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Patriarch Daniel says icons invite us to prayer, holiness and communion on Sunday of Orthodoxy



His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel underscored on Sunday the essential role of holy icons in the life of believers, stating that “icons invite us to prayer, to holiness and to communion with all the Saints of God.”

The Patriarch of Romania attended the Divine Liturgy at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, celebrated by his Patriarchal Auxiliary Bishop Varlaam of Ploiesti and the Assistant Bishop of the Archdiocese of Bucharest, Timotei of Prahova.

He explained that the Sunday of Orthodoxy, observed on the first Sunday of Great Lent, is dedicated to the confession of the true faith and commemorates the Church’s victory over iconoclasm, proclaimed in 843 in Constantinople.

Icon indispensable to the faith
According to the Patriarch, the veneration of icons is inseparably linked to the truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

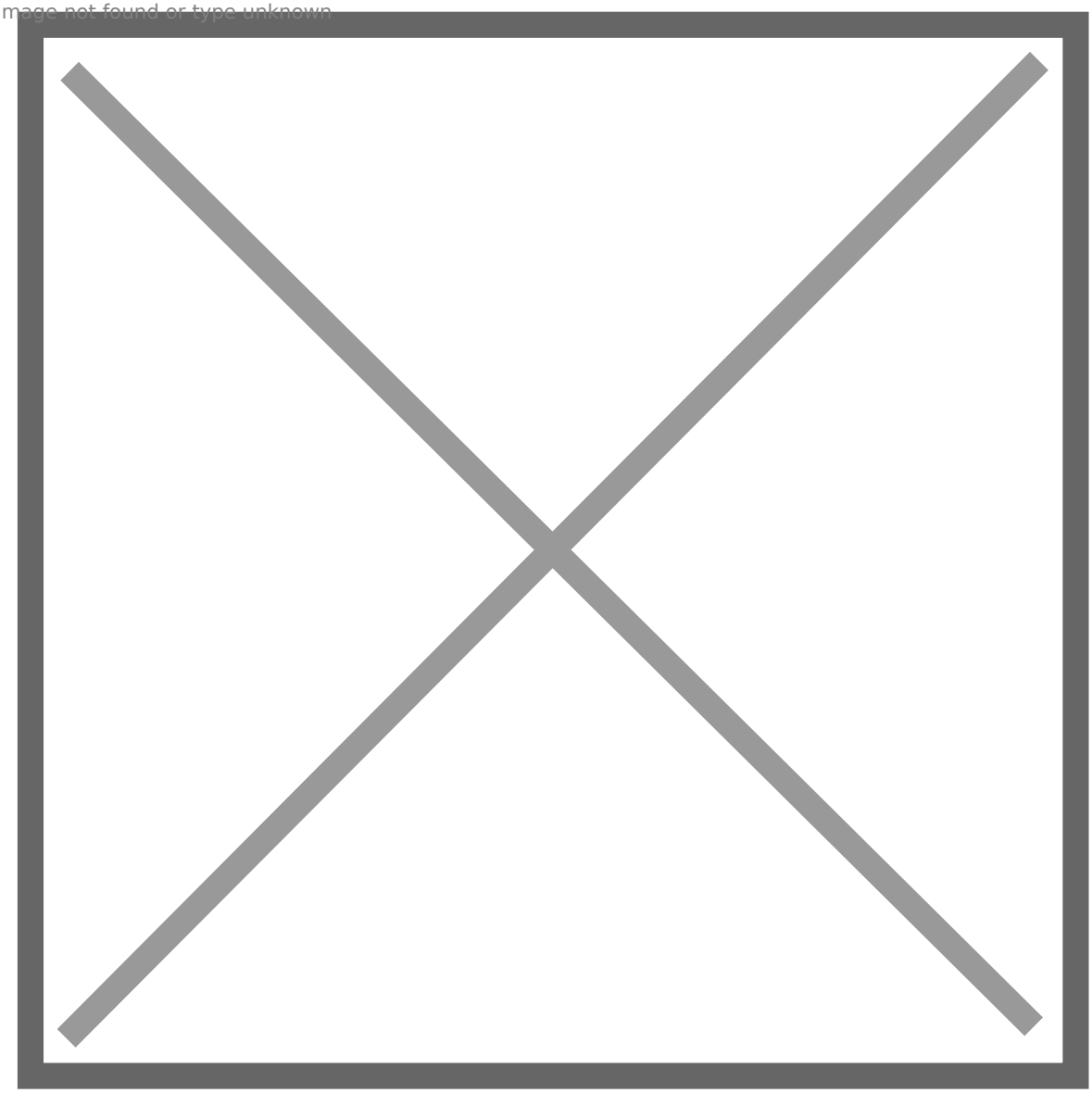
“For Orthodoxy, holy icons are not merely an aesthetic adornment in the Church. They form part of the confession of the true faith, such that no one can be an Orthodox Christian if he does not venerate them.”

Quoting John of Damascus, he illustrated the theological foundation of icon veneration: “I do not venerate the matter of the icon, but I venerate the Creator of matter, who for my sake became matter, Jesus Christ.”

Visible testimony of Christ’s Incarnation
Patriarch Daniel emphasised that the icon expresses the Christian faith both in word and in image.

“Holy icons are not added to the Orthodox faith as an appendix, but express the Orthodox faith in a complete form, as the confession of the truth of the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God.”

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He stressed that icons are not meant to be admired merely as museum pieces or decorative objects, but that “the icons of the Saints call us to prayer together with the Saints,” explaining that when believers approach an icon, they encounter the Saint depicted.

The Patriarch of Romania also highlighted the eschatological dimension of the icon, describing it as “a constant call to prayer and a prophetic vision of the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Christ’s presence in the Church

Patriarch Daniel noted that icons confirm Christ’s promise of His abiding presence in the Church: “The icon of the Lord Jesus Christ confirms His promise: ‘Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

He concluded by underlining that the path to holiness begins with the confession of

the true faith and purification from sin.

“The first step in acquiring holiness is the confession of the true faith and the cleansing from sins through repentance, through confession, and then through communion with the Holy Mysteries. Through these we sanctify our life and receive grace to accomplish good works,” the Patriarch said.

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