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For immediate release

Orthodox seminary in Kosovo to reopen, humanitarian relief operation announced

PRIZREN KOSOVO, 20 October 2011-- Ss. Cyril & Methodius Serbian Orthodox Theological Seminary in Prizren, destroyed during the war in Kosovo, is being reconstructed and will be reopened, the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Raska-Prizren and Kosovo-Metohija announced today.

Before the war in Kosovo, Prizren was known as one of the exemplary multiethnic cities in the province of Kosovo. Albanians, Serbs, Turks and Catholics lived together in tolerance and mutual respect. Prizren's beautiful churches, mosques and other cultural monuments were the pride of all its citizens.

Prior to the war, the seminary had undergone a renovation and had an enrollment of 130 students.

Some 153 Serbian Orthodox Churches and Monasteries have been destroyed in Kosovo/Metohija since 1998 and only three have been repaired. Seeking protection from Albanian gangs and paramilitaries which began raiding the city of Prizren, more than a thousand Serbs, Catholics, ethnic Turks and Albanians found refuge within the walls of the severely damage seminary since June 1999 – the end of the war in Kosovo.

During the announcement of the seminary's reopening, the diocese indicated that there are currently 11 students enrolled, and the diocese anticipates 50 seminarians.

His Grace, Bishop Teodosije of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese, will serve as Dean of the seminary with the Hieromonk Andreij, a monk from Decani Monastery, as Vice Dean.

Archimandrite Nektarios Serfes, President of the Decani Monastery Relief Fund, a non-profit organization committed to rebuilding Kosovo, applauded the news from the organization's United States headquarters in Boise, Idaho.

"Glory to God for the progress we are seeing in Kosovo. The announcement of re-opening of the seminary is an answer to our prayers and will be a tremendous blessing to the Orthodox faithful," Serfes said.



The Decani Monastery Relief Fund solicits financial contributions worldwide to support its work in Kosovo where resident Orthodox Christian monks distribute the funds directly for the benefit of Serbian individuals and families living in the war-ravaged communities of Kosovo-Metohija.

The fund supports six soup kitchens, one bakery, assists in providing daily lunches to four schools as well as shoes and clothing for youth. Additionally, the fund provides 61 scholarships to the University of Northern Kosovo as well as scholarship assistance for Serbian youth attending Boise State University, and Hellenic College/Holy Cross Orthodox Theological Seminary.

In celebration of the announcement of the seminary's re-opening, Father Nektarios and Decani Monastery Relief Fund Board Member, J. Basil Dannebohm will make a humanitarian relief visit to the region in February 2012.

"The days ahead of us are going to be a great struggle for so many in Kosovo/Metohija. Winter is fast approaching and many will freeze within their homes, churches, monasteries, and local schools if they do not have firewood. Food will also be difficult to obtain. We have a humanitarian crisis in the region and our organization is ready to be on the ground providing assistance, Serfes said.

On behalf of the fund, Serfes and Dannebohm hope to raise \$25,000 before their trip which will be distributed among the "poorest of the poor."

Donations will provide humanitarian aid to refugee centers, provide for the special needs of the elderly, pay electricity bills, provide firewood, finance necessary medical and surgical procedures, help to purchase farm equipment and livestock and to assist in the rebuilding of the seminary, monasteries and churches in the region.

"During our visit to the region we will spend time praying with His Holiness, Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, His Grace, Bishop Teodosije and the monks of Decani Monastery. We will also be visiting soup kitchens, schools, orphanages, the Serbian University Northern Kosovo, monasteries, the seminary and homes of families in need of humanitarian assistance from our organization," J. Basil Dannebohm said.

"We have a lot of work ahead of us before the work can begin," Dannebohm continued, "\$25,000 is a lot of money to raise before February but Father Nektarios and I are confident, through God's goodness we will raise the essential funds to make a meaningful difference to Kosovo."

During the visit, Father Serfes and Mr. Dannebohm will also be conducting lectures at the seminary.

Donations to the Decani Monastery Relief Fund can be made by mail to: 2618 West Bannock Street, Boise, ID 83702 or online at www.decanifund.org/donate.

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