

## **Patriarch Daniel honours Saints Paisius and Cleopas of Sihăstria as pillars of 20th century monasticism**



His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church marked the local proclamation of the canonisation of Saints Paisius Olaru and Cleopas Ilie on Thursday with a deeply spiritual tribute, calling them “two pillars of light between the mountains and heaven.”

In a pastoral message occasioned by the celebrations at Sihăstria Monastery, the Patriarch of Romania highlighted the ascetic lives, spiritual authority, and enduring influence of the two hesychast elders, emphasising their role as confessors of the faith during the communist persecution and as guiding lights in the Orthodox tradition.

Please find below the full text of Patriarch Daniel’s message for the local proclamation of the canonisation of Saints Paisius and Cleopas of Sihăstria.

### **Two Pillars of Light Between the Mountains and Heaven**

#### **Saints Paisius and Cleopas of Sihăstria**

Sihăstria Monastery in the Neamţ Mountains was blessed by God in the 20th century with two of the brightest figures in Romanian monasticism: the Venerable Elders Paisius Olaru and Cleopas Ilie – wise confessors, great men of prayer, and spiritual guides to thousands on the path to salvation.

Saint Paisius Olaru (1897–1990) embodied the image of a desert elder: he spoke little, but his words carried deep wisdom. A contemporary and spiritual friend of Saint Cleopas Ilie, he lived a life of severe asceticism, marked by humility and love for those who sought his counsel. He was known as a humble and gentle confessor, a true father of peace and Christian compassion. Through the prayer of the heart, profound humility, and love for all, he became a wellspring of comfort for troubled souls.

Saint Paisius was gifted by God with the gift of healing and pacifying hearts wounded by sin. Like the desert fathers, who distilled profound spiritual insight into

a few words, he offered essential truths in parental counsel.

The peace he radiated came from his deep and humble love for God and his fellow human beings. Out of his sacred intimacy with the All-Merciful and Loving God flowed his prayers and blessings—tender, paternal words for each pilgrim: “Bless, O Lord, his house, his table... grant him a little corner of Paradise!”

A bearer of the Holy Spirit through humble faith and unceasing prayer, Saint Paisius gathered the mind around the heart and led the hearts of others to God—at a time when atheist communist ideology sought to mislead minds, harden hearts, and alienate people from God.

Though frail in appearance, Saint Paisius Olaru of Sihăstria was, in the final years of Romania’s communist dictatorship, a true giant of the Romanian spirit. In silence, he strengthened the Church of Christ within believers’ hearts, while churches of stone were being demolished in the noise of the capital.

Saint Cleopas Ilie (1912–1998), the tireless abbot and preacher of Sihăstria, was one of the most beloved Romanian spiritual fathers of the past century—a pillar of Romanian Orthodoxy endowed with a remarkable memory and clarity of thought.

A profound knower of Holy Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers, a hesychast practitioner of Orthodox monasticism, Saint Cleopas was also a wise pastor and zealous missionary, deeply attuned to the realities of his time. He shared in the people’s suffering under communism and brought peace and joy to all souls who came to him for absolution of sins and guidance through life.

Constantly a wise and compassionate father, a pastoral teacher faithful to patristic tradition, a friend of the saints and confessor of the people, he welcomed hierarchs, priests, monastics, dignitaries, renowned intellectuals, and multitudes of ordinary people from cities and villages into his humble cell. His writings and recordings, filled with biblical light and patristic wisdom, continue to inspire generations of monastics and laypeople alike.

Father Cleopas Ilie answered God’s call to mission with great wisdom. He became a steadfast missionary from within his cell, showing how one can bring the world to God, to change lives, heal wounds, nourish souls—not by travelling or knocking on doors, but by lovingly opening the door of his monastic cell and helping each penitent open their own soul in confession to encounter God’s merciful and healing love for humans.

During the stormy period of persecution against the Church, at the invitation of

Patriarch Justinian Marina of blessed memory, Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie came to Bucharest, residing for several months at the Patriarchal Residence. There, he helped lay the foundation for an extensive missionary program, which he later carried out in many monasteries throughout the country, especially in Muntenia and Banat, working tirelessly to guide Romanian monastic life along the path of our Orthodox Church's Holy Tradition.

Saints Paisius and Cleopas lived lives of ascetic struggle, fasting, vigil, and intense prayer. They were deeply spiritual men, united in zeal for holiness, confessors of the true faith in times of persecution, and proclaimers of the Gospel of Christ in both word and deed.

The proclamation of the canonisation of the Venerable Saints Paisius and Cleopas of Sihăstria, together with 14 other spiritual fathers and confessors of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the 20th century, marking the centennial of the Romanian Orthodox Church's elevation to the rank of Patriarchate (1925–2025), reminds us how wonderfully God works among a humble and faithful people, and how great the need is for true spiritual fathers—holy elders who can guide us on the path of righteousness and holiness.

Today, at the blessed moment of the local proclamation of the canonisation of the Venerable Saints Paisius and Cleopas of Sihăstria, we wish to express, together with His Eminence Metropolitan Teofan of Moldavia and Bukovina, our appreciation and gratitude for all the labour and sacrificial love poured into the life of this monastery.

We also extend our congratulations to the abbot, Archimandrite Arsenie Popa, together with the entire dedicated and missionary monastic brotherhood of Sihăstria Monastery, to all its supporters from Romania and abroad, and to all the hierarchs, clergy, and faithful present at this sacred and solemn event of Christian spirituality and Romanian dignity.

We pray to the Venerable Saints Paisius and Cleopas, that together with the Most Holy Theotokos, Saint Theodora of Sihla, and all the saints, they may intercede before the Most Holy Trinity, protect this monastery, and grant peace, joy, health, and salvation to all who dwell in it, who worship here, and who support its holy mission.

With deep appreciation and fatherly blessing,  
† DANIEL  
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

Photo: Basilica.ro

[basilica.ro](http://basilica.ro)