

## **Patriarch Daniel invests new spiritual fathers with 'apostolic power to remit sins'**



**His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel invested seven priests from the Archdiocese of Bucharest with 'the apostolic power' to retain and remit sins during a special ceremony held at St George's Chapel at the patriarchal residence on Thursday, December 10, 2020.**

"The Holy Apostles received from the Saviour Jesus Christ, on the day of His Resurrection, the Holy Spirit to forgive the sins of those who repent. Therefore, the power to retain and remit the sins of repentant people is an apostolic power. This power or responsibility, this holy work was then transmitted to the bishops who led the dioceses on the path of salvation, teaching the right faith, the right lifestyle and the unity of the Church."

"Over time, as church communities multiplied and spread to villages, not just in cities or towns, bishops delegated some older priests with spiritual experience and

a high level of theological education to be spiritual fathers.”

“Later, when theological schools, seminaries, and faculties appeared, it was considered that not only biological age and seniority in the priesthood mattered, but also theological training, and so it came to pass that married priests too, not just improved monks, became spiritual fathers in a diocese.”

“Therefore, to this day, this practice remains, namely, after graduation, special training is required to obtain the appointment as spiritual father,” said His Beatitude.

“He is not only a remitter of sins but also a spiritual guide for the remission of sins and the healing of selfish passions and the cultivation of virtues.”

“The purpose of the Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit and to grow spiritually in love with God and with others. This spiritual growth takes place after the healing of passions.”

“Canon 102 of the Council in Trullo of 692 says that the spiritual father must be like a doctor. It does not say that the spiritual father must be like a judge, but like a doctor, who knows or recommends the best medicines for curing a disease.”

“This canon specifies that the spiritual father must know both rigour, exigency or akribeia, but also gentleness or certain flexibility so that the one who confesses does not fall into despair. The spiritual father must be harsher with the careless, insensitive, and show encouragement to those who are overwhelmed by the rebuke of conscience for their sins.”

According to His Beatitude, a spiritual father must be neither too lenient nor too demanding or rigorous, but “keep the middle line.”

“The purpose of spiritual guidance is not mere forgiveness of sins, but also spiritual growth in holiness. As such, it takes a lot of patience, wisdom and knowledge of each person.”

“Some people free themselves from a passion in a shorter time, others need several years, and others only before death, says St. John the Ladder in his book The Ladder (of Divine Ascent).”

“Therefore, the Holy Canons cannot be applied without taking into account the spiritual age, not only the physical age and the context in which each of those who confess lives, their culture, will, sensitivity.”

There are people who need encouragement because they are too scrupulous, Patriarch Daniel pointed out, and they need an “awakening of conscience,” because they are too pleased with themselves.

“Every person must be treated with great care, respect and patience,” said Patriarch Daniel.

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