10/12/2025

Romanian Orthodox priest in Tokyo reflects on joys and challenges of ministry in Japan

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In an interview with Formula AS magazine, Father Daniel Corîu spoke about the joys, difficulties and unexpected collaborations that accompany his pastoral mission in Japan.

Father Corîu has served in Japan for 12 years, ministering to around 200 families, most of them Romanian–Japanese. He is the only Romanian Orthodox priest in the country, after the mission was reduced over time to a single permanent parish centre in Tokyo.

“I believe there are about 5,000 Orthodox Christians in all of Japan — only one per cent of the total population,” he said, describing the life of Orthodoxy in the Land of the Rising Sun.

Community Support
The community now worships in a former Catholic church purchased in 2017 with the support of the Romanian Patriarchate and the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs. The church was later arranged and consecrated in 2020.

Services are celebrated in Romanian, English and Japanese, assisted by a Japanese deacon who was transferred three years ago from the Autonomous Japanese Orthodox Church.

Father Corîu also spoke about the support received from the local community for building a small wooden chapel at a cemetery in Yamanashi.

“Where God wills, even Buddhist priests help build an Orthodox church!” he said, explaining that all logistical support is being provided by priests from the temple located opposite the site.

Challenges of Mission
He addressed frankly the struggle of living the Christian faith in a deeply secularised society:

“Most Japanese are indifferent to everything religious. They live a material life emptied of everything that implies spirit and spirituality.”

For Romanians living in Japan, challenges are significant, especially in mixed families. Many Japanese spouses do not participate in church life, and the fast-paced nature of Japanese society makes it challenging to preserve their Christian and Romanian identities.

“Here we must make three or four times more effort than in Romania to live a Christian life,” he said, noting that the Church becomes a true “spiritual hospital.”

Father Corîu concluded with a message for the faithful at home: “I ask Romanians in Romania to pray also for Romanians in Japan, that they may regain their spiritual awareness and way of life.”

Photo: Facebook / Romanian Orthodox Church in Japan

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