

22 years since the death of Elder Cleopa Ilie



Elder Cleopa Ilie passed away on 2 December 1998. Considered by many people a *unique “Avva” of the Romanian spirituality*, as inspiringly Rev. Prof Dr. Dumitru Staniloae called him, Elder Cleopa was born in Sulița commune, Botoșani county, on a spring day.

His parents, Alexandru and Ana Ilie, called him Constantin, and he was the fifth child of the ten to this family of diligent and religious peasants.

After attending the courses of the primary school in his native village, he spent three years as a disciple of schemamonk Paisie Olaru, hermit at Cozancea Skete at the time.

He joined the community of Sihăstria Skete together with his elder brother Vasile, in December 1929. On 2 August 1937, he was tonsured into monasticism by the

name of Cleopa, by schemamonk Proclu Popa, a great monk characterised by love and humbleness.

Given the bad health of abbot Ioanichie Moroi, he was appointed temporary igumen, in June 1942. Two years later he was ordained hierodeacon and in 1945 he became igumen at Sihăstria Skete, raised to the rank of monastery in 1947, on which occasion protosyncelos Cleopa Ilie was made archimandrite.

Soon after, he retired in the mountains for six months, because of the persecution of the communist regime. When he came back he was appointed abbot of Slatina Monastery, Suceava, where he gathered a community of 80 monks.

His years of peace were over as soon as the Security forces started looking for him again, so that father Cleopa took refuge to Stănișoara Mountains, together with hieromonk Arsenie Papacioc.

After two years, he was brought to Slatina Monastery, by request of patriarch Justinian Marina, and in 1956, he came back to Sihăstria Monastery, where from he retired again, for the third time, to Neamț Mountains.

He lived as a hermit for five years, and then, in 1964, he came back to the monastic settlement of Sihăstria, where he advised and preached tirelessly, with much love, both for monks and for lay people, for more than three decades.

On 6 August 1987, Father Cleopa becomes the monastic Godfather of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, theologian Dan-Ilie at the time. Father Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie formed many disciples who remember him with great esteem, and bequeathed spiritual writings full of wisdom, showing the model of a great father confessor in whose heart the fire of faith was burning.

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