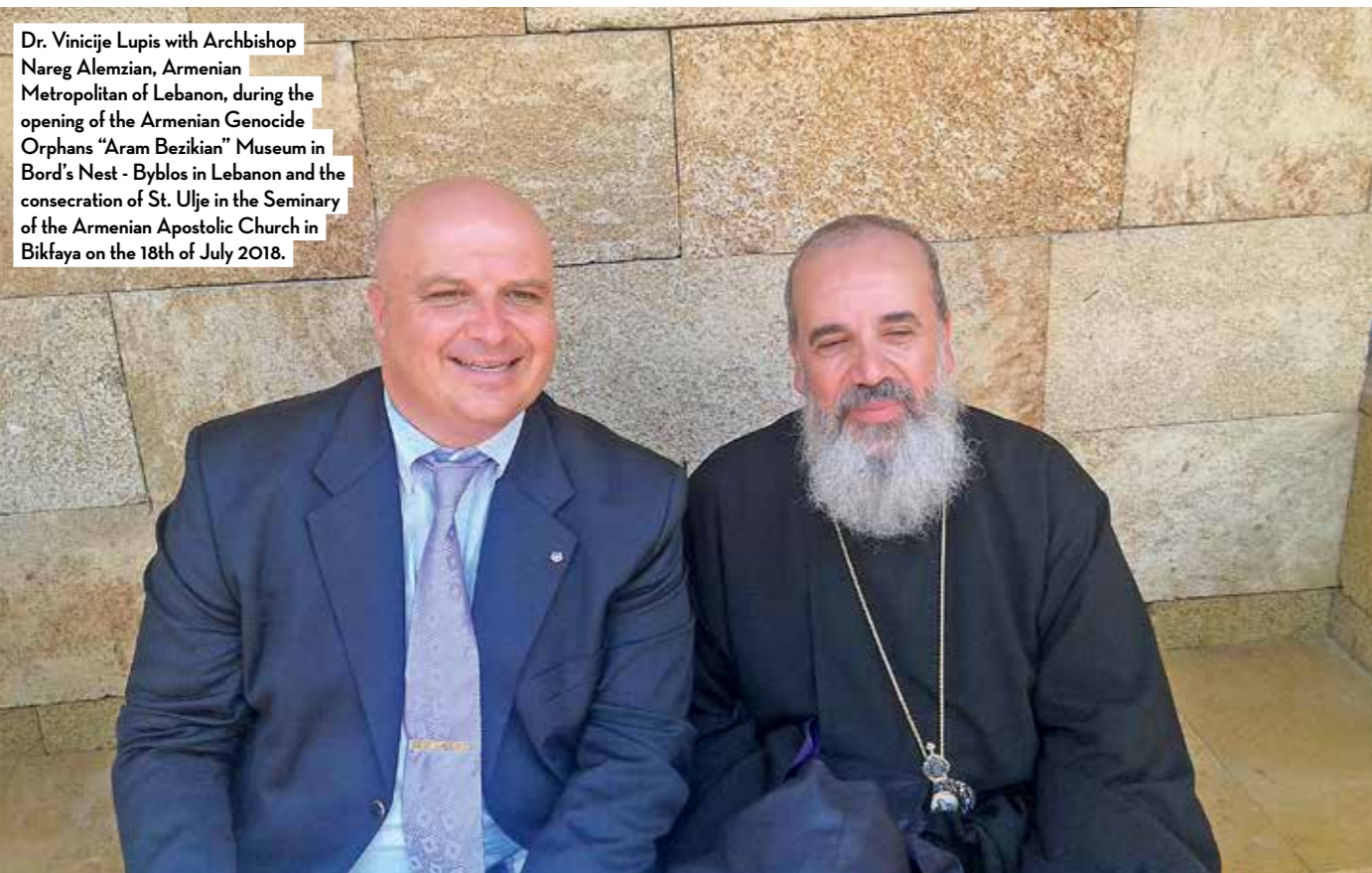


# St. Blaise has always been a link to the homeland for the citizens of Dubrovnik and a special sign of communion



Dr. Vinicije Lupis with Archbishop Nareg Alemzian, Armenian Metropolitan of Lebanon, during the opening of the Armenian Genocide Orphans "Aram Bezikian" Museum in Bord's Nest - Byblos in Lebanon and the consecration of St. Ulje in the Seminary of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Bikfaya on the 18th of July 2018.

by: Anton Hauswitschka

- For centuries St. Blaise has been a symbol of Dubrovnik. His worship had the full meaning of patriotism, and the depictions on the state symbols and liturgical objects have been followed by the people of Dubrovnik in the homeland and across the world. In Liber Croceus, where all the state holidays of the Republic of Dubrovnik were listed, it is prescribed how the festivity of St. Blaise was celebrated. His worship has remained unchanged since 972, and everyone

was united in this - noblemen and citizens alike. This unity at the same time explains the long survival of the Republic of Dubrovnik through a turbulent history - explains Dr. Vinicije B. Lupis, for whom the celebration of St. Blaise deserved the protection of UNESCO as an asset of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

