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## MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI TO HIS HOLINESS IRINEJ, NEWLY-ELECTED PATRIARCH OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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*To His Holiness Irinej  
Archbishop of Peč  
Metropolitan of Belgrade Karlovci  
Patriarch of Serbia*

I was glad to learn of your election as Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church and I pray that the Lord may grant you abundant gifts of grace and wisdom for the fulfilment of your high responsibilities in the service of the Church and the people entrusted to you.

You succeed Patriarch Pavle, our brother of happy memory, who was a Pastor both fervent and esteemed, and who bequeathed to you a spiritual inheritance that is rich and profound. As a great pastor and spiritual father, he effectively guided the Church and maintained its unity in the face of many challenges. I feel bound to express my appreciation of his example of fidelity to the Lord and of his many gestures of openness towards the Catholic Church.

I therefore pray that the Lord will grant Your Holiness the inner strength to consolidate the unity and spiritual growth of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as to build up the fraternal bonds with other Churches and ecclesial communities. Let me assure you of the closeness of the Catholic Church and of her commitment to the promotion of fraternal relations and theological dialogue, in order that those obstacles which still impede full communion between us may be overcome. May the Lord bless our common efforts in this regard, so that the disciples of Christ may again be united witnesses before the whole world to his salvific love.

From the Vatican, 22 January 2010

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

