



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0224

Sabato 16.03.2024

Pubblicazione: Immediata

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Messaggio del Santo Padre

*To His Eminence Yoan
Metropolitan of Varna and Veliki Preslav
Locum tenens of the Patriarchal Throne
Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church*

I learned with deep sorrow of the death of your beloved Patriarch, His Holiness Neofit, who was a great witness to the faith of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and I send heartfelt condolences to you, to the Holy Synod over which you preside, and to the entire Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness Neofit gave valued service to the Gospel and to dialogue, and despite his many sufferings remained a man of humility and joy, an example of a life consecrated to the Lord and his Church. Since the Body of Christ on earth – the Church – is the gateway into the life of the Risen Lord, so for the Christian faithful, death marks a passage from this world to Life Eternal. Thus, it is our prayerful hope that His Holiness Neofit is now living “where there is neither sorrow nor pain nor groaning” (*Trisagion for the dead*).

I assure Your Eminence, the Holy Synod and all the members of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church of a special

remembrance in my prayers, that Jesus Christ, who “rose from the dead, conquered death by his death and gave us life” (*Paschal Troparion*), may fill your hearts with consolation and peace.

FRANCIS

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 15 March 2024

[00473-EN.01] [Original text: English]

[B0224-XX.01]
