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Guard the light! Torch of 2023 Int'l Meeting of Orthodox Youth handed to Bucharest Archdiocese, host of the next edition

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Youth representatives from the Archdiocese of Bucharest, which will host the next edition of the International Meeting of Orthodox Youth (ITO) in 2025, symbolically received the 2023 edition torch on Sunday from the young people of the Archdiocese of Timișoara, this year's host of the event.

The ceremony took place after the Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Timișoara, which crowned the ITO 2023 event.

"Beloved young people of the Archdiocese of Bucharest, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel has ordained that, in 2025, when the Romanian Patriarchate will celebrate 100 years of existence, your will be the ones to invite to Bucharest young people from all Orthodoxy", Metropolitan Ioan said to the young people of the Bucharest Archdiocese.

"Until then, we entrust to you this torch, which is adorned with a representation of the blessed wheat ears of Banat. Keep its light burning, so that the spirit of our Orthodox and Romanian faith may be seen from one end of the earth to the other!"

"May God grant that even today, and as long as the Romanian people will exist on this earth, the soil of our homeland sprout ears of wheat from which the Romanian Christian woman will knead bread and prosphora for the Divine Liturgy," His Eminence added.

"May God bless you and I entrust you to the Good Lord – the Most Holy Trinity, to the Mother of God and to the one who cares for the Archdiocese of Bucharest, for the Metropolis of Wallachia and Dobrudja and, I could say, for Romanians from all over the world, because our patriarch is not only the patriarch of the current Romanian borders but also the guardian of Romanian hearts beating all over the world today."

"May God enable you to keep this flame alive and pass it as a relay to other young

people in Romania," Metropolitan Ioan added.

His Eminence thanked God "for the blessings showered upon us these days and upon these young people who have come from all parts of the world" and for the joy of meeting hierarchs from Sister Orthodox Churches who accompanied the youth delegations to ITO 2023 Timișoara.

"This is the sign of our deep communion, of our Orthodox unity," said the Metropolitan of Banat.

"Apart from the hierarchs, we also had the joy of having here the Abbot of the Romanian Prodromou Hermitage on Mount Athos, accompanied by members of his monastic community, and he gave us the joy of comforting St. Joseph the New from Partoș, whose relics are here in the cathedral."

"Just think that, for over 300 years, St. Joseph, who was a resident and abbot in the Holy Mountain, has been waiting for this moment, for the fathers to come from Mount Athos, where he also lived before coming to Banat," the Metropolitan said.

Metropolitan Ioan thanked Metropolitan Joachim, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, saying that "it means a lot to us" that "the Ecumenical Patriarchate was with us these days. We thank them and we also thank Patriarch Bartholomew".

The host hierarch also thanked Arch. Nikodimos Kabarnos, about whom he said that "he moved the hearts of thousands of young people who were at the meeting opening in Timișoara's Park of the Roses, and he moved, I could say, all the Romanian souls who feel and want to praise Christ the Lord".

See photos from the handing over of the ITO 2023 Torch here: Sfânta Liturghie și ceremonia de predare a torței ITO – 2023 | În imagini

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.

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