23/08/2019

Rwanda & Burundi Metropolitan Innocentios enthralled by humility, patience and love of large crowd of pilgrims at Nicula Monastery



His Eminence Metropolitan Innocentios Byakatonda of Rwanda and Burundi has left Romania after a seven-day visit to the Metropolis of Cluj where he celebrated a festive Divine Liturgy at Nicula Monastery which gathered over 20,000 pilgrims for the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos.

Before returning home on Monday, Aug. 19, the Rwandan Orthodox Metropolitan spoke about the pastoral ministry in Africa as compared to Romania in an interview with the local church radio station Renasterea.

‘You have one language, which is Romanian. But for us in Africa we have so many languages, all dialects. So you can’t understand even the liturgy. People when they are singing, it’s depending on the tribe. So it is really not very easy for us when we are doing mission,’ Metropolitan Innocentios said.

Music in African Orthodox worship

The Metropolitan of Rwanda and Burundi also spoke about the importance of music in Orthodox mission in Africa.

‘The Africans are into music. Either Byzantine or Slavonic, as soon as they start chanting you feel them they want to beat the drum even when they are going for Communion, they are very happy so you find them moving. Even the priests are adapted to that.’

‘After the liturgy, the people read the Psalms or they sing them in the African rhythms.’

‘But the most important is that what is in their hearts, whether they jump, what is their heart telling them.’

Stand firm and keep the Orthodox tradition

His Eminence urged Romanians to ‘stand firm and keep the Orthodox tradition’ and that ‘they should be as a fish in the water’.

‘Because if you remove the fish from the water it dies. It is the same with us, if we do not participate in the Orthodox liturgical life, we are as the fish which has been removed from the water, we are lifeless.’

Church media in Africa

‘Already our denominations have their radio stations and televisions,’ His Eminence said adding that ‘unfortunately for us, we are at the beginning. But it is our dream to have these means.’

‘The radio or the TV of the government, whenever we have big functions, they come and they cover the services of the Orthodox feasts. But those are major feasts as Christmas, the Holy Week, and maybe big Baptisms.’

‘As we are hoping to be like the other denominations, what matters is money that starts that.’

‘I will use an expression, when you give birth to a child, he does not start walking immediately, he grows slowly-slowly. That is our dream.’

Impressions about Romania

The Metropolitan was asked about his impressions about Romania, stressing that he admires the patience, humility and faith of the pilgrims who attended the celebrations at Nicula Monastery on the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

‘I have nothing to say. I think I’m taking a lot. The humility, the patience, people walking 7 km, staying all the night, when it was drizzling. I admire that stamina.’

‘These people came, and nobody forced them. And they stayed there. Even some were singing all night. So I took all that patience, that humility, that love of their faith.’

‘I wish I had the means to bring some faithful to this pilgrimage.’

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