

## **Romanian Patriarchate Spokesperson demands respect for most of the good and faithful people of the country: Pilgrimage is the expression of responsible religious freedom**



**The Romanian Patriarchate's Spokesperson Vasile Bănescu commented on the decision to ban this year's pilgrimage from Bucharest, on the patronal feast of the Patriarchal Cathedral. The spokesman reminded that the pilgrimage is a manifestation of religious freedom and that pilgrims and the Romanian Orthodox Church deserve more respect and trust from the authorities.**

"The rigorously organized pilgrimage, in exceptional conditions and observing the drastically applied rules and whose violation (now imaginary) can be sanctioned at

any time by the authorities, is not only one of the deepest expressions of responsible religious freedom, but, in the current context, also a form beneficial for trust and respect for most of the good and faithful people of this country,” Vasile Bănescu said.

Bănescu lamented that pilgrims are treated as risk factors in spreading the Covid-19 pandemic and that the government is not trusting the Church’s institutional capacity to organize and manage such large events.

“Negative exercises of imagination at the highest level regarding the behaviour of believers (declared a priori as suspects), the management ability of the Church (otherwise an exemplary social partner of the authorities) and the importance of the presence and manifestation of religion in society can be really offensive,” he said.

The spokesman stressed that the decision to cancel the pilgrimages from Iași and Bucharest this year violates religious freedom.

“The lack of inter-institutional dialogue, of co-optation in reflection on decisions with a major public impact on the suspension, even temporary, of fundamental freedoms, such as religious freedom, of experts in conjecturally related fields of politics and public health, denounces an excessive contempt for the immediate social reality,” Vasile Bănescu said.

“This is much more complex than it seems to those who believe it can be changed at any time and with any consequences,” he added.

The Romanian Orthodox Church was not consulted in making this decision, just as it was not consulted in banning the pilgrimage in Iasi.

Vasile Bănescu commented: “The community body functions naturally only in a state of balance springing from discernment and dialogue for which the Church constantly pleads. As for the observance of all the sanitary rules that are imposed now. Arrogance, decisional autarchy and moral solipsism have not honoured and will never honour anyone.”

The Prime Minister of Romania announced on Monday that the pilgrimage to Saint Pious Dimitrie the New in Bucharest, which was to take place in the last week of October, was banned, as was the pilgrimage to Saint Parascheva in Iasi.

Source