

04/03/2024

## **Romanian Orthodox Church establishes dioceses for Romanians in UK and Ireland**



On Thursday, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided to establish two new dioceses for the Romanian diaspora: the Diocese of Great Britain and the Diocese of Ireland and Iceland.

They are added to the already-existing 10 dioceses abroad, which include Romanians from the diaspora and the historic Romanian communities around the actual borders of the country.

The residence of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Great Britain will be in London, and that of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Ireland and Iceland will be in Dublin. The two dioceses will be subordinated to the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Western and Southern Europe under the leadership of Metropolitan Iosif Pop.

More than 1.1 million Romanians were officially residing in Great Britain last year, according to data offered by Her Excellency Laura Popescu, Romanian Ambassador to London.

The numbers include people holding dual citizenship or various residence visas. Thus, Romanians in the UK could be the largest Romanian community in the diaspora, positioning London as the third most populous capital regarding Romanian language speakers, following Bucharest and Chişinău.

The project to establish the two new dioceses of the Romanian Orthodox Church is supported by the central authorities and the Romanian Embassy in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Message by the Romanian Ambassador to London

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*HE Laura Popescu, Romanian Ambassador to London. Photo: Embassy of Romania to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

“We welcome the decision of the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church to establish a Romanian diocese in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as in other European countries,” Ambassador Laura Popescu told Basilica.ro.

“A single representative voice for the large Romanian Orthodox community in the United Kingdom was needed, which will be achieved from now on through the permanent presence of a bishop based in London.”

“Many Romanians reunited on Sundays at religious services in Romanian parishes throughout the UK and had this thought and hope: to have a permanent bishop, as is the case of the Romanian diaspora in other European countries with large

Romanian communities, such as Italy or Spain,” the ambassador added.

“On the other hand, spiritual leaders based/resident in the United Kingdom are usually invited at official events and meetings organised at the highest level by British institutions, whether we are talking about the Government, the Parliament or the Royal Family,” Ambassador Laura Popescu noted.

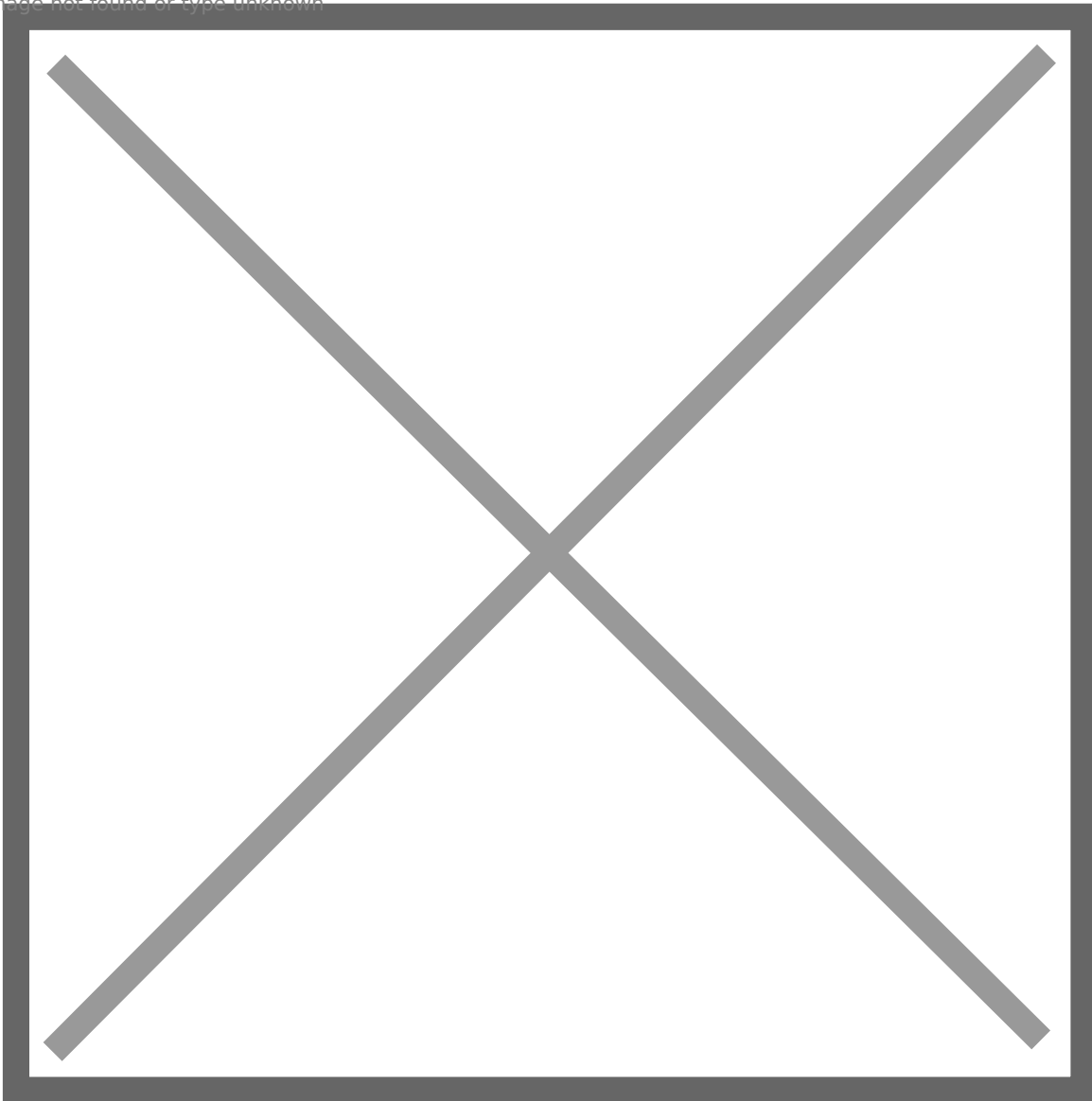
“For instance, the heads of the Churches based in the United Kingdom were invited to the coronation of King Charles III. The presence of spiritual leaders at these events is always of particular significance, giving prominence, legitimacy and stature to the communities and countries represented.”

“We were able to notice that the Greek Archbishop or the hierarch of the Coptic Church are actively present in various meetings in London that address not only social policies or meaningful issues debated in society but also the harmonisation of links between their communities and the British central and local authorities,” the Romanian Ambassador went on explaining.

“As the Church is the largest non-governmental organization on Earth and is founded by the Creator, the presence of a bishop in London would also extend the collaboration with Romania’s diplomatic and consular missions on British territory to support Romanian citizens.”

Romanian parishes in Great Britain

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In Great Britain, there are 63 Romanian Orthodox parishes, non-parochial churches and missions, as well as three monasteries.

In a meeting last year with His Grace Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of the Anglican Communion, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel thanked for the support that Orthodox Romanians in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland receive through the rental of 38 places of worship by the Church of England.

The first Romanian parish in Great Britain was St George's Parish - London 1, established in 1964 and operating from its inception to the present day in St Dunstan in the West Church in London.

The iconostasis, which stood for over a century at Bucharest's St Anthimos Monastery, now stands in this London church.

The transfer was enabled by the personal involvement of Patriarch Justinian of Romania in 1966 when His Beatitude visited England.

During the visit, the patriarch convinced Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain to offer the paper to print a new Romanian edition of the Holy Bible. Such paper quality was nowhere to be found in communist Romania at the time.

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