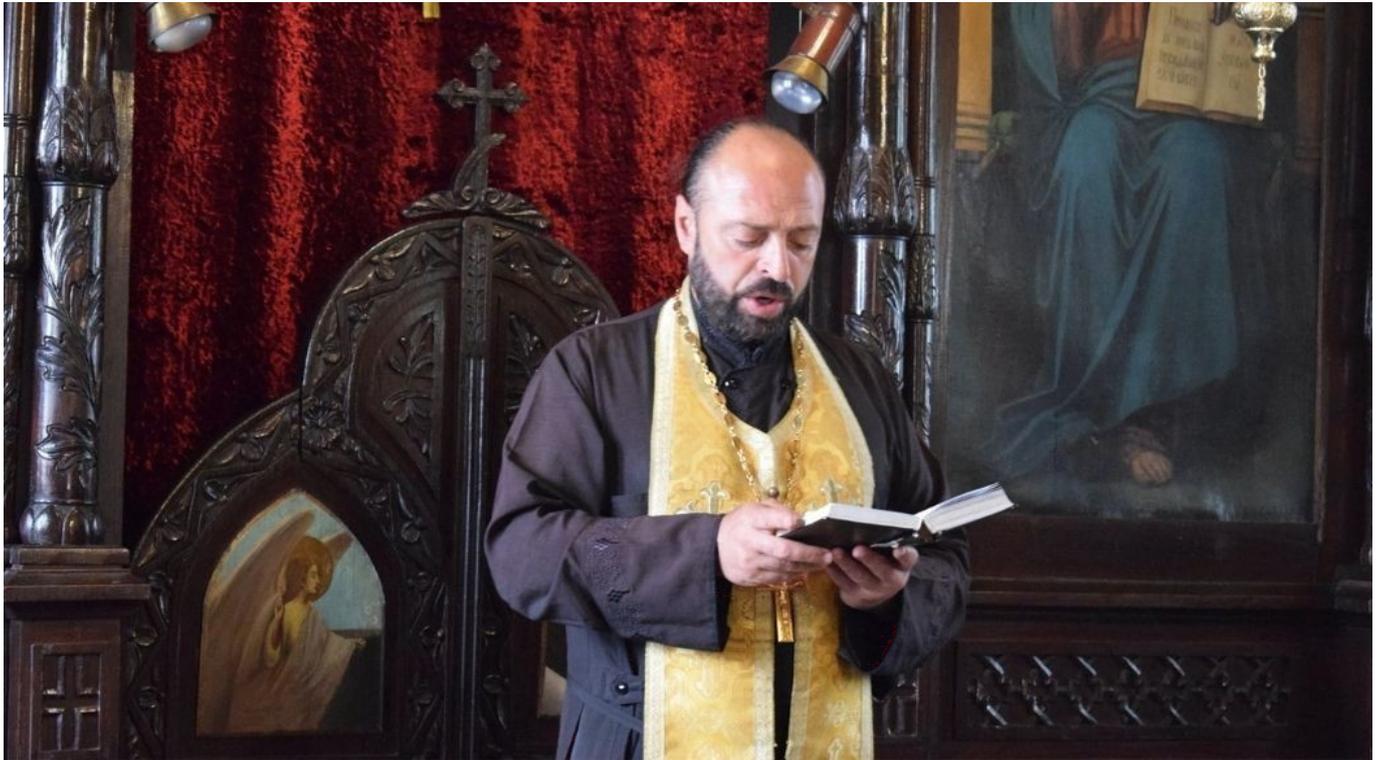


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## **The lessons of 2020 give us the key to salvation, Priest Georgi Fotakiev says**



For many of us, the year 2020 was extremely memorable – a year of reassessment of our value system. Some said farewell to loved ones, others lost their jobs, others saw the way to the salvation of their souls. On the eve of the New 2021, most Bulgarians look to the uncertain future with mixed feelings of fear, insecurity and flickering hope. However, the pandemic, which has confused the lives of billions of people on earth, is unlikely to subside as quickly as it appeared.

According to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, nothing in this world happens without God's permission. Coincidentally or not, the pandemic hit Bulgaria during the Easter Lent in spring and took the highest number of fatalities during the Nativity Lent. "I am extremely grateful to God and I hope that people have understood that He wants to tell us something," says Father Georgi Fotakiev from the St. Tsar Boris Church in the city of Varna in an interview with Radio Bulgaria. "It is in these times that the so-called traditional Orthodox Christian, who visits the church without faith, rushes to shop and turns the bright Christian holidays into vanity," says Father Georgi. Therefore, according to him, 2020 has given Bulgarians the opportunity to rethink events from a spiritual point of view because the pandemic has shown them their mortality.

"Lately, material prosperity and all sorts of alluring possibilities seem to have alienated man from the idea of eternity. Everyone fights for the moment without realizing that this is eternity itself. The things you do are an echo of what awaits us in eternal life - where each of us goes at one point or another. That's why I'm happy that the year has been graceful from a Christian point of view. I hope everyone gets the best out of it."

As for the trials of 2020, which most people had to go through - they are fading against the background of famine, wars and severe epidemics over the centuries. "We have not yet seen events in which human nature is tested in relation to God and one's neighbour," Father Georgi recalls, adding, "It is then that it becomes clear who is a true human being."

"If people can keep this awareness in 2021 and have managed to see the vanity of everything - they can keep their faith and strengthen it. I wish they understood that "here and now" it is not in time and space, but in eternity. God has given us this planet to protect it. It is normal to have a reaction for everything we cause to all nature and to our souls. Due to our irresponsibility, disasters increase."

That is why Father Georgi's wish for the New 2021 is for all to hold a "peaceful joy," such as that which comes to us from above. And it is possible only if people keep their faith, despite the difficulties. The priest's hope is that Bulgarians will be able to humble themselves a little and reassess their values:

"I wish all Bulgarians health, longevity and success in all their endeavors, to make efforts and do things because faith without deeds is a dead faith."

That is why the message of Father Georgi is gathered in only two words “Good deeds!”

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