07/02/2025

Patriarch Daniel’s message on Romanian Patriarchate Centennial: A time of gratitude, solemn occasion to honour new saints

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Celebrating 100 years since the establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel addressed the clergy and believers from the Patriarchal Cathedral, noting that the Centennial should be a time of gratitude to God and a solemn occasion to honour the newly canonized saints.

“Over the past 100 years, as an institution and spiritual organization, the Romanian Patriarchate has been a guiding light toward Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, and a pillar of unity and stability through the difficult times that our nation has endured”, Patriarch Daniel said on Tuesday, February 4.

His Beatitude used his festive message to present the newly canonized Romanian Saints as “the most precious spiritual fruit that our Church has offered in this century-long period, as their lives intensely reveal the mystical action of the Holy Spirit’s grace within the Romanian Orthodox Church.”

Please find below the full text of Patriarch Daniel’s message on the Centennial of the Romanian Patriarchate.

The Centennial of the Romanian Patriarchate – A Time of Gratitude to God and Benefactors, A Solemn Occasion to Honour Newly Canonized Saints
Your Eminences and Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,
Esteemed Members of the National Church Assembly,
Beloved Faithful,

The year 2025, designated by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church as the Solemn Year of the Centennial of the Romanian Patriarchate and the Commemorative Year of Romanian Orthodox Spiritual Fathers and Confessors of the 20th Century, solemnly marks the natural culmination of a century of dedicated service by the Romanian Orthodox Church, both for the faithful Romanian people

and for Holy Orthodoxy as a whole.

This anniversary is both a remembrance of the past and a time of gratitude for our forebears, as well as a reflection on the Church's role in the life of the Romanian people. Over the past 100 years, as an institution and spiritual organization, the Romanian Patriarchate has been a guiding light toward Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, and a pillar of unity and stability through the difficult times that our nation has endured.

A Century of Church and National Unity

Marking 100 years since the founding of the Romanian Patriarchate is an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the history of our Church, which has always been closely tied to the life of the Romanian people and their aspirations for unity and freedom.

The Romanian Patriarchate was established on February 4, 1925, in a historical context shaped by the Great Union of 1918, which brought together all Romanian historical provinces into a single unified state.

This national unity necessitated a reorganization of the Romanian Orthodox Church, reflecting the new political and territorial reality. The elevation of Romanian Orthodoxy to Patriarchal status was both an administrative necessity and an expression of the spiritual unity shared by clergy and faithful across Greater Romania.

Following the official recognition of the Romanian Orthodox Church's Autocephaly in 1885, the union of Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania with the motherland—the Kingdom of Romania—in 1918 called for liturgical standardization and a unified synodal structure under the leadership of the Holy Synod in the country's capital, Bucharest.

This process of ecclesiastical unification culminated with the election of Transylvanian Bishop Miron Cristea of Caransebeș as Primate Metropolitan of the Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church on December 18, 1919. The following day, he was enthroned in Bucharest.

As the Romanian Orthodox Church grew in dioceses, clergy, and faithful, becoming the second-largest Orthodox Church among its sister Churches, the elevation to Patriarchal status became an inevitable necessity.

The Establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate

This goal was fulfilled by the hierarchs of the Holy Synod, who, on February 4,

1925, unanimously decided to elevate the Romanian Orthodox Church to the dignity of a Patriarchate and to confer the title of Patriarch upon the Archbishop and Metropolitan of Wallachia (Ungro-Wallachia).

During this synodal session, Bishop Vartolomeu Stănescu of Râmnic-Noul Severin (1921-1938) read the “Act of Establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate”, which was then submitted to the government for ratification.

Following parliamentary approval by the Senate and Deputies Chamber (February 12 and 17, 1925), King Ferdinand I promulgated the law on February 23, 1925, and published it in the Official Gazette on February 25, 1925.

According to canonical provisions, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church sent an irenic letter on March 12, 1925, to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, announcing the elevation of the Romanian Church to Patriarchal status, along with the historical and canonical arguments supporting this decision.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate and other Autocephalous Orthodox Churches acknowledged the decision of both the Church and the Romanian State and formally recognized the Romanian Orthodox Church as a Patriarchate. Metropolitan-Primate Miron Cristea was subsequently invested at the Royal Palace and enthroned as the first Patriarch of Romania in the Patriarchal Cathedral of Bucharest on November 1, 1925, in an atmosphere of profound spiritual joy.

A Spiritual Legacy Rooted in Apostolic Tradition

Through this act of high church dignity, the Romanian Orthodox Church crowned a centuries-long journey of spiritual growth firmly rooted in the preaching of the Gospel of Christ by the Holy Apostles Andrew and Philip. This apostolic foundation was strengthened by the martyrs’ sacrifices, the prayers of the venerable monastic, the holy ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, the protection of pious rulers and the Christ-loving army, and always supported by the devotion of the Romanian Orthodox faithful throughout history.

The Romanian Orthodox Church of apostolic origin has rejoiced for two millennia as its sanctifying work brought forth holy intercessors and confessors of Christ through the Holy Spirit’s grace throughout the ages.

A Time for Gratitude and Remembrance

As we celebrate the Centennial of the Romanian Patriarchate (1925-2025), it is our sacred duty to honour the great spiritual shepherds, priests who professed the faith, martyrs, and great spiritual fathers who, through their exemplary deeds,

have shone brightly over the past century, becoming models of Christian life for clergy and laity alike.

Thus, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church solemnly proclaimed today the canonization of sixteen Romanian saints who professed the faith in Christ during the difficult period of the communist regime in Romania. These saints represent the most precious spiritual fruit our Church has offered in this century, as their lives intensely reveal the mystical action of the Holy Spirit's grace within the Romanian Orthodox Church.

