and the Serbian President.

Addressing the Primate of the Russian Church, Mr Vučić said:

“It is a great honour and joy for me to greet you on behalf of the entire Serbia and to thank you in person for your exceptional contribution to developing and strengthening friendly relations between our two

fraternal Slavic countries, between our two Orthodox Christian nations. We hold you in high regard as an authoritative and wise spiritual leader who upholds Christian values and unity of the Orthodox nations. From olden times, these values have been the unshakeable foundation for Serbia-Russia relations and the key to our survival as nations, as Orthodox Christian peoples in future.

“We hold you in high regard as a sincere friend of Serbia who raises his voice in defence of its shrines, in defence of the civilian population of Kosovo and Metohija. Prayers are offered for you in our Serbian churches in Kosovo and in the magnificent Cathedral of St. Sava in Belgrade, which shines in its beauty thanks to the invaluable help from Russia.

“Allow me to present to you the highest award of Serbia – the Order of the Republic of Serbia, First Class – and to wish you good health and strength for all your good deeds for the good of our two Churches and nations.”

After that, a decree of the President of Serbia was read out, which stated that His Holiness Patriarch Kirill was awarded the Order of the Republic of Serbia “for his exceptional contribution to promoting and strengthening friendly relations and cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Orthodox Church.”

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’ said in response:

“Of course, any award evokes positive emotions. But when it happens in the context of such relations as our two countries, peoples and Churches have, then it is more than just an award.

“The thing is, the Serbian and Russian people are bound by their history, their common fight, their faith. Our countries have never been at war with each other, have never betrayed each other. It is a remarkable, unique case in the Europe-wide context.

“And today Serbia and Russia, while divided by the geographical space and other boundaries, maintain their spiritual unity, their cultural unity and, what can also be important, their emotional unity. Because people can be mindful of what they have in common, but at the same time their heart can be silent. And in our situation, the heart is not silent; it speaks, for here we have truly brotherly nations and Churches. It is, indeed, the unity confirmed by the whole history of our two countries’ relations. In this sense, I think, it is a unique case, at least when it comes to Russia’s relations with other countries.

“I wholeheartedly thank you, Mr President, and I wholeheartedly thank all the Serbian people for their unwavering centuries-long love and support for Russia. And I hope that this love and support will always be mutual and beneficial for our two countries and nations.”

Among those present at the award ceremony were Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Alexy of Ramenskoye, Personal Secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, Adviser to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR Deputy Chairman.

The Serbian delegation included Bishop Stefan of Remesiana, Representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; Mr Momčilo Babić, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Serbia to the Russian Federation; Mr Zlatibor Lončar, Serbia's Minister of Health; Mr Nenad Popović, Minister without portfolio in the Government of Serbia; Ms Tanja Jović, Foreign Policy Adviser to the President; Mr Dragutin Matanović, Adviser to the President; and Mr Dušan Bajatović, General Director of Srbijagas.

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