

## **Patriarch Daniel urges faithful to seek God's Kingdom above material concerns**



“Let us live as spiritually free people who seek first the Kingdom of God’s love through prayer and good works,” His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel urged on Sunday at the historic Chapel of St George of the patriarchal residence in Bucharest.

His Beatitude explained that a person’s foremost concern should be the attainment of the Kingdom of God and the cultivation of communion with Him.

“The Holy Gospel does not encourage people to be idle, but tells them to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, that is, spiritual life, while material goods will be added afterwards.”

The Patriarch of Romania explained that there is an essential difference between the natural care for life’s necessities and anxiety that comes to dominate human existence.

“We must not allow our spiritual life to be paralysed by an obsessive concern for transient material possessions.”

“Concerns regarding food, drink and clothing must not enslave human life, that is, they must not become a source of anxiety or tyranny over the soul.”

The Mind Enlightened by the Work of God

Referring to the Gospel words, “The lamp of the body is the eye”, Patriarch Daniel explained that the Holy Fathers interpreted the eye as the human mind or spiritual discernment.

“If a person possesses a wise mind and a pure conscience, his life is filled with light. However, if the mind and discernment are darkened by selfish passions and impure thoughts, then life on earth becomes an existence overshadowed by darkness.”

“The mind or conscience, as the eye of the soul, remains close to God when we love Him more than we love limited and passing material goods. In other words, the

Lord Jesus Christ urges us to care first for the immortal soul in order to attain eternal life," His Beatitude added.

The Patriarch of Romania also highlighted the importance of trust in Divine Providence, noting that God's love for all creation should be a source of peace and hope.

"Above all, we must seek the merciful love of God, which can be seen even in His care for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field."

#### The Purpose of Christian Life

Patriarch Daniel further explained the profound meaning of the Kingdom of God, which Christians are called to seek unceasingly.

"It means that we must first nourish ourselves with spiritual gifts."

"The clothing of the body is temporary, but clothing both soul and body with the light of virtues such as humility and repentance, wisdom and gentleness, kindness and mercy, purity and sincerity, constitutes the unfading beauty and light of the human person."

The Patriarch explained that this spiritual nourishment is offered through Holy Scripture, prayer and, above all, participation in the Holy Mysteries of the Church.

"The spiritual nourishment of the soul with the grace of God's love through prayer is more precious than any material accumulation."

"A foretaste of the peace, joy and light of the Kingdom of the Most Holy Trinity is experienced in the Church, because the Church is filled with the gracious presence of the Most Holy Trinity in all her sacred works," he said.

#### Sunday of the Athonite Fathers

In the final part of his homily, Patriarch Daniel noted that the third Sunday after Pentecost marked the first commemoration of the Holy Athonite Fathers, a feast dedicated to all those who have lived and laboured spiritually on the Holy Mount Athos.

His Beatitude highlighted the contribution of Romanian monks to Athonite spirituality, noting that among them were hierarchs as well as many venerable ascetics who devoted their lives to prayer and spiritual struggle on Mount Athos.

"These spiritual fathers became acquainted with the Athonite tradition and learned from the holy ascetic fathers there," he said. Upon returning to their homeland,

“they preserved the hesychast tradition and became worthy servants of Romanian Orthodoxy.”

The Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church recalled several Romanian saints associated with Mount Athos, including St Nicodemus of Tismana, St Paisius Velichkovsky of Neamț, St Antipas of Calapodești, St Dionysius of Colciu and St Petronius of Prodromos Skete.

“We pray to all the Holy Athonite Fathers to grant us strong faith for prayer and a deep spiritual life, and to help us become witnesses to the love of the Most Holy Trinity for our salvation and for the joy of the Church,” Patriarch Daniel concluded.

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