

Archdiocese of Iași: Grievous that Romanians can come here for any purpose except annual St. Parascheva pilgrimage



The feast of St. Parascheva the protectress of Moldova on October 14 is one of the largest religious celebrations in the liturgical calendar in the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Every year, tens of thousands of Orthodox faithful flock to the city of Iași to venerate the saint's precious relics. Last year, the weekend-long celebrations drew more than 90,000 from throughout Romania and abroad.

This year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, authorities have banned pilgrims from outside the city of Iași from participating in the feast.

On the other hand, the Archdiocese of Iași regrettably notes that Romanians are allowed to enter the city for any other purpose.

A press release from the Archdiocese recalls that the St. Parascheva pilgrimage has been held every year since 1641, when her relics were moved to the Iași Cathedral after residing in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Constantinople.

“Holy relics,” the Archdiocese writes, “an essential element of the confession of the Orthodox Christian faith, are concrete proof that when man acquires the grace of the Holy Spirit, his body receives the gift of holiness that can then be enjoyed by those who venerate it in faith.”

The Church has always been active in the social and medical fields, proving it cares for the physical health of people.

“At the same time, the Church is obliged to take care of the mental health of its believers at all times, but especially in times like these, when more and more forms of anxiety, despair, fear and inner confusion have appeared. Participating in the feast of the St. Parascheva is for many an opportunity to be strengthened in the trying times they are going through.”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Church has supported the efforts of the health authorities.

Thus, in the context of the annual pilgrimage, “it would have seemed normal for the authorities to rely on the responsible behaviour of the faithful, with the same confidence with which they were invested, as citizens, in the recent local elections. Everyone must understand that fundamental freedoms include the right of people to freely and unrestrictedly manifest their religious beliefs.”

Lamenting the stricter measures enacted regarding the pilgrimage, the Archdiocese writes: “It is obvious that society as a whole is in a difficult time, in which measures are required to protect human health. At the same time, it is not easy to overlook the grief of those who find that they have the freedom to come to Iași for any other reason, except to participate in the pilgrimage on the occasion of the feast of St. Parascheva.”

Those who are not permitted to participate in the celebrations in Iași are asked to use the time they would have spent on the pilgrimage for prayer and attending the Divine Liturgy in their parishes, and to use the funds they would have spent on helping the sick.

Photography courtesy of Facebook / Constantin Sturzu

English article by OrthoChristian

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