

*"Even if I do speak for myself, what I say is true! I know where I came from and where I am going. But you don't know where I am from or where I am going. You judge in the same way that everyone else does, but I don't judge anyone. If I did judge, I would judge accurately, because I would not be doing it alone. The Father who sent me is here with me."(According to John, Chapter 8).*

## National Prayer Breakfast 2020 Protecting Christianity



From left are Rev. Vasilije Vranic, St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church in Washington, D.C.; Milan Visnick and John Buffalini, President and Treasurer of the St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church in Washington, D.C.; Milos Rastovic, Cultural Outreach Coordinator of the SNF; Father Mihajlo Backovic and His Grace Bishop METODIJE of Diokleia; Dane A. Medich, President of the SNF; and Mark Rasevic, Vice-President of the Church Board of the St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church in Washington, D.C.



Milos Rastovic, left, with His Grace Bishop METODIJE from Montenegro, and SNF President Dane A. Medich

Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Aleksandar and Crown Princess Katherine, center, with SNF President Dane Medich, left, and Milos Rastovic, SNF Cultural Outreach Coordinator.



Milos Rastovic with. Bojan Vujic, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United States

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MERRILLVILLE, IN — In an historic show of support and solidarity, hundreds of people marched the four miles from St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church to St. Elijah Serbian Orthodox Cathedral on Sunday, February 16. The demonstration was for the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro where church leaders fear a new law could strip the Serbian Orthodox Church of its holy sites, shrines and relics.

The faithful came from throughout the area to worship together at St. Sava's. Following Liturgy, they carried banners saying, "We're not giving up our holy sites" as they proceeded through the town to St. Elijah.

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## HISTORIC MARCH SUPPORTING OUR CHURCH



# National Prayer Breakfast 2020 Protecting Christianity

by Milos Rastovic

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The National Prayer Breakfast attempts to strengthen the relationships and provide a more profound understanding through love of God. People can better understand each other if they nurture a deeper connection, trust, and confidence among them.

On February 6 as guests of Mike Doyle, U.S. Representative of 18th District of Pennsylvania, Dane Medich, President of the Serb National Federation, and Milos Rastovic, Cultural Outreach Coordinator, were honored to attend the 68th Annual National Prayer Breakfast at the International Ballroom in the Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. On the first Thursday in February each year, members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives breakfast groups organize the National Prayer Breakfast to reaffirm their faith in God and encourage the power of prayer with others throughout the world. This year there were more than 3,000 present from the United States and over 130 countries around the globe. Clergy, missionaries, businessmen, politicians, scientists, artists, athletes, teachers,

students, doctors, and other professionals gather together to build and develop friendship and deepen their love for God, which can strengthen ties among nations and promote peace among them.

From the first National Prayer Breakfast in 1953, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower was present, American presidents have participated in the National Prayer Breakfast. This year, President Donald J. Trump appeared for the fourth time along with other representatives of the U.S. Administration such as Vice-President Mike Pence. On behalf of the Republic of Serbia and Republic of Srpska, Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Alexander and Crown Princess Katherine Karadjordjevic, Zeljka Cvijanovic, President of the Republic of Srpska, and His Excellency Bojan Vujic, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United States among others were present. I enjoyed and was honored to pray at the table with Ambassador Vujic, H.E. Martin Weiss, Ambassador of Austria to the United States, H.E. Mr. Piotr Wilczek, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the United States, and other distinguished guests.

After a warm welcome message from

honorary Co-Chairs John Moolenaar and Thomas Suozzi, U.S. Congressmen from Michigan and New York, we prayed to strengthen our ties with friends, neighbors, and nations. Throughout the hall, there was a collective feeling of tranquility of spirit and a shared spiritual voice for peace and understanding among people. During prayer and in a later conversation, we found joint commitments to the ultimate values of goodness and caring for one another. During the breakfast, the music was performed by Cece Winans.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Arthur C. Brooks, Professor at Harvard Kennedy School and Business School, highlighted the crisis which is facing our nation, and that is the "crisis of contempt – the polarization that is tearing our society apart... I believe that within this crisis resides the best opportunity we have ever had, as people of faith, to lift our nations up and bring them together." Lord and Savior Jesus said: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in Heaven" (Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 5, verse 43 – 45). He stressed that we should "Make a commitment to another person to reject contempt... I am calling each one of you to be missionaries for love in the face of contempt."

