

BISHOP SHARES GRANDEUR OF ANCIENT CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

WARNS OF THREATS TO PRESERVATION

by Milos Rastovic

PITTSBURGH, PA - Kosovo and Metohija are home to some of the most majestic ornaments of early Christianity—many going back more than eight centuries, and those irreplaceable treasures are in danger. His Grace Bishop MAXIM wants to change that.

On June 11, 2015, the Serb National Federation in cooperation with the Yugoslav Room Committee, had the honor to sponsor His Grace's lecture "Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija" in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. Students, clergy, educators, and concerned and curious community members crowded into the room as I introduced the subject of the lecture and the presenter His Grace Bishop MAXIM of the Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America.

His Grace presented the book "Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija: The Historical and Spiritual Heartland of the Serbian People." The book includes over 750 vivid photographs and other depictions of Serbian monasteries, churches, frescoes, icons, and historical figures in Kosovo and Metohija which are in grave danger of being damaged or destroyed. His Grace emphasized the massive cooperative effort to create and preserve the region's material and spiritual culture put forth by of all the contributors and the publishers, namely the Sebastian Press – The Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America with co-publishers: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade; Faculty of Orthodox Theology – University of Belgrade; BLAGO Fund; Serbica Americana; and Interklima-grafika, Vrnjci. In addition to the brilliant photographs and other artwork, the book includes 1,000 pages of history detailing the deep Christian heritage in this small region.



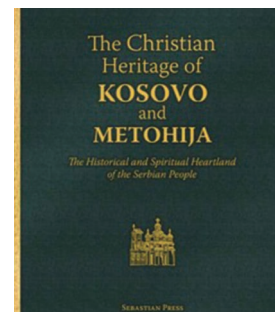
"The book conveys a wealth of information and provides valuable new insights into the telling testimony of richness of Serbian culture in its southernmost province," stated His Grace. Many expert historians, theologians, artists, and journalists such as Gojko Subotic, Alex Dragnich, Sima M. Cirkovic, Arthur Evans, Rebecca West, Atanasije Jevtic, Dusan T. Batakovic, Dimitrije Djordjevic, Radovan Samardzic, and Dimitrije Bogdanovic contributed to the book and the end result is truly a collaborative effort of their hard work. His Grace went on to say that their original texts that accompany the photos "demonstrate that Serbia's architectural and art monuments in Kosovo rank among the finest achievements of medieval Europe." This book gives us a number of historical facts about historical and Christian identity of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija. In this sense, the book is a monument of Kosovo and Metohija in scientific, cultural, artistic and historical sense of its long history of more than eight centuries.

His Grace gave a review of Christian presence in Kosovo and Metohija from the beginning: "During the early Middle Ages Kosovo was a part of the Serbian empire. It was Christian, and many churches and monasteries were built in the area; their walls were richly decorated with precious frescoes. From the 15th century until World War I, Kosovo was controlled by the Muslim Ottoman Empire and later (after 1912 – 1918) it became a part of Serbia and Yugoslavia... Historically speaking, the enduring monuments in the lands known as Serbia sacra are the result of the farsighted need of the autonomous Christian Church and Serbian state to master human destiny's ephemerality with a sense of perpetuity."

All chapters in the book investigate Christian heritage of Kosovo and Metohija in different ways from spiritual endowments and aesthetic insignia of Kosovo and Metohija to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Kosovo Covenant, the history after the battle, and translations of many historical documents.

His Grace stressed that "this book on Serbia's Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija, its heartland in medieval times and through Ottoman domination, is intended to introduce to a wide reading public the oldest and richest treasury of Serbian medieval history and culture." The book starts with the words of Patriarch +Pavle (1914 – 2009): "For centuries the territory of the Ras-Prizren Diocese has been the center of our national and ecclesial life. It has remained so even after all the destruction by conquerors, for on it are found remnants of the most important accomplishments of Serbian Church architecture, art, and literature."

More information is available on the website of the Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America: <http://www.westsrbdio.org/>



1 Introduction, *The Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija*, Sebastian Press, Los Angeles, 2015, pg. 15-18.
2 Foreword, *The Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija*, Sebastian Press, Los Angeles, 2015, page 13.

WE'VE MOVED

The SNF is now located at 615 Iron City Drive, Suite 302, Pittsburgh, PA 15205. In addition to more space and free parking, the bonus is the view. These are the new "neighbors" of the SNF Home Office.

