

In Memoriam: Very Rev. Dr. Mateja Matejic

Among his many achievements, one of the ones of which Professor Mateja Matejic was especially proud was the part he played in the establishment of the Hilandar Research Library and the Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies at The Ohio State University (Columbus, Ohio). The obituary that follows, written by his elder son Predrag Matejic, provides a detailed account of Father Matejic's accomplishments reflecting his wide and varied interests and talents.

Protopresbyter-stavrophor Dr. Mateja Matejic fell asleep in the Lord on 27 July 2018. A World War II refugee seminarian at Bitolj, Yugoslavia, he completed his seminary education in a Displaced Persons camp in Eboli, Italy. In 1949, at another camp in West Germany, he married Ljubica Nebrigic of Srem, his helpmate, brilliant partner, and gentle conscience, who preceded him in death on April 17, 2016.

The life of Father Matejic may best be summarized by his almost constant activity, a passion to work, to produce, to add something to the history, culture, memory, and faith of others. In addition, with his words and deeds, he inspired others to believe, to build, to create.

He was ordained as a Serbian Orthodox priest in a DP camp in 1951. He and his young family immigrated in 1956. As a priest, he founded two parishes and encouraged and physically contributed to the building of two places of worship: the Church of St. George in Monroe, Michigan (served 1956-1967), and the Church of St. Stevan of Dechani in Columbus, Ohio (served 1967-1990).

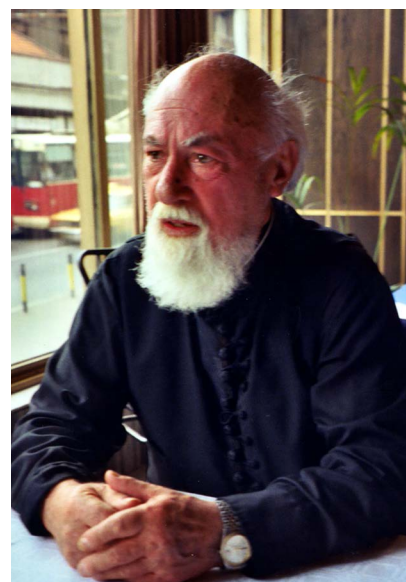
After his retirement in 1990, he voluntarily served as a temporary priest in Naples (Florida), Kansas City (Kansas), Akron, Norton and Barberton (Ohio), Hermitage, Midland and Youngwood (Pennsylvania), and Seattle (Washington), where he is credited with helping inspire them to establish their first St. Sava parish church. Father Matejic continued to volunteer as long as he was able. He also taught and served as Dean of the Serbian Orthodox School of Theology at the St. Sava Monastery in Libertyville, Illinois.

Dr. Matejic published original works on theology and translations of early Christian texts. He also discovered and published unknown works of the medieval Serbian Church and wrote on the history of Orthodoxy. He was especially committed to children's education and wrote religious poems as well as plays about Serbian saints, suitable for younger children.

In addition to his seminary education, Professor Matejic attained a BA in 1963 (Wayne State University) and a PhD in 1967 (University of Michigan). He taught at Case Western Reserve 1967-1968, and then in the Department of Slavic and East European Literatures and Languages at Ohio State until his retirement in 1989. His areas of specialization were diverse, but he was especially known for his lectures on Dostoevsky, Old Russian and South Slavic literatures.

Father Matejic was the co-founder and first editor (1967-1974) of *The Path of Orthodoxy / Staza Pravoslavlja*, which began as a dual-language newspaper of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of the Eastern U.S. and Canada and is now an official publication of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America. In 1976, he established and for 20 years ran a small publishing company, "Kosovo," which published books of interest to the Serbian and Eastern Orthodox communities in North America.

In 1969, as a professor at OSU he helped found and became the first director of the Hilandar Research Project, an undertaking to microfilm the medieval Slavic manuscripts of the Serbian monastery, Hilandar, on Mount Athos (Greece), thereby making their content more widely accessible and encouraging research in medieval Slavic studies. Under his direction, in time he helped found and establish at OSU both a special collection, the Hilandar Research Library, and a small research center, the Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies with its "Hilandar" Endowment.



