

ROMANIAN CHURCH WON'T CHANGE RITE OF INFANT BAPTISM DESPITE PUBLIC PRESSURE



The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church announced yesterday that it has no right to change the rite of Holy Baptism.

A public scandal broke out after a 6-week-old baby suffered cardiac arrest and died earlier this month after being immersed in the waters of Baptism. The autopsy revealed water in the baby's lungs. Thousands signed a petition calling for the rite of infant Baptism to be changed. The matter was exacerbated by the fact that many outlets reported that the baby died during the Baptism.

"There is no word or deed to wipe away the tears and now soothe the broken hearts of parents and relatives, but we are with them at this particularly difficult time... We beseech the Most Merciful God to strengthen, comfort and heal this wound, together with the infant Justin, who will henceforth watch over them from the throne of the heavenly Father," the Archdiocese of Suceava said in a statement after the tragic incident.

Having met at the Patriarchal Palace in Bucharest under the chairmanship of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel yesterday, the Holy Synod resolved that it cannot and will not change its liturgical rites, reports the Basilica News Agency:

The Holy Synod recalled the statutory obligation of the Romanian Orthodox Church to remain in communion and dogmatic (doctrinal), liturgical (sacramental) and canonical (disciplinary) unity with the universal Orthodox Church. Therefore, the Romanian Orthodox Church cannot change its doctrine, its liturgical-sacramental ritual, and its canonical discipline, and urges all its servants to be more responsible when celebrating the Holy Mysteries and all blessing services.

The Holy Synod also decided that before an infant Baptism, the parents are to consult with a physician and then present the baby's health to the priest. The Patriarchate's Department of Theology will also give special attention to the rite of three immersions when preparing future priests, and every deanery is to organize an annual clergy meeting concerning the correct celebration of the Mysteries, and catechesis for the faithful on the spiritual significance of the Holy Mysteries.

The Synod made several other decisions including the election of Archimandrite Nichifor (Horia) as vicar bishop to the Archdiocese of Iasi and Archimandrite Nestor (Dinculeană) as vicar bishop to the Diocese of Deva and Hunedoara.

The hierarchs also declared 2022 as the Solemn Year of Prayer in the Church's Life and the Christian's Life and the Commemorative Year of the Hesychast Saints Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas, and Paisius of Neamț, and resolved to begin the canonization process of several Romanian confessors and missionaries under communism to mark the 140th anniversary of autocephaly and the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Patriarchate in 2025.

Finally, the Synod approved the liturgical texts in honor of the Hieromartyr Zenobius of Cilica and his sister Zenobia (October 30), and approved the inclusion of National Flag Day (June 26) and Romania's National Anthem Day (July 29) in the Christian Orthodox Calendar for 2022, under the heading Days and important dates.

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