

From medicine to theology: Metropolitan Antonie of Bessarabia recounts his journey towards faith



His Eminence Metropolitan Antonie of Bessarabia spoke on a ProTV Chişinău podcast about the path that led him from medical studies to theology and, subsequently, to monastic life.

Metropolitan Antonie explained that his interest in theology began while he was studying medicine, when his psychiatry courses prompted questions about the existence of the soul and its suffering.

“And these questions arose: if someone is suffering in their soul, that means the soul exists. But under what circumstances does the soul become ill? And if the soul becomes ill, what is the relationship between the suffering of the soul and the suffering of the body?”

After completing his medical studies, news of the opening of the Faculty of Theology in Iaşi and the opportunity for young people from Bessarabia to study there prompted him to pursue this new path. In Iaşi, encounters with professors such as Fr Mircea Păcurariu helped him, according to his own account, see the history he had been taught during the Soviet period differently.

“I knew that I would serve the Romanian Orthodox Church and that I would do everything in my power to help my fellow countrymen who do not know to which people they belong,” His Eminence stressed.

‘Faith gives us strength’

His Eminence Metropolitan Antonie also spoke about the beginnings of his calling to monastic life. When he arrived at Neamț Monastery in 1990, he was impressed by the life of the monks and the monastery’s liturgical rhythm, recalling: “I discovered that the monastery was something that belonged to me.”

The thought of monastic life remained with him for many years, and he was eventually tonsured a monk in 2011, at the age of 48. The Metropolitan of Bessarabia emphasised the maturity required to undertake the monastic vows and the role of faith in this journey.

“Faith is necessary because it helps us. Faith gives us the strength to overcome certain trials and temptations that arise in our lives.”

His Eminence explained that a monk undertakes three vows – obedience, chastity and voluntary poverty – and particularly emphasised the importance of obedience. Referring to his decision to embrace monastic life, the Metropolitan explained that it stems from a desire to draw closer to God and a need to devote more time to prayer.

‘A particular cross’

Asked about his current ministry at the head of the Metropolis of Bessarabia, His Eminence Metropolitan Antonie said that this responsibility, too, is a form of obedience that is “by no means easy”, and acknowledged that he regards it as “a particular cross”.

His Eminence also spoke about the areas in which the Metropolis of Bessarabia intends to develop its work, including cooperation with state institutions, social outreach, the promotion of historical truth, the Romanian language and culture, and educational projects for young people.

In conclusion, Metropolitan Antonie encouraged the faithful to place their trust in God.

“Do not be afraid; believe in God, for He does not forsake us. He will always be with us; it depends on us. God never abandons us, but we can distance ourselves from Him.”

Photo: Facebook / Metropolis of Bessarabia

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