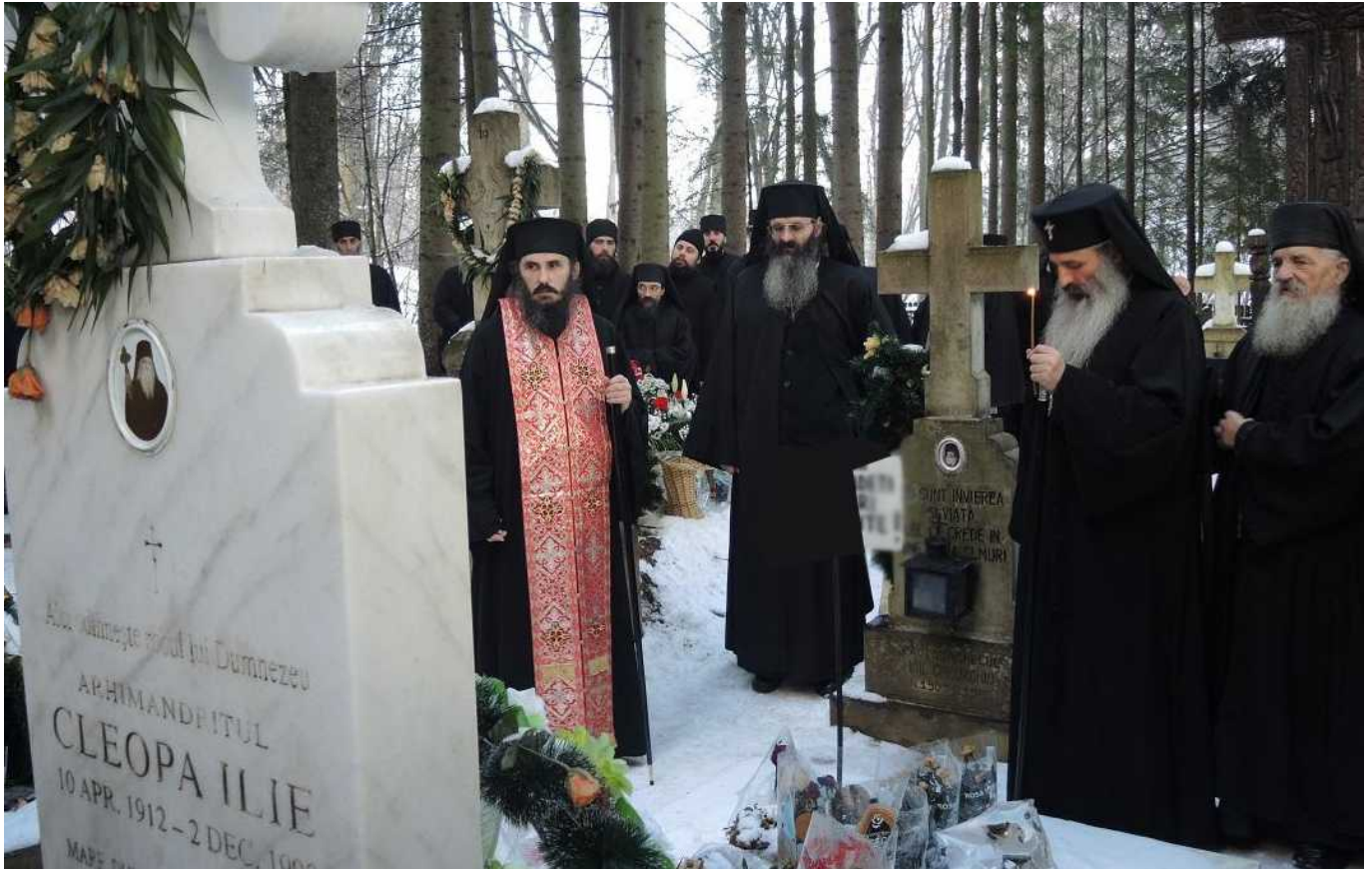


## **Elder Cleopa's coming canonization brings joy to hearts of orthodox faithful, says Abbot of Sihăstria**



News of the coming canonization of Elder Cleopa (Ilie) has brought great joy to the hearts of the Romanian Orthodox faithful, and especially those who are parishioners of Sihăstria Monastery, where the great 20th-century confessor and elder labored and is buried.

“Even though many already honor Fr. Cleopa as a saint, they still wanted their piety to be confirmed on an official level as well. We have often been asked when Fr. Cleopa would be canonized. Some of the pilgrims already call him St. Cleopa,” Sihăstria abbot Archimandrite Arsenie said.

At its session on February 25, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided to begin the canonization process of a dozen confessors and missionaries who suffered under Communism, to mark the 140th anniversary of autocephaly and the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Patriarchate in 2025.

The names of three of them were later announced: Elder Cleopa, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, and Elder Gherasim (Iscu) of Tismana Monastery.

Even more people will learn of Elder Cleopa's life and teachings through his eventual canonization, Abbot Arsenie said, and thus they will gain a worthy model to follow.

"It will once again demonstrate that the Church is alive, even if its teaching—as has been proved many times in its two-thousand-year history—is at odds with some mentalities, be they promoted by the powerful of the world, but which prove ephemeral in the end," Fr. Arsenie reflected.

Elder Cleopa was a great missionary and confessor against atheistic communism, the abbot recalled, and even during his years of isolated refuge in the mountains, he continued to serve the Church:

I say that his retreats into the wilderness were an indirect kind of mission because on the one hand it was an authentic way of monastic living, which also means prayer for the world, and on the other hand, even at the repression institutions in the area that sought him, his photo was displayed as that of someone who was in conflict with the power of that time, so that the police unwittingly proved that there are still great living people who, through their spiritual lives, contradict the desecrating ideology of the then-state leadership.

Through his vigorous sermons and his ministry as abbot of Sihăstria and Slatina Monasteries and spiritual father of many more, Elder Cleopa contributed to the flowering of the monastic and spiritual life throughout the country, Abbot Arsenie emphasized. His teachings are a synthesis of Patristic teachings yet exude a freshness that speaks to the contemporary world, and that is why people of all ranks in the Church sought him out, Fr. Arsenie concluded.

Photo credit: Sihăstria Monastery

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