

Zvornik, December 14th 2017

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANS-CATHOLICS OF THE PARISH ZVORNIK-SREBRENICA

A lot of water, blood and tears had flown down the Drina river in more than 70 years and nobody stopped to think why Zvornik has not got its own bell tower, church and monastery after which its name was given.

And who knows for how long the situation would stay the same if there weren't for the priests, given this little herd in charge, which have been honestly praying for spiritual and material renovation of the parish Zvornik -Srebrenica

In a special way, the prayer was strengthened after the arrival of the priest, pater Joso Oršolić, in 2016. Immediately after the arrival, he started holy masses on Sundays and saint days in Srebrenica, where there is a small chapel built in 1991 in the name of St. Mary as a memorial to 700th birthday of the Franciscans' arrival to Srebrenica.

Not only did he start holy masses, but also praying rosary and other pieties for spiritual and material renovation of Zvornik, Bratunac, Srebrenica and the whole area of the middle Podrinje¹

And then, as the continuation of searching and appealing of previous parish priests, there came the revised letters for the reconstruction of the parish church in Zvornik and the local government's claims that there were over 100 Catholic believers in Zvornik, and over 200 of them in the whole area.

However, as all of this turned out to be nothing more than nodding the head and prolonged waiting for the place – location to be chosen, the parish priest decided to apply to the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons, supported in written by the Mayor of the municipality Zoran Stevanović.

To make a break from the infinite period of waiting, a working meeting of the Christians Catholics of the parish of Zvornik- Srebrenica was organised. His Eminence, Vinko Puljić, the cardinal, happily supported the initiative and joined us on the big event, this being his first visit to the parish of Zvornik-Srebrenica. Due to the fact that the parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus still does not have its own parish office or any space at its disposal, we did not have a holy mass. Under the watchful eyes of the media, the meeting took place in the House of Youth. Supportive, open-minded and in a good mood, the Mayor also came to the meeting and shared his wishes for the Catholics to get their praying space, like both Orthodox and Muslim believers have it there. Indeed, it is a real miracle that, after so many years, there is a living Church in Zvornik.

Several people kindly addressed our believers and the cardinal during the above-mentioned meeting of the Christians Catholics of the parish of Zvornik- Srebrenica, and some of them were Mr. Ivan Bandić, the consul of the Republic of Croatia in Tuzla and Mr. Ivan Jukić, a deputy of the Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Canton of Tuzla.

¹ the middle area of the river Drina's flow

Mister Rajko Avramović, the rector and the founder of the Zvornik Museum, in which the altar picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the patron of the town, is preserved, delivered a lecture about Zvornik throughout the history.

We checked the Mayor's promise, that the Catholics should get their space for prayer, taking a tour throughout the town visiting several places: the museum, the post office (previously the church), the park, as a possible location, and the location above the villa of Andraš, the place where the church of St. Mary and the Franciscan monastery stood until the end of the 17th century. Now there are only ground remains and a visible wall of the church crypt.

After sightseeing the town and looking for possible locations for the church, we went to the motel "Laguna" all together and, happy after the beautiful day and meeting, had our meal as a real community, hoping for better days and brighter future for a small herd, sustained after 70 years of hiding and prosecuting! We stay in hope that Zvornik will get its catholic bell tower!