President Trump welcomed the religious believers, foreign dignitaries, and other guests at the 68th National Prayer Breakfast with the words that we "come together as one nation, blessed to live in freedom and grateful to worship in

peace." He stressed that "we know that our nation is stronger, our future is brighter, and our joy is greater when we turn to God and ask him to shed his grace on our lives... In everything we do, we are creating a culture that protects freedom, and that includes religious freedom... 'In America, we celebrate faith, we cherish religion, we lift our voices in prayer, and we raise our sights to the Glory of God'... Today we proudly proclaim that faith is alive and well and thriving in America. And we're going to keep it that way. Nobody will have it changed. It won't happen... Something which wasn't done nearly enough — I could almost say wasn't done at all — we are standing up for persecuted Christians and religious minorities all around the world like nobody has ever done... All of us here today reaffirm these timeless truths: Faith keeps us free. Prayer makes us strong. And God alone is the author of life and the giver of grace... Religion in this country and religion all over the world — certain religions in particular — are under siege. We won't let that happen. We are going to protect our religions. We are going to protect Christianity." After these words, there was applause with the hope that these words one day will come true in defending and protecting Serbian Orthodox Christians and their temples in Kosovo and Metohija, and Montenegro.

The closing prayer was made by the Honorable John Lewis, U.S. Representative from Georgia.


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Aleksandar Cuic, Partner



If our life is based on the love of God and care for each other, our spirit will achieve the highest moral values of honesty, sincerity, and goodness. This commitment can be a great deed in our and others' lives. One of the great leaders, Thomas Jefferson (1743 – 1826), Statesman, Philosopher, Diplomat, and Founding Father of the United States, expressed the necessity of God with the following words:

"I hold the precepts of Jesus, as delivered by himself, to be the most pure, benevolent, and sublime which have ever been preached to man."

After the National Prayer Breakfast, Dane A. Medich, and Milos Rastovic met with His Grace Bishop METODIJE of Diokleia from Montenegro at the St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church, Washington, D.C. H.G. Bishop METODIJE introduced us with a current status of the Serbian Orthodox Church, new law on religious freedom in Montenegro, and his personal experience when the police beat him during the litija. In a conversation with H.G. Bishop METODIJE, Fr. Mihajlo Backovic along with Rev. Vasilije Vranic and Church Board Members of the St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church, Milan Visnick, Mark Rasevic, and John Buffalini, it was discussed models of helping and supporting to the Serbian Orthodox Church in fraternal Montenegro.

They also had a meeting with Kenneth J. Depew, Legislative Assistant for National Security and Foreign Affairs at the Office of Representative Dan Crenshaw from Texas, at the United States Congress. In a productive conversation, we discussed issues about Serbian Cultural Heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, and religious freedom in Montenegro.

## REFLECTIVE REMARKS FROM THE PRESIDENT

by SNF President Dane Medich

Milos and I attended the Prayer Breakfast and what a joy this event was - to mix politics and religion in a crowd of over 3,000 people representing over 120 countries in a common spirit, lifting our requests in prayer to God in unity. It was a blessing that I wish everyone could experience.

This event is bipartisan. Each member of Congress had a duty to pray for their representative group, from the poor and persecuted to the world and national leaders affecting their everyday lives. It was very moving. The keynote speaker Arthur Brooks, whose presentation was on the love of God, personally touched me. He covered all aspects of God's love. It was followed by President Donald J. Trump's most interesting remarks.

My personal prayer for this event was on behalf of the struggle of our Serbian people and our Orthodox churches and holy sites in Montenegro. Just days before this Breakfast, 250,000 Serbs and friends of Serbs participated in a peaceful protest march to send a message to the government of Montenegro against its actions to take away our churches and property there. Other marches took place throughout the world around this same time.

God soon answered our prayers. Our member John Buffalini, who lives in Washington, notified us that His Grace Bishop Metodije of Montenegro was in the nation's capitol staying with Father Vasilije Vranic of St. Luke's Serbian Orthodox Church. This pleasant surprise enabled us to arrange an impromptu meeting with His Grace at which we were able to spend at least three hours addressing the situation in Montenegro and how the SNF can use its platform to add to a voice requesting help.

It was an exceptionable and memorable day, seeing the President of the United States in the morning and His Grace Bishop Metodije in the afternoon. I am sure my role as president of the SNF has much in store, but this was an amazing experience. I truly pray for our Serbian people and our Savez. I put all of this in God's hands. This is one of those times that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ revealed himself through answered prayers.