*Professor Mateja Matejic
5th International Hilandar Conference
Belgrade, Yugoslavia, September 2002
(Photo by M.A. Johnson)*

Dr. Matejic had a gift for languages and was fluent in five, conversant in another three, and read six others. He was prolific as a lecturer and author. Well known as a theologian and scholar, he travelled frequently and made presentations in 23 different countries. He was the author of 49 monographs and reference works, and over 500 articles and literary reviews, many of them for *World Literature Today* (1976-1981). His scholarly publications, especially descriptions of Slavic medieval manuscripts, are consulted and cited regularly.

His creativity also extended to poetry and literature. In fact, his first works were published at age 18 in 1942. Many of his published works are books of poems, short stories, and memoirs, in Serbian as well as English. Several poems were published in the camps. His poems, especially those inspired by Hilandar Monastery and its monks, have been published with and without attribution in several countries, especially Serbia. Some of his poems have been set to original music and performed in concerts.

Father Matejic received recognition and numerous awards, beginning with prestigious academic fellowships, including the Woodrow Wilson. Later, his research and scholarship were instrumental and led to receiving grants from the U.S. Information Agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council for Learned Societies, and several awards of The Ohio State University.

For his dedication to the Serbian Orthodox

Church, he was recognized as a “cross-bearer,” with the right to wear a pectoral cross, similar to those worn by bishops. In 2001, he received a Commendation and the highest award of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Order of St. Sava.

For his original poetry and literature in Serbian, the Union of Serbian Writers acknowledged him to be among the three best Serbian émigré authors of all time. In 1988, he was accepted into the Union of Serbian Writers, and in 1996, 2000,

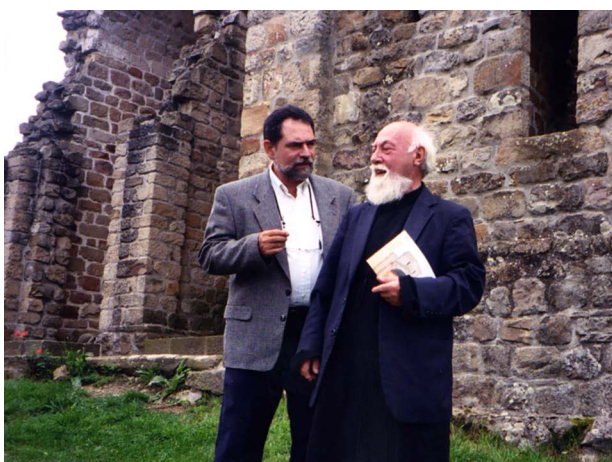


Funeral service at the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio August 1, 2018 (Photo by Tatyana Nestorova-Matejic)

and 2005, he received three separate literary awards. The city of Smederevo, which he left as a political refugee in 1944, acknowledged his many contributions by a lengthy entry in the “Smederevo Encyclopedia.” In 2001, he was awarded the key to the city of Smederevo.

For his contributions to scholarship and medieval studies, he was also recognized by Bulgaria. In 1978, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church awarded him the Order of St. Kliment. In 1984, he was inducted as a member of the Union of Bulgarian Writers. In 1988, he received the highest recognition of the University of Sofia, the “Blue Ribbon with Medal of St. Kliment.”

The Very Rev. Dr. Mateja Matejic was a classic example of a Renaissance man, “a person with many talents or areas of knowledge.” The breadth and depth of his interests, knowledge, and creativity were remarkable. Yet, without the steadfast support, patience, understanding, and sacrifice of his wife, Protopresbytera Ljubica, many of his travels, lectures, opportunities and accomplishments would not have been possible.



