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Romanian President to award National Order of Merit to Italy's assistant bishop for philanthropic work during pandemic



His Grace Bishop Atanasie of Bogdania will receive the Romanian Knight's National Order of Merit for the philanthropic work carried out by the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Italy during the pandemic.

On [Thursday](#), President Klaus Iohannis signed the decree for the decoration of His Grace Assistant Bishop Atanasie of Bogdania (Tudor Rusnac), but also of Pastor Lupu Corneliu Benone, coordinator of the Romanian Adventist Church in Italy.

The President awards these decorations "as a sign of high appreciation and gratitude for the solidarity and dedication they have shown in their intense social-philanthropic activity for Romanian citizens on the territory of the Italian Republic, thus helping to limit the impact of the current epidemiological crisis on the Romanian community and especially on the vulnerable social categories."

His Grace Atanasie has been an assistant bishop since 2018, but had been serving in the Romanian Diocese of Italy for more than 12 years. His Grace is 38 years old and comes from Chisinau.

The titular Bishop of the Diocese of Italy, His Grace Bishop Siluan, was also decorated by the President of Romania. In 2014 he was awarded the National Order of Cultural Merit in the rank of Officer.

What the Church did for Romanians during the pandemic

Many of the Romanians working in Italy have a precarious financial situation and the effects of the coronavirus crisis have brought them to the limit. In this context, most of them found support in the Romanian parishes in the Peninsula.

The parishes provided the supply of basic foodstuffs, but also medicines, hygiene products or money. Another type of support offered refers to the payment of rent for Romanians without possibilities.

At the same time, the parish communities showed solidarity in supporting the hospitals in Italy, but also in Romania.

In addition, the clergy and missionaries from the Diocesan Centre in Rome and from the Dormition Monastery took care of several isolated people at home but also the families in the foster homes of children in Romania with particularly serious illnesses.

Photography courtesy of the Basilica.ro Archive

[Source](#)