Milos and I experienced God's love on this day. May we all continue to pray for our Serbian Orthodox Churches in Montenegro, that the government does not confiscate their freedom, and we continue to pray for all of our Serbian Orthodox faithful and SNF members everywhere.

## OPEN LETTER TO ST. JUDE DONORS

*A Huge thank you to our friends  
of St Jude's Children's Hospital patients*

On behalf of Father Aleksandar Vujkovic and Nina Gavric, we would like to extend our sincere heartfelt gratitude to each of you who donated for our five Serbian children from our homeland currently receiving cancer treatments in Memphis, Tennessee. Fr. Aleks from Sveta Petka Serbian Orthodox Church in Nashville, TN, Nina and myself (both from Northwest Indiana) asked for donations from our local churches, Kolo Sestaras, choirs and others, by getting the appeal out with the help of Sandi Radoja and her daughter-in-law Branka Radoja, through the American Srbobran back in October and November 2019. Our goal was to communicate this as fast as we could to help inform our people of the situation with these Serbian children in need who have cancer. The goal was to help these children and their parents in any way we could.

I personally would like to thank all of the clergy who forwarded my message through email to their parishioners, made announcements at the end of Liturgy and through their weekly bulletins on Sundays. This all made a tremendous difference in the outcome of the aid to these families. Each and every one of you helped a child with cancer and their families. This is how we make a difference with our Serbian people, showing love, compassion, and with our never-ending prayers.

These children from Serbia were brought to St Jude's for cancer care that is free to them. They were given apartments to live in by Target house, who also gave them \$125 a week for food. The emotional, physical, financial and spiritual strain is truly indescribable for these parents. It saddens us all that any child should have cancer and their parents should have to live through this ordeal.

These families will never know our names, our faces, nor where we are from, but they will feel our love, compassion and the devotion in our hearts as every donation made a difference to them. Large or small, the love and help came from the unselfish compassionate hearts of our Serbian people. We Serbian people...when we are faced with difficult times come together with open minds and hearts to divide the pain and multiply the help. Your generous donations and prayers have helped our effort.

Nina and I had no expectations of what we could gather for these children, we simply thought if we could raise a little bit of support it would ease the burden for them to buy coats, boots gloves, etc., for winter. With the mercy of God and all of your contributions, as of February 12, 2020 we were able to send those families \$39,755.00. We are overjoyed with this unexpected amount.

What a blessing it was for me to walk out to my mailbox and find your letters, cards and donations every day and then send those checks to the church and the receipts to you. This was an honor for me to do. I am writing to you all to express my deepest thanks. Generous gifts from donors like you provide the financial and moral support needed for these families. With your faithful contributions, you've demonstrated your deep commitment to our Serbian children. As a first generation American-born Serbian mother who never wavered from her Orthodox faith, and as a registered nurse for 33 years who never walked away from that either, I realize I have been blessed with both healthy children and a career that has allowed me the privilege to care for sick patients, many like these children. I know the pain of desperately trying to help someone you love and I know the anguish of being a registered nurse and not being able to help the parent or the child change this outcome. This completely changes one's perspective on life.

When we walk a little while in their shoes, we sure do appreciate what we have. I remind myself every single day of how blessed I am. This makes me want to help others even more. I hope in some small way these donations help these families to continue to rely on God, help them feel the blessings upon them even though they feel defeated many days with this cancer, and know there are so many of us out there who want to help them as much as we can no matter what else is going on in our personal lives.

I thank you and I ask you all to keep these children and their families in your prayers. May God bless you all with health and happiness always. I truly hope you can feel our deep gratitude for all you have done. Your compassionate hearts will never be forgotten.

Ziveli na mnoga ja ljeta.

--Mileva Gligic-Savich

## COMING EVENTS CALENDAR

**A.S.C. BLARNEY BASH**  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
March 6

**LIFELINE CHARITY GOLF**  
Seminole, Florida  
March 7

**HOLY TRINITY FISH FRY  
FRIDAYS @ ASC**  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
Through April 10

**ST. NICHOLAS  
TAMBURITZANS CONCERT**  
Monroeville, Pennsylvania  
April 25th

**COCKTAILS,  
CABBAGE & COMEDY**  
Merrillville, Indiana  
May 2

**ST. CONSTANTINE  
& HELEN 125TH**  
Galveston, Texas  
June 13 - 14