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Patriarch Daniel explains liturgical gesture inspired by St Peter during miraculous catch of fish



The Patriarch of Romania on Sunday spoke about a liturgical gesture that the Church learned from St. Peter, who fell to his knees after the miraculous catch of fish, because he had been distrustful of the word of Christ, and said: Leave me, Lord! I'm a sinner!

"That is why, today, when the ministers of the Church enter the Holy Altar, they bow to the ground in front of the Altar Table, which represents the tomb and the throne of glory of Christ, and say: God, cleanse me a sinner."

"We have learned this from the Apostle Peter, because before the holiness of God man must confess his sins and ask for their cleansing and forgiveness," His Beatitude said in a homily delivered Sept. 27 at the historic chapel of the Patriarchal Residence.

The most important lesson in ecclesiology

St. Peter had the attitude of repentance because Christ's exhortation to cast the nets came after a night of toil in which they caught nothing, and the apostle was

not fully confident of success.

“But he showed humble obedience to Jesus,” said the Patriarch, “and this obedience made him do what Jesus commanded him. In a very short time, surprisingly, when those in the boat lifted the nets from the water, they were full of fish.”

Unexpected help came by God’s grace after a night of work. Thus, the miraculous catch of fish was “the most important lesson of ecclesiology,” said Patriarch Daniel, who underscored that “in the ministry of Christ’s Church, God’s grace or help counts first, and then human skill.”

“And grace is given to those who are humble, obedient, and industrious,” added His Beatitude.

At the end of labours, we see the work of grace

The Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church pointed out that grace is offered to those who strive to achieve good goals.

“The Saviour Jesus Christ performed the miracle of the great catch of fish not for the disciples as lazy fishermen, but the miracle of catching a great multitude of fish was performed for the fishermen who had laboured all night, who were exhausted so that the miraculous grace came when human power reached its end.”

“Where human power has done nothing of what was desired, grace has unexpectedly intervened and brought great joy. At the end of human labours – toils that have produced much humility – we see the wonderful work of grace.”

But in addition to diligence, humility is needed to receive divine grace, the Romanian Patriarch said.

“Those who work hard and become humble because they feel they need God’s help and ask for it in prayer, they receive the grace to work miracles.”

“So the miracle performed by the Saviour Jesus shows us that much effort, humility, and obedience are needed. Christ gives his grace to those who are obedient, humble and diligent, therefore the miracle of the great catch of fish must urge us to humility, to obedience to God, to much prayer and labour.”

The Patriarch of Romania explained that there are moments in life when, “although we work hard, we do not succeed in fulfilling what we set out to do”, even if “the work was a good one and we did not ask for vain things.”

“Then it is a sign that we must wait with hope because our requests are not always fulfilled by God when and how we want, but He sometimes fulfils them later, unexpectedly and in a way that we did not foresee (…) to reward our faith, humility and hope.”

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