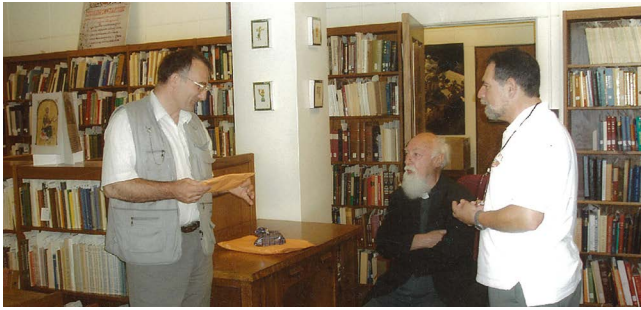
Predrag and Mateja Matejic at Đurđevi Stupovi (Raška, Serbia) September 13, 2002 (Photo by M.A. Johnson)

The Very Rev. Dr. Mateja Matejic is survived by: five children—Predrag (Tatyana), Milica (Frederick), Vida (Thomas), Nenad, Dragana (Milan); 12 grandchildren—Nenad (Tina), Svetoslav (Sarah), Angela (Matt), Anjalyn (Patrick), Zachary, Emily (Doug), Konstantin, Kara, Alex (Lauren), Thomas, Milan, Aleks; and nine great-grandchildren—Ethan, Sam, Eli, Sophia, Dimitur, Stella, Elisaveta, Violet, and Finn. He is also survived by his dear sister-in-law and friend Gordana Mirić, nephew Borislav Mirić, and many nieces and nephews in Serbia.

In lieu of flowers and in accordance with his wishes, donations may be made to support children and orphans in Serbia (lifeline—canada.org or <http://www.lifelineny.org>), Hilandar Monastery (athosfriends.org), or The Ohio State University’s Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies (rcmss.osu.edu and “Giving”).

Condolences

The family of Father Matejic received messages of condolences from all over the world. Below are a few excerpts from comments regarding Father's legacy of the Hilandar Research Library and the Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies, and photographs of Father Matejic with various guest researchers.



Mirosljub Joković (d. 2016) with Fr. Mateja and Predrag Matejic in the Hilandar Research Library, 225 "Main Library," August 2004

Sincere condolences upon the death of Father Mateja Matejic. If it can bring peace—his life is the life of a man chosen by God, and with his strength and spirit, and with the strength of his heart and character. Slavic studies, without his tremendous work, vision, and strength and delicacy, would be less developed. His accomplishments are the best possible memorial and recognition of his talents. It is difficult for you now, but he and his wife are now united in joy.

Adelina Angusheva, School of Arts, Languages & Cultures, University of Manchester, England, United Kingdom



Predrag and Mateja Matejic with Slobodan Mileusnić (d. 2005) in the Hilandar Research Library, 225 "Main Library," March 26, 2002

It was very sad to read the news about your father, whom I had the chance to meet during MSSJ 2001 and to share with him an enriching talk during the 4th of July celebration at your place. [See photo at right.] Though it was a brief meeting, I keep a vivid memory of his kindness and the wisdom of his words. His memory will always remain in our minds and in our hearts, and especially his good deeds and his contributions to Medieval Slavic studies will stay forever. So please, accept my sincere condolences....

Enrique Santos Marinas, Department of Classics, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

Примите изразе мога најдубљег саучешћа поводом смрти Вашег поштованог оца Проте Матеје Матејића. Човек не може а да се и овом приликом не сети свега што је он са Вама учинио за "Chilandar Room" – данас великог, веома познатог и угледног научног Центра.

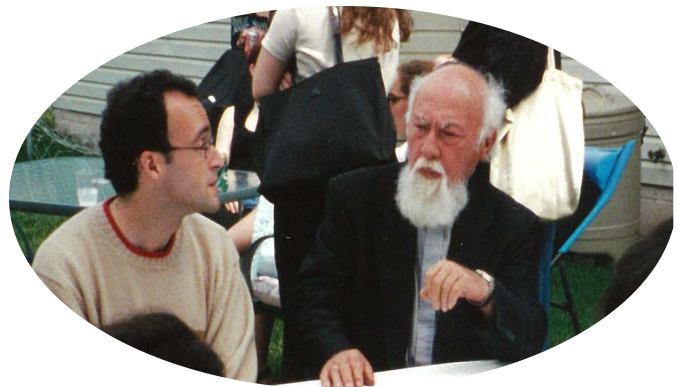
Mirjana Živojinović, Medieval Serbian History, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia



