

“God exists!” Int’l Meeting of Orthodox Youth 2023 pays tribute to the 1989 heroes who prayed under bullets in Timișoara



Participants in the 2023 International Meeting of Orthodox Youth (ITO) held in Timișoara, Romania, walked the Friendship Procession on Saturday. The procession ended in the city’s Opera Square with a tribute to the heroes of December 1989, who drove out atheist communism by praying under bullets in the very same place.

The Friendship Procession was broadcast live on Facebook and Youtube by Trinitas TV, the television of the Romanian Patriarchate.

Some young people wore traditional costumes and some groups sang religious hymns or folk songs during the procession.

The young people carried signs identifying their dioceses and flags personalized with the ITO 2023 logo.

Image not found or type unknown



Metropolitan Ioan of Banat welcomed the participants in Opera Square, where he told them: “Dear young people, we are in one of the places where, 33 years ago, the first words were: ‘God is with us’ and ‘Down with communism’.”

“Here, young people like you from the student campuses and workers from Timișoara joined forces in peaceful protest at the Opera Square and the Metropolitan Cathedral. We have declared this space sacred since then.”

“Those who climbed to the Opera balcony were not yet used to slogans and other political expressions, they only said what had been sown in their hearts by their parents. They hadn’t even studied Religion (in school – ed.), but, in a whisper, at home, their mother still taught them a prayer”, continued the Metropolitan of Banat.

Image not found or type unknown



The Metropolitan invited Eng. Ioan Savu, a participant in the 1989 Revolution in Timișoara.

Eng. Ioan Savu, who was 39 years old at the time of the 1989 Revolution, reminded the young people present at the event of a word by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, who said that, before God, we are responsible not only for our own being but also for the being of the nation, also given by God.

“We then understood this and set ourselves against those who were trying to take the country away from God,” said Ioan Savu. “I thank God for blessing me to live these tragic but dignified moments.”

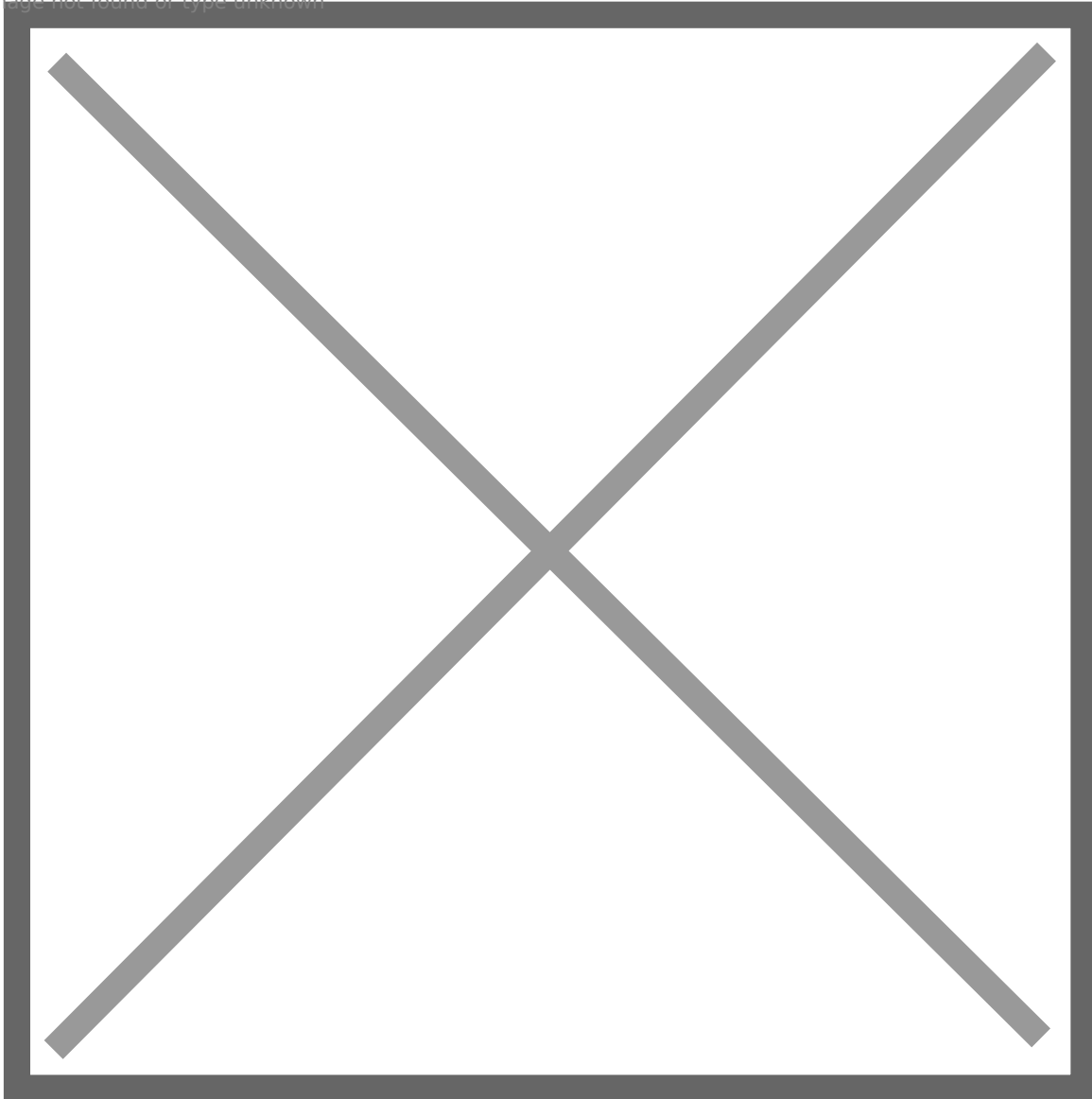
“There were 200,000 people who rediscovered God then. We got down on our knees and shouted, “God exists!” and together we said ‘Our Father’ as a sign of our trust and redemption,” Ioan Savu told the thousands of young people present at

