



## Primate of Ukrainian Orthodox Church visits Montenegro



From February 27 to 29, 2020, His Beatitude Onufriy, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine, was on a visit to the Metropolis of Montenegro and the Littoral. The Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church came to Montenegro to take part in the celebrations held on the commemoration day of St. Simeon the Myrrh-Flowing and to give a prayerful support to the Orthodox faithful in Montenegro at a time of hardships.

His Beatitude was accompanied by Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, head of the Synodal Commission for the Monasteries of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; Metropolitan Anthony of Borispol and Brovary, UOC chancellor; Metropolitan Clement of Nezhin and Priluki, head of the OC information and education department; And Bishop Victor of Baryshev, head of the UOC representation to European and international organizations.

In the evening of February 27, Metropolitan Onufriy, assisted by Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro

and the Littoral, celebrated vespers at the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Podgorica. After the service, there was a procession with the cross. After the procession, a festive concert took place at the cathedral square.

Metropolitan Onufriy addressed himself to the Montenegrin faithful with words of greeting, saying, "We have brought over here from Amman a blessing of Patriarch Theophilos, Patriarch Kirill and other Primates of Orthodox Churches. I have also brought a blessing of the holy Prince Vladimir, our baptizer and illuminator, and a blessing of the Venerable Fathers of the Kiev Caves, who rest in holy relics in caves and intercede for the Ukrainian people and for all those who love Christ and want to be with Him.

"We are Slavs bred in the holy Orthodox faith, which has formed both our spiritual mode and our culture. Today we are speaking much about what should unite us in order to defeat the evil of the world, but it is possible to unite only around Christ. Those who are with Christ cannot be defeated by any evil".

On February 28, the delegation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church led by Metropolitan Onufriy venerated the shrines of the Tsetin Monastery – the incorruptible relics of St. Peter of Tsetin and the right hand of St. John the holy Forerunner and Baptizer of the Lord.

Metropolitan Amfilohije awarded His Beatitude Onufriy the Order of St. Peter II Njegoš "in recognition of his services for the defence of the Orthodox faith".

On the same day, Metropolitan Onufriy together with Metropolitan Amfilohije gave at Podgorica a press conference for Montenegrin and Ukrainian mass media.

In the course of the briefing, Metropolitan Onufriy emphasized that in recent times the developments in the Orthodox Churches in Ukraine and Montenegro have been in the centre of attention throughout the Orthodox world.

"We perfectly understand the present situation of your Holy Church because our Church, too, experienced and partly continues to experience something similar. In church history, there were both times of peaceful development and times of martyrdom and confession. However, the Lord has always been with His people and has never left His Church. We are confident that the Lord will not abandon His Church now either and help her in her trials in both Montenegro and Ukraine".

His Beatitude thanked the Serbian Orthodox Church for its support for the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, saying, "In spite of the trials experienced by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in recent years, it has not only held out, not only remained the largest Church in Ukraine, but it has become even stronger. Today our Church numbers 53 dioceses, nearly 12300 parishes, 250 monasteries. Serving in the fold of

the Ukrainian Church are over 100 hierarchs, 12400 clergy 4600 monastics who take pastoral care of multimillion Ukrainian flock.

“It has often happened that politicians yield to the temptation to interfere in church life and use the Church in their interests. Politicians want to rule the Church but the Church should not yield to these attempts. The Church cannot change to please human demands. We are aware that the Church is uncomfortable for a sinful man who is accustomed to live according to his passions. However, it is not the Church that should change and play the way of the sinful human nature, but it is man himself who should change and try to become better, purer and seek to become like Christ”.

The Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church also addressed the Orthodox Montenegrins, “Dear Eminences, brothers and sisters, all the faithful of the Holy land of Montenegro! We are pleasantly surprised by your numerous processions with the cross, as they have encompassed your land to strengthen your spirituality and protect your shrines. We are pleased by your vigil in the faith, your unity in the Orthodox faith. For us, Orthodox Ukrainians, your example is inspiring. We are with you today not only to share the joy of the feast but also to reassert the truth of the biblical words, ‘A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle’ (Pr. 18:19).

In the evening, Metropolitan Onufriy and his delegation, joined by Metropolitan Amfilohije, visited the Ostrog monastery in Montenegro to venerate the relics of St. Basil of Ostrog.

On February 29, Metropolitan Onufriy led the celebrations devoted to the commemoration day of St. Simeon the Myrrh-Flowing and the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diocese of Zeta, now the Metropolis of Montenegro and the Littoral.

During the service, a prayer was lifted up for peace in Ukraine and Montenegro.

After the Cherubic Hymn, Metropolitan Onufriy administered a hierarchal consecration.

After the liturgy, there was a procession with the cross along Podgorica streets.

Before the procession, Metropolitan Onufriy addressed the faithful in the cathedral square. He said in particular, “Today we are lifting up our heartfelt prayers for the cessation of disorders in Montenegro and also for peace in Ukraine. We are ardently praying to God, to His Most Holy Mother and to all the saints that the evil hearts may be softened and peace and well-being may come as soon as possible to our sister Churches.

“Sharing with you the joy of the great feast, I wish that, through the intercession of St. Simeon the Myrrh-

Flowing the Lord may open His eyes day and night (cf. 3 Kings 8:29) towards your God-loving people. May, through the intercession of these great men of God, your country be filled *with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God* (Phil. 1:11).

*With reference to the UOC Information-Education Department*

*DECR Communication Service*

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