## Martyr from Armenia

The Head of the Dubrovnik Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar tells us about the legend of the Dubrovnik patron saint. - Saint Blaise, according to le-

gend, was recorded in Annales Ragusini Anonymi at the end of the 15th century, in 971, in the church of St. Stjepan, he warned the priest Stoko that the city was being threatened by a Venetian armada which was coming from the east. Stojko raised the alarm, and according to the instructions of St. Blaise, the guards were sent on the walls and to the sea, so the Venetians failed in their deceitful plan to take Dubrovnik at night. After that, the citizens of Dubrovnik adopted St. Blaise as their patron saint and protector, and they

pledged to build a church in his name, following a decision of the Grand Council of 1348 - emphasizes Dr. Lupis, who explored the origins of the Dubrovnik patron saint. - Saint Blaise, or Soorp Vlasi, originates from the then Armenian city of Sebaste, which is today Sivas in Turkey where his grave is located. Among the Christian martyrs executed during the reign of Roman emperors was also Blasius, or Vlaho, a bishop and physician in Sebaste. According to the story, the Emperor Licinius at around 316 ordered that the body of

St. Blaise should be broken up and thrown into a lake, but not only did his wounds heal but he also walked on the water and preached. In the end he was beheaded. He is the patron saint of wild animals, herdsman and betrothed, and invokes throat diseases - says Vinicije B. Lupis, adding that the former citizens of Dubrovnik spread the influence of St. Blaise throughout the world.

## The cult of St. Blaise

- Jakov Lukarević in his historical work "Copioso ristretto degli annali di Ragusa" in 1605, states: "Within the other temples (in Goa), there is one is very rich one. It was decorated by the people of Dubrovnik, who are trading in these seas." Along with the church of St. Blaise in India, throughout Levant, there were Dubrovnik settlements, and churches dedicated to St. Blaise, as in Constantinople and Nea Smyrni. In the courtyard of the church of St. Peter and Paul in Galati near Torre di Galata are numerous tombstones of citizens of Dubrovnik - emphasizes Dr. Vinicije B. Lupis - In the church of St. George in Galati was the seat of the Dalmatian Charity Society of St. Blaise, founded on the 20th of August 1913, and until that year there was in Constantinople the Dalmatian Society of St. Blaise, founded in 1900. The First Brotherhood of St. Blaise of Constantinople was

founded, according to known facts, after the fall of the Republic of Dubrovnik, because at that time there were many citizens of Dubrovnik in Constantinople, regardless of their position and occupation, they did not want to return to the City, which had lost its freedom and independence. In an unnamed church in Nea Smyrni there was a Dubrovnik altar of St. Blaise before which the people of Dubrovnik celebrated the festivity of the patron saint. The former Dubrovnik citizens supported the cult of St. Blaise wherever they were, and in the cities where they had their own consul they especially celebrated the festivity of St. Blaise. In the town of Genoa with which the Republic of Dubrovnik had a living relationship in the Dominican church of Santa Maria di Castello, located in the old part of the city near the city harbour, they had a chapel dedicated to Our Lady and St. Blaise. The Dubrovnik Government, sent to its consul in Genoa, along with the normal consular fees a special tariff for the chapel St. Blaise in Genoa - adds Dr. Vinicije B. Lupis, pointing out that the traces of the citizens of Dubrovnik and the images of St. Blaise can also be found in Aquileia, Ancona, Livorno and Barcelona. St. Blaise, Lupis says, was a link to the people of Dubrovnik, representing a special sign of communion. - Don Nedjelko Subotić wrote

## The reliquaries of St. Blaise

The reliquaries of St. Blaise are preserved in the Treasury of St. Mary's Cathedral, the relics of his hand and head belong to one of the greatest Dubrovnik treasures. The reliquary of his head, made in the form of a crown of the Byzantine Emperors, is the most precious reliquary that is in Dubrovnik, donated by Bishop Vital in 1026 in the times of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VIII. It was damaged in the great earthquake in 1667, and in 1694 it was repaired by Venetian goldsmith Francesco Ferro. In 1428 at the time of the archbishop Antun I from Rieti a reliquary of his larynx was donated. A reliquary of his right leg from 1684, a replica of the old reliquary which was apparently destroyed in the earthquake of 1667. The new one was made by the goldsmith Francesco Ferra, and the coat of arms and the inscription "SANCTVS" bear witness to this. 1684 BLASIVS.' The original was made in Dubrovnik in 1026. The reliquary of the left hand in 1346, at the time of Archbishop Ilija Sarac, was brought to Dubrovnik by Toma Marinov de Vitiano. In 1667 it was stolen and taken to Genoa, where it was later returned to Dubrovnik with the highest honour, but with damaged jewellery. The reliquary of the right hand was mentioned for the first time in 1421 and was owned by the monastery of St. Clare. There was also a reliquary of the right arm which was lost in 1459 which at the time of Archbishop of James II De Racenata in Dubrovnik was donated by Juraj Radovanović. There used to be a third reliquary of the right hand of St. Blaise.



Archbishop Nareg Alemzian in the procession in 2010 carrying the reliquary of the head of St. Blaise.

in his "Sunflower of the Saint Blaise" in 1928: "As an old violin of Stradivarius, as the second Christian Orpheus on the Blue Adriatic he still has us here, since the age of Dubrovnik ..." says Lupis and recalls

that today citizens of Dubrovnik celebrate the festivity of St. Blaise around the world and the homeland. From Rijeka, Split and Zagreb across to Los Angeles and New York in the USA to Lima in Peru.