

## **20th anniversary of repose of Elder Cleopas Ilie prayerfully commemorated at Sihastria Monastery**



His Grace Bishop Veniamin of Southern Bessarabia on Saturday, Dec. 8, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St Theodora Church of Sihastria Monastery commemorating Archimandrite Cleopas Ilie, one of Romania's charismatic elders of the past century, on the 20th anniversary of his blessed repose.

Elder Cleopas was an abbot of Sihastria Monastery and a well-known spiritual figure of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Elder Cleopas was the spiritual godfather of the current Patriarch of Romania, Daniel, at his monastic tonsure.

Father Cleopas of blessed memory reposed in the Lord on December 2, 1998, but

his teachings still inspire Orthodox believers in Romania and abroad.

After the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Veniamin officiated a memorial service for the rest of the souls of Archimandrite Cleopas, Hieroschemamonk Paisie Olaru, and Archimandrite Ioanichie Balan.

The service took place in the monastery's cemetery.

'Although they lived in harsh times, these monks remained steadfast and faithful to Christ's calling, they committed with devotion to bear the cross and the monastic votes, being the support and models of living in Christ for many believers, monastics or clergy,' the bishop said.

Bp Veniamin noted that the three Romanian elders professed the true faith 'in word and deed,' being great spiritual directors of the believers.

Thanks to these spiritual figures, Sihastria Monastery has become 'a genuine spiritual oasis.'

His Grace recalled that one of those who was received into the ranks of monastics in this monastery was the Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Daniel, who had fr. Cleopas Ilie as a spiritual father, but also took advice from the fathers Paisie and Ioanichie.

As a sign of gratitude for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, the abbot of Sihastria Monastery, Archimandrite Arsenie Popa, presented Bishop Varlaam with a picture of the three great elders.

In turn, the Bishop Veniamin honoured the abbot with the Saint Dionysius Erhan Honorary Diploma of the Southern Bessarabia Diocese.

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