

Patriarch Daniel: Two weeks ahead of Nativity Fast, we listen to the most significant gospel passage



The Patriarch of Romania said that the Parable of the unmerciful rich man and Lazarus is the most significant of the gospel readings and was proclaimed last Sunday to help us prepare for the Nativity Fast.

“The unmerciful rich man loses his salvation.” This is the conclusion of the parable with many spiritual meanings.

“In two weeks the Nativity Fast begins, and this Gospel wants to indicate how important almsgiving is,” the Patriarch said on Sunday, November 1, at the Chapel of St George at the Patriarchal Residence.

The Gospel presents two ways of living – one in joy, wealth, feasts, and another in poverty, sickness, loneliness.

“This contrast shows us that God respects human freedom, and the way man organizes his life. No one is obliged to do good.”

Most details about the afterlife

But this gospel shows us more than two kinds of life.

“It is the most significant of the gospel passages in terms of the truths it reveals about the link between man’s life on earth and the life of the human soul that is separated from the body through physical death,” Patriarch Daniel said.

“It is the Gospel in which the Saviour gives us the most details about the life of the soul beyond the grave,” the Patriarch explained, continuing with the presentation of these particularities:

“First of all, the Gospel illustrates that the human soul, after being separated, reaches either the communion and joy of the righteous who have fulfilled the will of God on earth in their lives or the isolation and unhappy existence of those in hell who do not enjoy either communion with God or with each other.”

“Second, we see that the human soul after its separation from the body is in a conscious state, not in a state of slumber, or numbness. The human soul after death has an enlightened conscience and remembers all the deeds it committed during earthly life.”

“Third, the gospel shows us that the human soul after separation from the body is able to distinguish its own spiritual state and the state of others who have passed from this earthly life to the eternal.”

Heaven or hell begins in this life in man’s soul

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel pointed out that there is equity in the afterlife.

“God is just. Those who have lived in indifference, in joyfulness without thinking of God, without gratitude to God, and without mercy toward fellow people who suffer are not listened by God. And those who suffered, but had hope in God, humbled themselves and had patience, did not judge others, but put all their hope in God, now they enjoy the love of God.”

“The way of living in eternity depends on the way man lived on earth,” His Beatitude noted.

The patriarch highlighted that this idea that heaven or hell begins in the human soul since this life has been emphasized by the Holy Fathers, but also by iconographers and writers.

Dostoevsky emphasized this idea in his novels, reminded the Patriarch, pointing to the Saviour’s words: “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21).

“This gospel is a strong foundation for the Church’s prayers for those who reposed in the Lord,” Patriarch Daniel said on November 1.

“Merciful love is the only thing that is stronger than death. This merciful love in which the presence of God’s grace is felt is the only one that can elevate man to the state of salvation, to the state of communion with God,” the Patriarch of Romania concluded.