

Patriarch Daniel sends message of gratitude and appreciation on International Day for Older Persons



Patriarch Daniel sent a message of gratitude and appreciation on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons, October 1. In this context, the Patriarch prayed to the Most Holy Trinity “to shower blessings and love on all the elders and grandparents of the Romanian nation, so that they may look with kindness and goodness towards the younger generations and with hope towards the light of the Kingdom of Heaven”.

Full text:

October 1 – gratitude and special appreciation for the elderly

The International Day for Older Persons overlaps with the feast of the Protection of the Mother of God and it calls upon us to reflect on the Church’s care for all generations and especially for the elderly. For the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of the Romanian Patriarchate, it is a moment of gratitude to those who gave birth to us, brought us up and educated us, towards those who sacrificed themselves so that we could be free in our ancestral land and faith.

The Romanian Patriarchate has dedicated the year 2023 to the pastoral care of the

elderly, taking into account the wise words of Scripture and Christian tradition: “Do not dismiss what the old people have to say, for they too were taught by their parents; from them, you will learn how to think, and the art of the timely answer” (Book of Sirach 8, 9). The aim has been to encourage the participation of the elderly in the life of the Church and to foster a more consistent contribution of the family, the Church and society in supporting the elderly and in intensifying social-philanthropic and cultural activities dedicated to this social category.

Worldwide statistics show that ageing is an accelerating process, with 9.6% of the world population of old age, approximately 800 million. Out of the 19.2 million inhabitants of Romania, 3.7 million people are over 65 years old (almost 20% of the country’s population) according to a report from the National Institute of Statistics.

The contribution of the Romanian Orthodox Church to supporting the elderly through social services and dedicated social-philanthropic projects and programs is as follows: 27 daycare centres, 53 residential centres, 30 home care services and 21 socio-medical home care services. In addition to these institutions specifically dedicated to the elderly, there are also 61 social assistance offices, 120 social canteens and meals-at-home services, the majority for the benefit of the elderly.

Thus, our Church supports more than 66,000 elderly people every day: elderly people who are alone, immovable, abandoned by their families and with serious health problems. In the context of the 2023 Solemn Year (dedicated to the pastoral care of the elderly), on 11 April 2023, the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity signed a protocol of cooperation in the field of social inclusion and social assistance, with the aim of intensifying cooperation in the social field: in the area of long-term care and also in other social programmes and projects aimed at disadvantaged social categories.

I have noted with joy that summer camps have been organized throughout the Romanian Patriarchate, in which priests have coordinated intergenerational workshops where children and young people have interacted with the elderly, thus harmoniously and happily combining the spontaneity and purity of the former with the wisdom and experience of the latter, while both generations exchange values.

How does the Romanian Orthodox Church support the elderly?

The 13,000 rural and urban parishes, served by more than 14,000 priests, offer to the vulnerable elderly from their communities spiritual and material support through food packages, firewood, paying their bills, transporting them to the hospital or to medical centres, and buying medicine for them.

The charity organizations members of the Romanian Patriarchate's Filantropia Federation offer licensed residential services in daycare centres and at home for a daily number of more than 1,000 seniors. Hundreds of experts from these social institutions founded by the Romanian Orthodox Church, social service providers accredited by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, offer specialized support to the elderly through licensed services which respect the national legislation in force: Law 292/2011 (the Social Assistance Law), the Law for assisting the elderly (Law 17/2000) and the Order of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity no 29/2019 on meeting the minimum quality standards for providing services for the elderly.

Among the most important nationwide campaigns, we mention: the "Health for Villages" campaign, through which Orthodox Christian doctors travel to rural areas and offer free consultations, especially to the elderly, currently having over 12,000 beneficiaries; the "Donate blood, save a life!" campaign has resulted, in the 10 years since its initiation, in the collection of over 23,000 litres of blood, with the help of the National Cathedral Chapel Volunteers, and, last but not least, the telemedicine program (screening and diagnosis) implemented by several organizations of the Filantropia Federation, which provide medical services mainly to elderly patients who do not have the physical possibility or the financial capacity to access specialized medicine consultations.

At this anniversary moment, we celebrate the holy families of the Old and New Testament, as well as the holy families from the history of the Orthodox Church, which gave to the world the greatest saints of the Church, models for us, those who live in the present. We remember the old scholars who moulded countless generations of cultural personalities, offering to our country light for the soul. Last, but not least, we also remember our parents and grandparents who, through their kindness, wisdom and love, left as a legacy a new generation of people living on the face of the Earth.

We pray to the Most Holy Trinity to shower blessings and love on all the elders and grandparents of the Romanian nation, so that they may look with kindness and goodness towards the younger generations and with hope towards the light of the Kingdom of Heaven, through the intercessions of the Mother of God and all the saints.

† Daniel,
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

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