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## **A church will honour the memory of victims of Pitești Phenomenon: “the most terrible act of barbarism of the contemporary world”**



**Pitești Prison of communist Romania was home to unspeakable horrors, where thousands suffered for their faith in Christ and political dissension.**

Now, the former penal facility is set to become the site of a future Orthodox church in honour of all who suffered there.

The foundation stone for the future church was placed and consecrated on Monday, March 8, 2021, by His Eminence Archbishop Calinic of Argeș and Muscel. The necessary arrangements for building a new church were worked out by Fr. Cozmin Ionuț Miloiu, who currently serves in the chapel at the prison building.

Before the consecration, Abp. Calinic celebrated the Divine Liturgy and a memorial

service for all the Pitești prison victims. He also spoke about all those who were physically and psychologically tortured at the prison and encouraged all those present to cultivate respect and love for their neighbour.

The penitentiary in Pitești, in its current form, was built between 1937-1941 and functioned as a penitentiary until 1977. It is especially known for the reeducation experiment conducted between December 1949 and September 1951 designed to violently “reeducate” the prisoners, including destroying their faith in Christ, altering their personalities to the point of absolute obedience.

French historian François Furet, considered Pitești “one of the most terrible dehumanization experiences our age has ever known.” Alexander Solzhenitsyn, having himself suffered in the Russian gulag system, described the Romanian prison as “the most terrible act of barbarism in the contemporary world.”

Among those who suffered in Pitești were Fr. Roman Braga, Fr. Gheorghe Calciu, both of whom ended their days in America, and Valeriu Gafencu.

The commemorative services were attended by representatives of the Pitești branch of the Association of Former Political Prisoners and the Pitești Prison Memorial Foundation.

Afterwards, Abp. Calinic also went to the monument to the victims of the prison in the centre of the city, where more memorial prayers were read.

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