

A Resurrection service for the deaf: They accept their condition and sip with their eyes the priest's signs



Reporters from Libertatea attended the Resurrection service at the old church Park 1 Rahova in Bucharest, where services are held simultaneously in two types of language: sign language for those with hearing impairments and the usual one for “those who hear.”

“People with hearing impairments and the frequent parishioners of the community did not take their eyes off the two priests who held the service and listened from the first to the last word. From the first to the last sign,” the publication wrote about the service officiated by Fr. Alexandru Țugui, a missionary priest for deaf persons in Alexandria, and Fr Eugen Bucur, the coordinator of the charity priests in Bucharest.

The two replaced priest Mirel Ilie, who was translating live the Resurrection service into sign language on the Facebook page of the Ministry of Defense.

Father Mirel Ilie pastors the deaf-mute community in Bucharest and neighbouring counties, consisting of over 4,500 deaf people and their families at risk. Almost 1,000 people come to the services almost constantly.

Father Mirel Ilie was also called “the soldier with two uniforms” because he is also a military priest. After he became a skydiving instructor, a conversation with the priest from his native village left an existential question in his mind: what is his purpose?

“Then I think I was born spiritually,” Father Mirel Ilie confessed.

After graduating from Theology, he was ordained a priest and served in nursing homes, social centres, and penitentiaries. There he felt that he could not help enough people with hearing and speech impairments.

He said that they are reconciled to themselves: “We are very unhappy for what we are, ungrateful for what God has given us. They actually accept their condition.”

Asked if they would like to be born again and be able to hear, everyone answers, “No, because I’m happy with myself.”

“In the world of those who hear, I see on TV that they fight, break up, steal from each other, while in their world there is no such thing. On the contrary, they are good and warm and give to others from their little part,” Father Mirel Ilie noted.

The services he officiates are attended by people with hearing impairments from Bucharest, Ilfov, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu, and sometimes from more distant counties and believers who hear.



This community is like a family: “After each service, they stay together and look for solutions to each other’s problems,” Libertatea writes.

“From people’s donations, the priest and church volunteers make food and medicine packages for those they care for, sometimes pay for medical care and interpreters when they need them, and run Bible schools for children.”

Father Mirel Ilie’s dream is to build a multifunctional centre with a canteen, chapel, speech therapy office, children’s meditations and psychologist. They need 420,000 euros, of which they have raised half the sum.

“I consider this to be the head of the line for me. I consider that this is the place from which God will have to wave to me and call me up there,” Father Mirel Ilie told the reporters.

Photography source: Libertatea

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