

Encounters with the priests via virtual technology in the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Canada



With God's help, between April 27-29, 2020, the Diocesan Center hosted through the Zoom virtual platform several encounters with the priests from the three Deaneries in 3 sessions: Eastern, Central and Western of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Canada.

The meetings were chaired by His Grace Bishop Ioan Casian, the Romanian Orthodox Bishop of Canada. At each meeting the troparion of the Resurrection was sung, *"Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life!"*

HG Bishop Ioan Casian gave an introductory speech on the purpose of these meetings: to take a tour of the liturgical and pastoral activity during the pandemic at Easter and after, and to see the way in which the spiritual, liturgical and community life happened in each of the parishes of the Diocese in the special context of this year.

"The church, like the whole society, is affected by this special situation of isolation – said the hierarch – because the community and communion are part of its DNA. The Church means community and communion with God and neighbor. Forced isolation produced a brutal, unforeseen and unprepared rupture trauma, and this produces longer-term effects. Not all of us are always prepared for such moments

and sometimes it is difficult to understand and coordinate and act in this regard.

At the same time, this time is under the 'veil of eternity', said Archimandrite Vasile Vasilachi, and it can be a time, a kairos, an opportunity for God. It can mean a revision and a reconsideration of what we have lived so far from a more spiritual perspective that comes from the self-imposed hesychia in the family or personal at home and that takes us away for a certain routine well established for a long time in everyone's life. It is a possible time for metanoia, that is, the change of mind, to become aware of a habit of 'dissipation' through the real world of unnecessary social relationships or through that of virtual information and the opportunity to re-enter the depths of the soul cell where we personally meet God, and thus strengthened, we go out on trips especially virtually at this time in the world of spiritual culture."

Each priest in the Diocese had the opportunity to share the experience of pastoral work with the local church community in the context of the '*social and physical distancing*' required during this trying period. Everyone was able to talk about the special conditions in each province and the way in which the recommendations made by the Romanian Patriarchate and most of the Orthodox Churches, by the Canadian federal, provincial and local authorities and not least by the Romanian Orthodox Diocese were perceived and lived here in Canada. Some of the priests were able to meet the faithful in online broadcasting of the main religious services of this special period for the liturgical and spiritual life of the Orthodox faithful.

The priests felt this lack of the real community, physically present, praying with them in a single voice to God. At the same time, this time gave birth in some of them to the understanding of the need for another kind of pastoral work that would include as many people as possible. And the virtual path can be the path that enters where physically there are fewer chances. It was also stressed the need for a greater nuance of catechesis by age groups given that due to special recommendations for the participation in religious services could involve a participation only of certain age groups less exposed to the danger of contamination.

These meetings were moments of spiritual communion even if they had this virtual component. The priests saw and strengthened each other during this trying period both personally and in the pastoral mission.

The Romanian hierarchy of Canada thanked the clergy for their participation and collaboration in guiding the spiritual ship of the Church of Christ, that is, the faithful

to salvation through devotion and responsibility towards God and neighbor.

The sessions ended with the hymn of the Axion specific to this period: *'The Angel cried to her who is full of grace.'*

[Source](#)