

Patriarch Daniel: Saints correct people's mistakes, strengthen ties between countries. Pilgrimage is not wasted time



Patriarch Daniel's sermon on the feast of Saint Demetrius the New focused on the meaning of the relationship between saints and believers, in general, and on how devotion to the Protector of Bucharest has helped and still helps the Church and society.

Numerous believers participated in the patronal feast of the Patriarchal Cathedral, with more than 5,000 pilgrims queuing to venerate the relics of the two Saints Demetrius and the icon of the Mother of God of Soumela.

The Patriarch of Romania highlighted Saint Demetrius the New's miracles after describing the few biographical facts known about him.

"He is a wonderworker by which he manifests not an arrogant power but humble and merciful love. This is the love of Christ and the love of the saints. It is not an arrogant and possessive love, but humble and merciful," His Beatitude said on October 27.

Saints correct people's mistakes

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel insisted that Saint Demetrius "greatly helped the right-believing people of Bucharest, especially during the communist rule."

At that time, the authorities intended to transfer the Cathedral itself, not just the Saints' relics, to the former Văcărești Monastery.

"In 1989, the Patriarchate was forced to move the reliquary because a session of the Great National Assembly was organised (in the current building of the Patriarchate Palace) precisely on October 27," Patriarch Daniel recalled.

“The wise Patriarch Teoctist moved the Saints’ relics not far from the Cathedral, in the Church of St. Nicholas – Vladica. And so, the faithful went there and celebrated the saint’s feast. But the same year, around Christmas, the communist regime fell.”

“On October 27, 2007, on the very feast of St. Demetrius the New, in the building where the Great National Assembly was once held, the Basilica Media Centre was established. And from here, Radio Trinitas and Trinitas TV continued to broadcast from 2007 until today the services from the Patriarchal Cathedral where the saint’s relics are located.”

In 1996, the structure in issue was inaugurated as the Palace of the Patriarchate. Later, it was given to the Metropolis of Wallachia, as the land beneath it belonged to it.

“So, the saints have their way of correcting people’s mistakes and this hostile attitude towards St. Demetrius the New that the communist regime had turned into a missionary encouragement of the Church. That’s why we can say, together with the Psalmist: <God is wonderful in His saints!>”

Saints strengthen the ties between countries

The Patriarch of Romania went on to appreciate the goodwill of Metropolitan Panteleimon of Veria, Naousa and Kampania, who carried from Greece the relics of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrius and the Icon of Panagia Soumela.

“The reverence the Orthodox believers have for the holy relics, but also for the holy icons, has been a constant in the history of Orthodoxy,” the Patriarch of Romania said, noting the recent discovery bringing forth the connection between the Romanian people and the Panagia Soumela icon:

“We have recently discovered that in the 17th century, Lady Maria, the wife of Ruler Șerban Cantacuzino, added a gilded silver crown to the icon of Panagia Soumela, the Mother of God of Pontus, and wrote her name, her son’s name, prince Gheorghe, and the names of her four daughters.”

“Here, we can see the connection between Orthodox countries through saints, relics and miracle-working icons,” Patriarch Daniel emphasised.

His Beatitude added that “we, the faithful, when we venerate the relics of the saints, we do not venerate bones – as the unprepared, uninformed and ill-intentioned wrongly say – but we meet the person of the saint whose relics are in front of us.”

“When we venerate holy icons, we do not venerate the wood, but the person who is represented.”

“The pious believers, the pilgrims, feel the presence of the grace of the Holy Spirit working in the saints and rejoice, and those who have no faith and no spiritual feeling are disturbed.”

“The saints gather the peoples in communion and give each worshiper two great spiritual gifts: peace and joy,” Patriarch Daniel noted.

Pilgrimage is not wasted time

“This year, we honour the memory of Saint Demetrius the New by asking him for health and help in life,” the Patriarch of Romania continued.

“Illnesses often come from negligence and carelessness, but sometimes God allows them so that we realise that we are not eternal. Although we want to live forever, we find that diseases afflict us, and we feel the end is near,” Patriarch Daniel said.

“Pilgrimage is not wasted time and futile effort,” the Romanian Patriarch stressed, concluding his sermon.

“Pilgrimage is a great spiritual gain. It reminds us that we are pilgrims on earth and that we are heading towards the imperishable city, towards our definitive city.”

“Pilgrimage matures us, urges us to give meaning to our lives, to fill life with the humble and merciful presence of Christ. Pilgrimage is an act of faith, hope and love, but also a moment of gratitude to God for the blessings received. A pilgrimage is also an act of repentance for sins and a request for forgiveness; it is an opportunity to ask the saints to help us love God as they loved Him.”

“The patronal feast and pilgrimage organised on this occasion can be an event to strengthen faith, to refresh prayer, to get to know other people than those we meet daily in the parish, in the monastery or in the locality where we each come from.”

“We congratulate all of you, dear faithful pilgrims, for the piety and great patience you have shown, and we pray to the Most Merciful God and all the saints to reward your zeal and toil with His spiritual and saving gifts,” Patriarch Daniel concluded.

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