

Patriarch Daniel says spiritual guidance is a holy work of balance, which avoids extremes



Patriarch Daniel invested six new spiritual fathers during a blessing service held at the Chapel of St George at the patriarchal residence on Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

“This holy work is a work of balance. A good spiritual father avoids extremes; he avoids relativism or laxity and exaggerated rigour,” said the Patriarch.

“If we say, ‘This is how the times are. We are moving forward, we are adapting anyway’, this means relativism and, instead of healing man, we let him move ahead to the spiritual abyss,” he added.

“Others are extremely rigorous and exaggerated and lead some to despair,” His Beatitude noted.

“A spiritual father must be like a doctor: to know both harshness and gentleness and to apply them according to the person, according to temperament, age, culture, sensitivity and spiritual age,” Patriarch Daniel said.

“The whole love of the Holy Trinity is shown by the merciful love of the spiritual father, by the light of the gospel, by the Orthodox teaching it transmits, and by the power of the earnest or fervent prayer he shows to the spiritual sons, because often people know what they have to do, but they can’t do it alone,” Patriarch Daniel noted.

He mentioned that “in our Romanian tradition, the great spiritual fathers were older people and connoisseurs of the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers.” This tradition of special training is still preserved today.

“Just as someone who has graduated from medical school does not immediately become a practising physician, but needs a special period of training until they have the right to practice medicine, so whoever has finished theology needs special training, a further examination to receive the certificate of a spiritual father.”

Patriarch Daniel said that the work of the spiritual director is based on four pillars:

- Holy Scripture
- Writings and canons of the Holy Fathers
- Prayer
- Obedience to the local bishop

“A spiritual father must show the light of the gospel of Christ, which enlightens every man who comes into the world. This means that the teaching of the spiritual father is one based on the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers and the canons of the Holy Fathers, the canons that we have as spiritual guidance. And, finally, a spiritual father must transmit the warmth of prayer through the Holy Spirit, Who helps us to pray,” said the Patriarch of Romania.

“It is very important to listen to the local bishop and to perform this mystery of the remission of sins according to the canons of the Orthodox Church, not so much according to personal opinions,” said His Beatitude.

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