the event.

He also told them that the purpose of life is to give life and that our purpose is to preach what is beneficial.

“Don’t believe anyone who tells you otherwise. Walk in God’s way! It is the only way that defines us as people.”

Image not found or type unknown



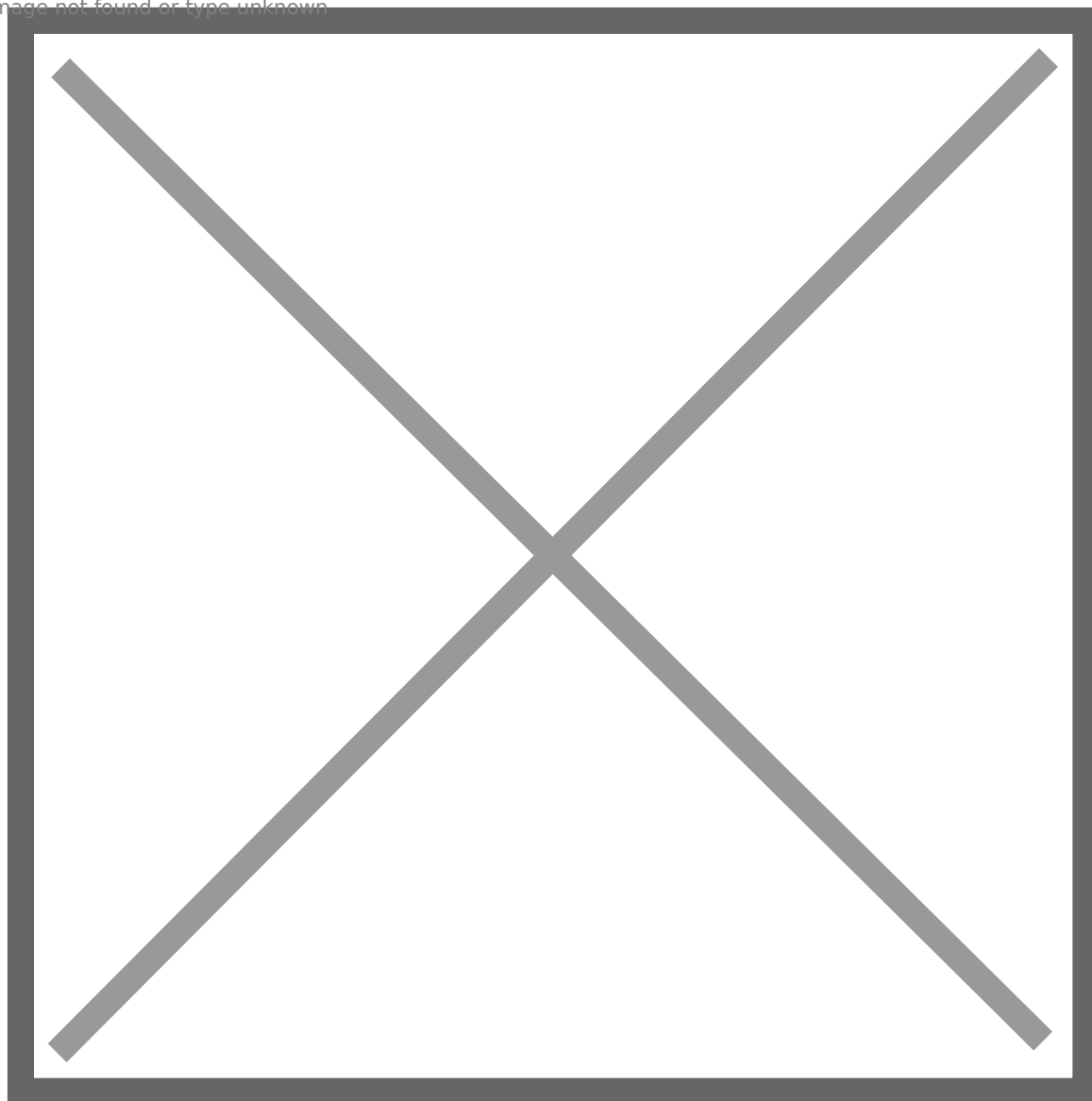
The Metropolitan of Banat was joined by two other priests who took part in the 1989 Revolution: Father Constantin Jinga, shot on 17 December 1989, and Father Ioan Mura.

Metropolitan Ioan gave the young Romanians from the county of Maramureş a symbolic flag kept from the 1989 Revolution, telling them: “Keep it and fight under it so that God and the Mother of God will never again be driven out of our Romanian soil.”

“Wave this flag in the remotest place of our country, and, from the Dniester to the Tisza River and from Khotyn to the sea, let us all be worthy people of faith, heirs of our Romanian traditions and life in Christ.”

At the urging of the Metropolitan, the young participants in the Friendship Procession knelt in the Opera Square and said the “Our Father” prayer as a sign of homage to those who said it under the bullets of the communist regime in December 1989.

Image not found or type unknown



The procession ended at the Metropolitan Cathedral with a Commemoration service

for the heroes of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989.

More photos here: [Procesiunea Prieteniei la ITO 2023 | FOTO](#)

3,500 young people aged between 16 and 35 took part in the 2023 International Meeting of Orthodox Youth (ITO), organized in Timișoara, Romania, between August 31 and September 3, 2023.

They came from all the dioceses of the Romanian Patriarchate (including the Romanian communities around the country and those in the diaspora), but also from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Orthodox Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Poland, Albania, the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and the Archdiocese of Ohrid and North Macedonia.

Young people were accompanied during the event by group leaders, who were priests from their dioceses.

The theme of this year's ITO meeting was made of the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ to His disciples: "You are my friends". Previous editions have been held annually since 2014. The Timișoara meeting came after a four-year break due to the pandemic. The next edition will be held in Bucharest.

Photo credit: [Basilica.ro](#) / Mircea Florescu

[basilica.ro](https://www.basilica.ro)