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Patriarch Daniel’s message for the 2024-25 Academic Year: Youth education is a sacred mission and civic obligation

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At the start of the 2024-2025 academic year, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel extended a message of blessing and encouragement to students and professors in universities across Romania. In his message, he highlighted the importance of cooperation between the Church and the University, encouraging a deeper dialogue between theology and science. He noted that this can help form a social ethic that nurtures spiritual and educational values.

Patriarch Daniel emphasized the role of professors in shaping students’ intellectual and spiritual growth, likening their work to the Parable of the Sower. He called for an integrative education that helps young people contribute to both the Church and society.

The Romanian Orthodox Church, through various youth-oriented programs, continues to support young people in reconnecting with a living and prayerful community. The Holy Synod has declared 2024 as the Solemn Year of Pastoral Care and Assistance of the Sick, focusing on the value of health as a divine gift.

The Patriarch concluded by offering prayers for the success of students, educators, and parents in the upcoming academic year.

Please find below the full text of Patriarch Daniel’s message at the start of the new academic year.

Youth education is a sacred mission and social co-responsibility
At the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year, we extend a message of blessing to all students and professors in higher and postgraduate education, wishing them God’s abundant help in their studies, research, and deepening of both spiritual and scientific values.

Church and University are called to rediscover the joy of dialogue between theology and science, not only to overcome any artificial or apparent divergence

but especially to collaborate in forming a social ethic that contributes to preserving and promoting authentic and enduring educational values.

These two representative institutions of Romanian society can deepen their cooperation to form young people, who in turn should cultivate the values of faith and Christian culture: love for people and nature – God's creation, Christian solidarity, friendship, respect for Family, Church, School, and Nation, and dialogue with other nations.

Therefore, the spiritual and educational work of guiding and supporting the youth must be enlightened by the conviction that all young people are a blessing from God for Family, Church, and Society.

At the beginning of each academic year, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to us through the Parable of the Sower that there is power in both the seed and the soil where it is sown: "All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head" (Mark 4:26-28).

Similarly, there is a power in the depths of the human soul that grows and is illuminated through the seed of God's word. That is why teachers are called to shape and cultivate students' souls, helping them grow intellectually, spiritually, professionally, and socially.

Christian education aims to foster young people's spiritual growth, following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ: "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him." (Luke 2:40).

The Romanian Patriarchate, through youth-oriented projects (International Orthodox Youth Meetings, activities of the Association of Romanian Christian Orthodox Students – A.S.C.O.R., the National Catechetical Program "Christ Shared with Children," the educational project "Choose the School!", youth camps, pilgrimages for students, and various social, philanthropic, and cultural-educational projects), encourages and supports reconnecting young people to a living, confessing, and prayerful community in challenging times for both body and soul.

The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church has declared 2024 as the Solemn Year of Pastoral Care and Assistance of the Sick, emphasizing the importance of health as a gift from God in the context of valuing and sanctifying life.

Embracing one's identity, building and defending the Christian family, raising children with eternal values, educating youth in the spirit of Christian faith, uniting

freedom with responsibility – these are ongoing priorities.

These aspects highlight the importance of an integrative education for young people, aiming at their spiritual and practical formation as they participate in and contribute to the life of the Church and Romanian society.

On the occasion of the new academic year 2024-2025, we pray to the Merciful God, the Source of life and wisdom, to bless all students, professors, and parents with many fruitful years!

With great appreciation and fatherly blessings,
† DANIEL
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

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