

Archbishop Irineu reminds monastics that they don't need a virtual identity



During the first-ever Monastic Assembly of the five dioceses within the Metropolis of Transylvania, the Archbishop of Alba Iulia highlighted the dangers of using social platforms for the spiritual life of monastics.

“The contemporary monk doesn’t need a virtual identity in order to communicate with the world, even in their wish for mission,” the archbishop noted Sept. 10.

Social media communication is “artificial and sterile” and “separates people rather than brings them together”.

“Replacing the Philokalic spirit with the worldly spirit, which they consider an increase or a progress, the ascetic effort, the daily prayer rule, the obedience and even relaxation time diminish.”

Archbishop Irineu stated that this process comes in contradiction with the old monastic principle: Ora et labora! (Pray and work!).

Both lay persons and monastics who “are aware of their calling” keep themselves away from these media networks.

The risks regarding the spiritual life to which the Archbishop referred include the alienation from God, from our neighbour and ourselves, instability, indiscipline and the waste of time.

Archbishop Irineu advised all the monks and nuns who gathered at the Dormition of the Theotokos Monastery at Izvorul Muresului that “the prayer rope should be their only mobile phone.”

As Saint John Climacus once said, it is only this way that monks can become “a light for lay people.”

Father Razvan Ionescu also approached the topic of social media risks in an article for Basilica.ro.

The parish priest of the Romanian Orthodox community of Saints Paraskeva and Genoveva in Paris cautioned about the idea of “unilateralizing our lives by shifting our focus online to the detriment of living in the concrete reality.”

“I believe that the Church can suggest new ways of fasting to new forms of addiction and our presence on social media, a way of mingling with the crowd, can turn into a withdrawal in prayer, following the example of our Saviour.”

In order to really give up using social media, Fr Ionescu suggested a real communion instead of a virtual communion.

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