Vidovdan

Faith and Heritage

What is Vidovdan?

Vidovdan is observed every year on June 28 (old calendar June 15). The Serbian Orthodox Church designates it as the memorial day to Saint Prince Lazar and the Serbian holy martyrs who fell during the Battle of Kosovo on June 28,1389 against the Ottoman Empire.

The most famous pre-battle scene is "Kneževa Večera" (The Prince's Supper), where Prince Lazar addresses his knights.

According to epic poetry and Serbian Orthodox tradition, Prince Lazar was given a choice by an angel on the eve of the battle: to win an earthly, temporary empire or to lose and inherit an eternal, heavenly kingdom. He and his warriors chose martyrdom and spiritual salvation over submission, elevating the defeat into a sacred sacrifice

What Led Up to the Battle of Kosovo

The Battle of Kosovo in 1389 resulted from decades of relentless expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Balkans.

1371 The Collapse of the Serbian Empire: Following the death of Emperor Stefan Dušan, the Serbian Empire fragmented into smaller, competing princedoms. The Ottomans, under the Ottoman leader, Marad, defeated the Serbian nobility at the Battle of Maritsa in 1371.

Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović (1329–1389) was a medieval Serbian ruler who united and governed "Moravian Serbia," the most powerful state to emerge from the collapse of the Serbian Empire after the defeat at the Battle of Maritsa.

However, the Turks continued their conquest of the Balkans and in 1389 met Prince Lazar and the Serb and the allied Christian army on Kosovo Polje.

On the Battlefield

The two armies were somewhat evenly matched. The Serbian and allied Christian forces are estimated to have numbered between 15,000 and 30,000 men, while the Ottoman forces numbered between 27,000-40,000 men.

Serbian losses: Some historical records claim that upward of 15,000 to 17,000 Serbian and allied men were killed. Nearly the entire generation of Serbian nobility was wiped out.

Ottoman Losses: Estimates range from 10,000 to 30,000 dead.

Most Notable: Both Prince Lazar and Sultan Murad were killed at the Battle of Kosovo. Many records claim that Prince Lazar was captured and executed. In tradition, Sultan Murad is said to have been killed by Miloš Obilić, a Serbian nobleman, close advisor, and Prince Lazar's son-in-law, who was captured and immediately executed.

Kosovo Polje

This is a view of the battlefield

Our Spiritual Heritage

Kosovo and Metohija were the spiritual and political heart of medieval Serbia. Records indicate that there were over 1,000 monasteries, churches, and religious estates built there during the medieval era. The oldest known Christian church is Ulpiana Basilica. It dates from the 4th–5th Century. It was located near the ancient Roman city of Ulpiana (near Pristina).

Ulpiana Church

One of the largest early Christian basilicas in the Balkans, dating back to 545 AD under Emperor Justinian I.

Monasteries and Churches in Kosovo And Metohija Then and Now

Many monasteries and churches date in Kosovo and Metohija back to the Nemanjić dynasty in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Four sites, vitally important to the Serbian spiritual and cultural heritage are collectively designated as UNESCO heritage sites because of their immense religious, historical and artistic value.

They are: Visoki Dečani, Patriarchate of Peć, Gračanica, and Holy Virgin of Ljeviš.

Visoki Dečani Monastery

The Visoki Dečani Monastery was built between 1327 and 1335 by the Serbian King Stefan Uroš III Dečanski. The original initiative for this monastery can be traced directly back to Saint Sava.

Patriarchate of Peć

This monastery consists of 4 churches, dating from the mid-13th century to the early 14th century.

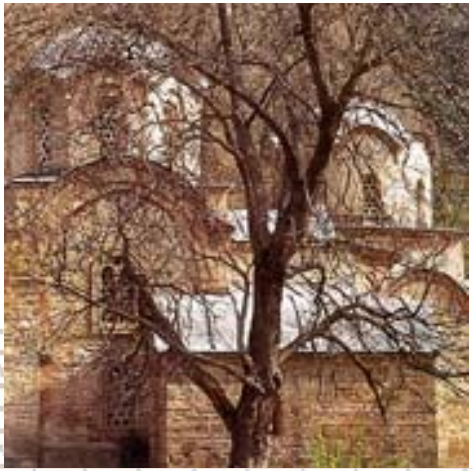
All newly elected Serbian Orthodox Patriarchs are enthroned at the Patriarchy of Peć. This follows the Patriarch's initial installation at the Cathedral Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Belgrade.

The Serbian Orthodox Patriarch holds the title of Archbishop of Peć due to the Patriarchy of Peć's status as the Church's historic spiritual center.

Church of the Holy Apostles 1250

Church of St. Demetrius 1320

The miraculous Peć Icon of the Mother of God is one of the most revered treasures of the Serbian Orthodox Church as a protector of the faithful.



Church of St. Nicholas 1330

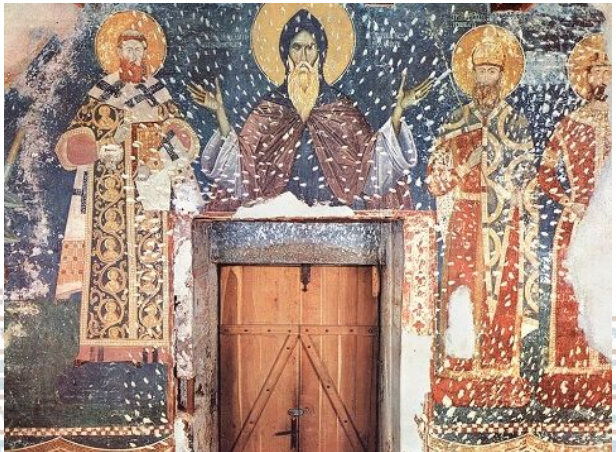
The Church of the Virgin Hodegitria 1330

Gračanica Monastery

It is a 14th-century endowment of King Milutin. It is dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is one of the most beautiful examples of Serbian medieval architecture.

Icon depicting King Milutin

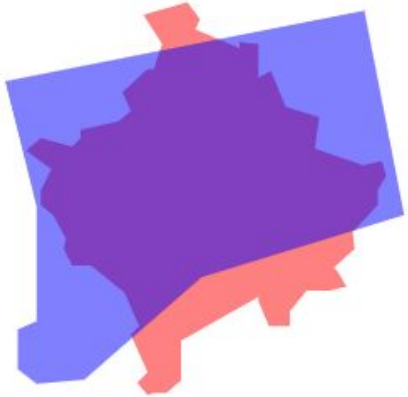
Holy Virgin of Ljeviš



Now also a UNESCO protected church, Holy Virgin of Ljeviš was built between 1306 and 1309 by revered Serbian King Stefan Uroš II Milutin. It stands as a profound symbol of the Nemanjić dynasty, which solidified Orthodox Christianity as the state religion and cultural identity of the Serbian people

Built on the ruins of an 11th century Byzantine church, it is renowned for its distinctive five-dome architecture. The icons, also date from the 14th-century and feature Serbian historical and religious figures such as Saint Sava and his father, Stefan Nemanja who, is now revered as Saint Simeon. These icons create an irreplaceable visual record of the Church's roots.

How Big is Kosovo?



Connecticut (US) is **1.32 times** as big as Kosovo

Delaware (US) is **0.47 times** as big as Kosovo

Serbia is **8.11 times** as big as Kosovo

Israel is **1.91 times** as big as Kosovo

Kosovo Polje Today

Current Day

There are currently 156 functioning Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija.

Glory be to God!