These servants of God were canonized and included in the Church calendar because their lives bore evident signs of holiness: the Orthodox faith, a holy life of repentance and prayer, humble and merciful love for others, sacrificial confession of faith, and in some cases, even miracles, along with the veneration they received from the faithful.

The Church honours them especially for their courage in enduring persecution and for bearing witness to Christ's truth, even in conditions of torture and death, offering a living example of complete Christian faith. Their canonization is a recognition of their sanctity, transcending any political context, emphasizing that true Christian witness does not support transitory worldly ideologies but rather the eternal values of faith and love for God.

New Martyrs
Among the saints who from today adorn our church calendar are the martyrs who confessed their faith in Christ at the cost of their lives, being crowned with the glorious wreaths of martyrdom.

Among them, we recall:

- The Holy Priest-Martyr Constantine Sârbu, who suffered a martyr's death for refusing to betray the Mystery of Holy Confession;
- The Holy Priest-Martyr Liviu Galaction of Cluj, who was arrested for his catechetical activity and died in terrible suffering in the Aiud prison;
- The Venerable Martyr Gerasimus of Tismana, a great hesychast ascetic, who confessed his faith in Christ and died as a martyr in the Târgu-Ocna prison;
- The Venerable Martyr Bessarion of Lainici, who, after enduring severe beatings, died confessing Christ in the monastery on the Jiu Valley;
- The Holy Priest-Martyr Hilarion Felea, who reposed in the Lord after enduring great suffering in Aiud prison;
- The Holy Priest-Martyr Alexander of Bessarabia, who, at the age of 80, was

deported, stripped, beaten, pulled by his beard, starved, and humiliated, ultimately entrusting his soul to God in the Church of the Most Holy Theotokos in the Russian city of Kazan.

Confessors of Faith in Communist Prisons

Another group among the glorified saints today consists of the priests who confessed their faith in the communist prisons, sanctifying their lives through patience, love, and humility, forgiving those who beat, tortured, and mocked them, and thus departing in peace to the heavenly dwellings.

Among these servants of God, we remember:

- The Venerable Confessor Sofian of Antim, who confessed his faith in Christ in the prisons of Bucharest, Jilava, Aiud, Galați, and Balta Brăilei. After his release, he became one of the most beloved spiritual fathers of Bucharest, known as the “Apostle of Bucharest”;
- The Holy Confessor-Priest Dumitru Stăniloae, the greatest Orthodox theologian of the 20th century, who endured imprisonment in Jilava and Aiud. He was renowned as a translator of the Romanian Philokalia and patristic texts, as well as a distinguished professor of Orthodox Theology;
- The Venerable Confessor Arsenie of Prislop, who endured four imprisonments and, after his release, was forced to live in the secular world, yet secretly maintained his monastic rule, later being revealed as a miracle worker after his passing;
- The Holy Confessor-Priest Elijah Lăcătușu, who suffered in the prisons of Galeșu – Constanța, Peninsula – Constanța (Danube-Black Sea Canal), Târgu-Ocna, and Periprava. He was a great man of prayer, known for his humility, and after his passing, his incorrupt body was discovered, exuding a divine fragrance and performing many miracles;
- The Venerable Confessor Heraclius of Bessarabia, one of the greatest Romanian missionaries of the interwar period, who confessed his faith in Christ for eight years in Soviet labour camps. After his passing, his holy relics were revealed to be myrrh-streaming.

Hesychast Saints and Spiritual Fathers

Among the saints glorified today, there is also a third group of venerable fathers, who were recognized by the Orthodox faithful as wise spiritual fathers and guides on the path of salvation.

Among these great hesychast ascetics, we recall:

- Venerable Paisius of Sihăstria, who led a life of severe asceticism, full of humility and love for those who sought his counsel, and who, after his passing, was revealed as a miracle worker;
- Venerable Cleopas of Sihăstria, one of the most beloved Romanian spiritual fathers of the last century, a gifted preacher and tireless guide for clergy and believers who received from God the gift of miracles;
- Venerable Dometius the Merciful of Râmeț, a humble and prayerful spiritual father, known for his charism of non-possessiveness, giving away everything he had to help those in need. After his passing, he was called by the people “the Apostle of the Moți”;
- Venerable Seraphim the Enduring of Sâmbăta de Sus, who guided many souls to God during the communist period and for his holy life, was granted by God the gifts of foresight and wonderworking;
- Venerable Callistratus of Timișeni and Vasiova, a humble missionary and spiritual father in Banat, who faithfully preserved the rule of monastic life, receiving from God the gift of healing and casting out evil spirits.

Therefore, the Centennial of the Romanian Patriarchate is a moment of sacred joy and gratitude for the entire Romanian Orthodox Church. Looking back, we see not only a rich history but also a profound spiritual legacy left by our forebears—patriarchs, hierarchs, priests, monastics, and lay faithful—who defended and passed on the Orthodox faith throughout time. Despite trials and hardships, the Romanian Orthodox Church has remained steadfast in its mission, intertwining the sacrifice of the Cross with the hope and joy of the Resurrection in its historical journey.

On this solemn anniversary, the Romanian Patriarchate, together with its clergy and faithful, offers prayers of thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity, the Mother of God, and all the saints for their protection and blessings upon the Church and the Romanian people. At the same time, it expresses its gratitude to all those who contributed to the founding, organization, and development of the Romanian Patriarchate as a servant and defender of the Orthodox faith and national unity.

May this centennial be a time of strengthening in faith and of gratitude for those who, through their sacrifices, have left us a worthy work and a sacred heritage, to the glory of God and for the good of Holy Orthodoxy!

† Daniel
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

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