

## **Patriarch Daniel's message on 50th anniversary of uncovering of relics of Niculițel Saints**



Patriarch Daniel sent a message for the festivities organized by the Diocese of Tulcea marking the 50th anniversary of the uncovering of the relics of the Holy Niculițel Martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippas, June 4, 2021.

The land of Dobrudja “was sanctified by the sacrifice of many martyrs, especially in the first four Christian centuries,” the Patriarch of Romania noted.

“However, we cannot talk about the importance of the Niculițel martyrs without gratefully mentioning those who over time have made it possible to maintain their veneration,” His Beatitude added.

Please find the full text of Patriarch Daniel's message below.

**Martyrs of Christ - a source of light and holiness over the ages**  
**50 years since the uncovering of the relics of the Holy Martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus**

“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown” (Revelation 2:10)

Christ is risen!

With chosen spiritual joy, in the light of the feast of the Lord’s Resurrection, the entire Romanian Orthodoxy, at home and abroad, but particularly the Diocese of Tulcea welcomes this year the feast of the Holy Martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus, who have been the protectors of Dobrudja for a long time, and since 2008 are the patron saints of the young diocese of the Danube Delta.

This year (2021), we celebrate 50 years since the providential uncovering of these saints in the hearth of Niculițel village, in the summer of 1971, following torrential rains that once washed the earth reddened by the blood of martyrs.

The holy martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus were beheaded at Noviodunum (Isaccea-Niculițel, Tulcea County), on June 4 of an uncertain year, either during the anti-Christian persecutions launched by order of Emperor Diocletian, between 303-304, or during the persecutions ordered by the Emperor Licinius, between 319-324, or during the persecutions of the Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363).

In this regard, the Syriac Martyrology mentions June 4 as a day of commemoration of the Holy Martyr Filippus, and St Jerome’s Martyrology mentions all four martyrs (Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus) as being commemorated on the same date, June 4.

The Holy Martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus were buried in the martyrium of Niculițel, under the majestic basilica built over their tomb, in the second half of the 4th century.

This basilica has a special significance for the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church because here the relics of these saints have been preserved in a martyrium built especially for them.

The land of Dobrudja, starting with the martyrs Epictetus and Astion of Halmyris (†July 8, 290) and continuing with the martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus of Isaccea-Niculițel, was sanctified by the sacrifice of many martyrs,

especially in the first four Christian centuries.

However, one cannot talk about the importance of the martyrs from Niculițel without gratefully mentioning those who have made it possible to maintain their veneration over time.

First, we remember with reverence the Christians who lifted their bodies after martyrdom and buried them in a common place.

In particular, we remember the bright figure of the Holy Hierarch Hyacinth of Vicina, who also resided in the Niculițel area, in Isaccea, Tulcea County and who became, in 1359, the first Metropolitan of the Voivodship of Wallachia, residing in Curtea de Argeș, to be next to the country's ruler prince, Nicolae Alexandru.

The canonization of Metropolitan Hyacinth and the Venerable Dionysius Exiguus (6th century) was made by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, at our initiative, in 2008.

Of course, it is worth mentioning all the hierarchs from the Lower Danube, who during the Ottoman rule over Dobrudja (1428-1878) kept the flame of the Christian faith and the Romanian national identity burning.

In particular, we remember today the name of the hierarch Antim Nica, the diocesan bishop of the Diocese of the Lower Danube (1973-1994), by whose care the Paleo-Christian tomb from Niculițel was built, between 1984-1990, over the old martyrium of the fourth-century basilica.

At the same time, we recall here priest Dumitru Capaciurea and the assistant bishop Gherasim (Cristea) of Constanța, residing in Galați, for their courage in 1971 to take the holy relics of the martyrs from Niculițel to Cocoș Monastery, despite the interdiction of the communist authorities then.

In addition, we remember the competence and scientific erudition of archaeologist Dr Victor Heinrich Baumann, who offered the Church and the Romanian scientific world the work "Blood of the Martyrs" (Dobrogea Publishing House, 2015), the best book written about the Holy Martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippus.

Professor Emilian Popescu summarized the importance of uncovering the relics of the Holy Martyrs from Niculițel systematically: "The discoveries at Niculițel have an exceptional value because 1. they brought to light, for the first time, the whole bodies of several martyrs, whose names we know for sure; 2. one of the oldest basilicas in our country and the oldest martyrium of this kind known so far have

emerged; 3. It strengthens our belief that martyrology information is true; 4. the strength and antiquity of the Christian faith on the land of Romania are proved; 5. Finally, such a discovery is unique in the entire Balkan area and extremely rare in the entire Roman Empire”.

To highlight the uninterrupted continuity of our apostolic faith and the sacrifice of the Romanian people, at the consecration of the Altar of the Romanian People's Salvation cathedral (November 25, 2018), we placed at the foot of the Holy Table particles of the relics of the Holy Martyrs of Niculițel, offered by His Grace Bishop Visarion of Tulcea.

Today, on the 50th anniversary of the uncovering of the holy relics of the martyrs from Niculițel, the Romanian Orthodox believers from the Diocese of Tulcea, from the neighbouring dioceses, but also other parts, with much faith, devotion and love, come to this source of blessing, which soothes both physical and spiritual pains of worshipping believers.

With these thoughts, we convey warm congratulations and best wishes to His Grace Bishop Visarion of Tulcea, to the other hierarchs present, to the priests, deacons, monks and believers of Dobrudja, as well as to the pilgrims from all over the country.

We pray to the Most Holy Trinity, to the Mother of God, to the Holy Martyrs of Niculițel and to all the saints to grant to those present peace and joy, health and much help, for many and happy years!

With chosen appreciation and paternal blessing,

† Daniel

Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

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# Saint Joseph the Hesychast

