05/02/2025

Synodal Decree of the Romanian Orthodox Church for canonization of 20th-century Saints



In a significant event marking the centennial of the Romanian Patriarchate, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church has officially proclaimed the sainthood of sixteen confessors and spiritual fathers, recognizing their exemplary lives and martyrdom during the tumultuous times of the 20th century.

The decree, issued on February 4, 2025, honours priests and monks who stood firm in their faith against the backdrop of communist persecution. Among those canonized are notable figures like Saint Dumitru Stăniloae, known for his theological contributions, and Saint Arsenius of Prislop, revered for his ascetic life and miracles.

This Synodal Tomos not only adds these saints to the liturgical calendar but also encourages the faithful to venerate them by painting new icons and building churches dedicated to their honour. The canonization is seen as a profound spiritual acknowledgement of the resilience and sanctity of these individuals who exemplified unwavering devotion to Orthodox Christianity through their lives and deaths.

The new saints, including martyrs like Saint Constantine Sârbu and confessors like Saint Elijah Lăcătușu, are expected to inspire contemporary believers in their faith journey, offering hope and a model of Christian living amidst adversity.

This canonization is anticipated to lead to increased pilgrimage to the resting places of these saints, fostering a deeper connection with the Church’s heritage and reinforcing the spiritual identity of Romania’s Orthodox faithful.

Synodal Decree of the Romanian Orthodox Church for the Proclamation of the Canonization of 20th-century Romanian Saints
Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church
To the beloved clergy, monastic order, and the right-believing Christians of the Romanian Patriarchate,
Grace, mercy, and peace from God, and from Us, episcopal blessings!

Our Orthodox Church announces great joy today to her children on the occasion of the centennial of the Romanian Patriarchate, deciding that the God-pleasing people from the Romanian nation be included in the calendar of saints.

By this, our Church fulfils the exhortation of Saint Paul the Apostle, who says: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7). Following this exhortation, the clergy and faithful of our Church honour, together with all the saints of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, the saints born in our land, among whom are the martyrs, confessors, and great ascetics who shone in recent times through their saintly life and the gift of working miracles.

Thus, in the 20th century, the Orthodox people honoured with great devotion the confessor priests and great spiritual fathers who, in the harsh times of the communist period, preached the faith in God with great courage.

These chosen people by God include:

- the Venerable Confessor Sofian of Antim, commemorated on September 16,
- Confessor Priest Dumitru Stăniloae, commemorated on October 4,
- Priest-Martyr Constantine Sârbu, commemorated on October 23,
- the Venerable Confessor Arsenius of Prislop, commemorated on November 28,
- Confessor Priest Elijah Lăcătușu, commemorated on July 22,
- Venerables Paisius and Cleopas of Sihăstria, commemorated on December 2,
- Venerable Dometius the Merciful of Râmeț, commemorated on July 6,
- Venerable Seraphim the Enduring of Sâmbăta de Sus, commemorated on December 20,
- Priest-Martyr Liviu Galaction of Cluj, commemorated on March 8,
- the Venerable Martyr Gerasimus of Tismana, commemorated on December 26,
- the Venerable Martyr Bessarion of Lainici, commemorated on November 10,
- Venerable Callistratus of Timișeni and Vasiova, commemorated on May 10,
- Priest-Martyr Hilarion Felea, commemorated on September 18,
- Venerable Heraclius of Bessarabia, commemorated on August 3, and

- Priest-Martyr Alexander of Bessarabia, commemorated on August 8.

These God-pleasers led lives crowned by prayer, fasting, repentance, humility, and love, reaching perfection. Some paid with their lives for their confession of faith, being crowned with glorious martyr's crowns. Others lived a continuous, bloodless martyrdom, enduring imprisonment, torture, and countless humiliations, and even after release, they continued to be persecuted by the godless. However, neither trouble, nor hardship, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor danger could separate them from the love of Christ; in all these things, they were more than conquerors through Him who loved them (see Romans 8:35-37).

Our Mediocrity, after consulting with the Metropolitan Synods of Muntenia and Dobruja, Moldavia and Bukovina, Transylvania, Cluj, Maramureș and Sălaj, Oltenia, Banat, and Bessarabia along with all the hierarchs of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, considering the life pleasing to God of these saints, noting their firm and steadfast faith in Jesus Christ, their commendable zeal for prayer and confession of the true faith, and seeking the spiritual benefit of the Orthodox Romanian people, following the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church and invoking the grace of the Most Holy Trinity,

DECREE

That from now on and forever, the Holy Venerable Confessor Sofian of Antim, the Holy Confessor Priest Dumitru Stăniloae, the Holy Hieromartyr Constantine Sârbu, the Holy Venerable Confessor Arsenius of Prislop, the Holy Confessor Priest Elijah Lăcătușu, the Holy Venerables Paisius and Cleopas of Sihăstria, the Holy Venerable Dometius the Merciful of Râmeț, the Holy Venerable Seraphim the Enduring of Sâmbăta de Sus, the Holy Hieromartyr Liviu Galaction of Cluj, the Holy Venerable Martyr Gerasimus of Tismana, the Holy Venerable Martyr Bessarion of Lainici, the Holy Venerable Callistratus of Timișeni and Vasiova, the Holy Hieromartyr Hilarion Felea, the Holy Venerable Heraclius of Bessarabia, and the Holy Hieromartyr Alexander of Bessarabia, be numbered among the saints of the Church and be commemorated with hymns of praise on their feast days, and that they be inscribed in the Synaxarion, in liturgical books, as well as in the calendar of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

We also decree that their services and lives be published, their icons be painted, which should be received with all devotion by the Orthodox Christians, and their portraits be placed appropriately alongside the other Romanian saints in the churches to be built from the ground up or painted henceforth.

Furthermore, to increase the devotion of the Orthodox Christians through the veneration and invocation in prayer of these saints, we decree that they also be patrons of new or renewed churches.

For the full establishment of what we have synodally and canonically decreed, we have drawn up and confirmed with our signatures this Synodal Tomos of the proclamation of the canonization of these 16 Romanian saints in the centennial year of the Romanian Patriarchate, which we bring to the knowledge of the reverend clergy, the venerable monastic order, and the right-believing Christians of the Romanian Patriarchate.

This Synodal Tomos of Canonization is proclaimed today, February 4, in the year of salvation 2025.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you! (2 Corinthians 13:13).

Chairman of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church
† Daniel
Archbishop of Bucharest, Metropolitan of Muntenia and Dobruja, Locum tenens of the throne of Caesarea in Cappadocia and Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

All members of the Holy Synod co-signed the document

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