Svetlana Nikolova, Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre (Bulgaria), and Professor Mateja Matejic at the reception of the HRL exhibit, "Fruits of Devotion," November 4, 2011

I am so sorry. Accept our sincere condolences. He was most deserving—he did so much for the Hilandar Center ("Hilandar Room") and so many people throughout the world have benefitted from his work there. I marvelled and had the greatest respect for him—a man who was erudite, always knowing what he wanted and how to achieve it, focused, strong, unwilling to compromise his principles. A great figure. I bow before all that he achieved—for scholars, for scholarship, for people in general.

Svetlana Kujumdzhieva, Musicology, Institute of Arts, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria



In Memory of the Very Rev. Dr. Mateja Matejic

*Many donations have been made in memory of Father Matejic to several institutions.
We are grateful to the following for their support of the
Hilandar Research Library and the Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies.*

Sally Arsenovich
Buchanan, Michigan

Dragana Matejic & Milan Orbovich, Jr.
Worthington, Ohio

Catherine E. Vrugitz & Charles S. Vrugitz
Powell, Ohio

Jacki Blazeski
Columbus, Ohio

Carole Rogel Poirier
Columbus, Ohio

Danka Adamović Yankula
Hilliard, Ohio

Michael N. Borato
Lakewood, Ohio

V. Rev. Father Daniel & Elaine Rentel
Columbus, Ohio

Vida Matejic & Tom Bowen
Reynoldsburg, Ohio

Jennifer Spock & David Blaylock
Richmond, Kentucky

Steven & Tina Bujenovic
Yellow Springs, Ohio

St. Stevan Serbian Orthodox Church
Columbus, Ohio

Pauline Dickey
Hilliard, Ohio

James E. & Linda K. Stuart
Riverview, Michigan

Kathleen & Philip Johnson
Columbus, Ohio

Milan & Sheila M. Suka
Worthington, Ohio

Mary Allen Johnson
Columbus, Ohio

Lorraine Swank
Bristol, Tennessee

Milan & Janice Katic & Family
Schererville, Indiana

Dave & Sharon Tumbas
New Albany, Ohio

Dragan & Petra Koprivica
Chesterfield, Michigan

The Families of Dragan Vukovich
Columbus, Ohio

Dan & Brana Lukovic
Dublin, Ohio

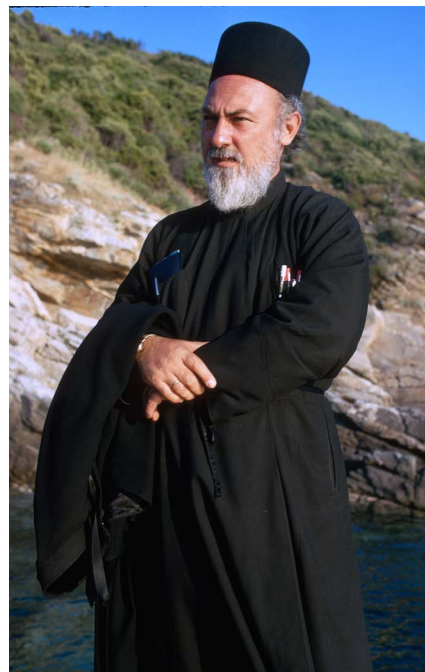
The Lund Family: In Memory of The
Rev. Dr. Mateja & Ljubica Matejic
Columbus, Ohio

Alex & Carol Machaskee
Cleveland, Ohio

Beverly I. McDonald
Columbus, Ohio

Annette F. Merrick
Galena, Ohio

Jovanka Obradović
Hammond, Indiana



*Father Matejic on Mount Athos, Greece, 1970
(Photo by Walt Craig)*



Father Matejic at St. Basil's, Mount Athos, Greece, 1971 (Photo by P. Matejic)