

## ROMANIAN PATRIARCHATE DEFENDS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



The Romanian Orthodox Church spoke in defense of keeping religious education in the pre-university school curriculum at a debate on the matter organized by the Commission for Education, Science, Youth, and Sports of the Chamber of Deputies and the Commission for Education, Youth, and Sports of the Romanian Senate at the Parliamentary Palace yesterday.

The Church was represented by Patriarchal Vicar His Grace Bishop Varlaam of Ploiești, Fr. Nicușor Beldiman, Coordinating Patriarchal Counselor, and Fr. George Jambore, inspector of the Educational Theological Department of the Romanian Patriarchate, reports the Basilica News Agency.

Bp. Varlaam emphasized that “the Patriarchate shows a very special interest in education in general and, of course, in religious education in particular.”

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel also addressed an appeal to the Minister of Education on the matter last year.

Religious education consists of just one hour a week at present, and the Church believes its request to keep this minimum must be supported, Bp. Varlaam

explained. Religious education should not be discriminated against, but should be treated like the other humanities, the hierarch argued.

The meeting at the Parliamentary Palace was organized in view of the upcoming curriculum review for technological and professional schools for the 2021-2022 school year. One proposal maintains the one hour of religious education a week, while other proposals cut it in half or abolish it altogether.

Bp. Varlaam emphasized the importance of religious education “for training young people for modern society, which means not only technology, but also culture and spirituality, and from this perspective, the discipline cannot be replaced with any other.”

Importantly, the Patriarchal Vicar noted that, according to the Romanian constitution and other federal laws, children have the right to participate in religion classes. Moreover, more than 93% of Romanian parents have expressed the desire for their children to participate in such classes.

His Grace also explained that the teaching of religion in school has profound educational values, through its formative role in the lives of children and young people. The hour of religion, he explained, contributes to reducing the negative effects of the contemporary crisis of identity and orientation, as it proposes viable models of goodness, holiness and human coexistence.

Last year, Romanian Parliament revoked the mandatory nature of sexual education in schools after the Romanian Orthodox Church issued a statement opposing the obligatory nature of the classes, calling for parents to be able to retain the right to decide how their child will be educated in such matters, as provided for by the Romanian constitution. Studies show that sex education in public schools can damage a child’s innocence and purity, the Church argued.

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