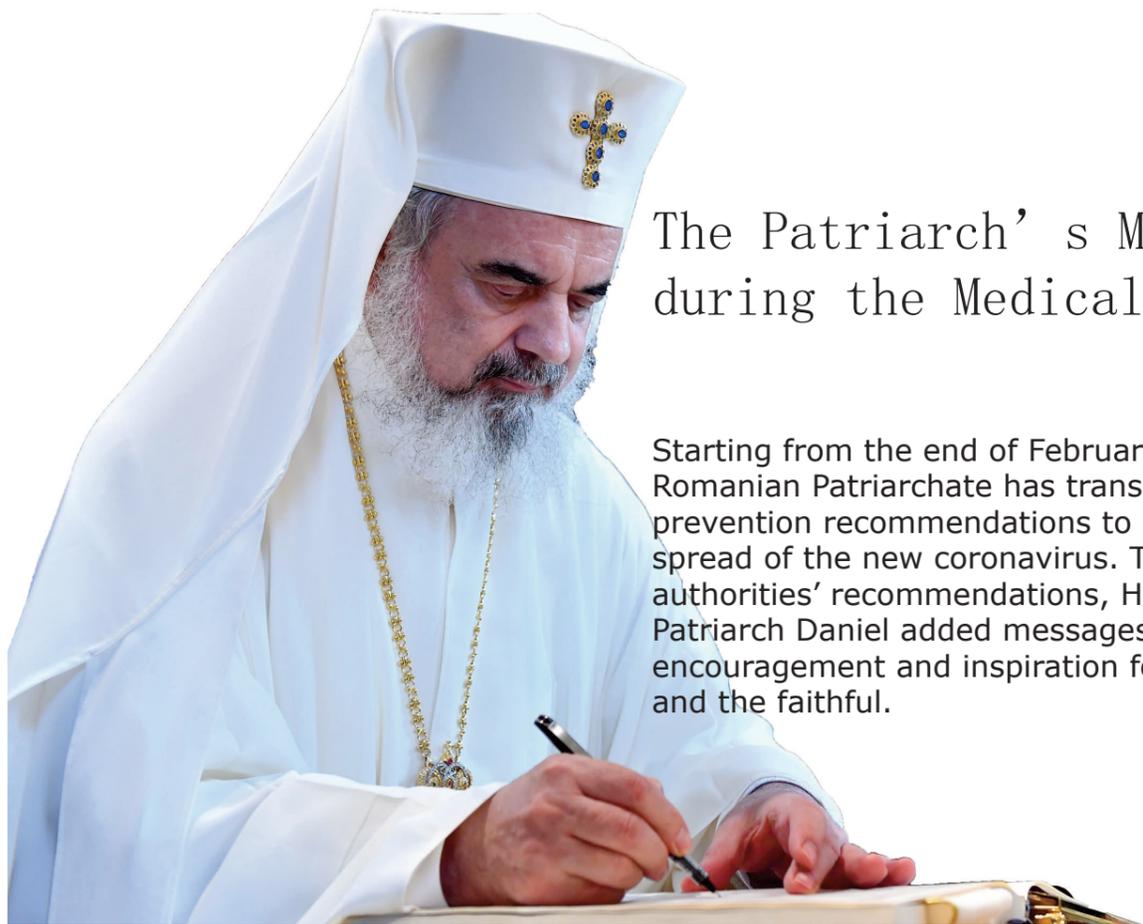




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The Patriarch's Messages during the Medical Crisis

Starting from the end of February, the Romanian Patriarchate has transmitted prevention recommendations to stop the spread of the new coronavirus. To the authorities' recommendations, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel added messages of encouragement and inspiration for the clergy and the faithful.

"This period shows us how fragile human life on earth is, how much need we have to keep in constant contact with God, the source of earthly life and eternal heavenly life", the Patriarch said on March 15, the Second Sunday of Lent. His advice was:

"Therefore, we must transform this period of medical crisis in a time to strengthen our faith and increase our love for God and our peers."

The next day, when the state of emergency was declared, the Patriarch added a message of courage and hope, explaining:

"The state of emergency is a special state of prevention of the spread of the epidemic, not a state of panic and discouragement."

On the Sunday of the Holy Cross, the Patriarch reminded us:

"In these days of trial, we need to conquer fear through faith and consolidate our faith through prayer and good deeds."

On the Annunciation, the Patriarch of Romania recommended additional care for mental health while spending time at home, in isolation. He said the Mother of God can greatly help us with this.

"At the question, 'How do we stay home?' we respond: In a positive and active way. With prayer and good activities."

On Sunday, March 29, Patriarch Daniel emphasized the importance of fasting and prayer in troubled times:

„To intensify our fasting efforts means to turn our physical hunger and thirst into hunger and thirst for God, for God's love."

On the Fifth Sunday of Lent, the Patriarch pointed out the social distancing offers a good environment for penitence and urged us:

"To use the deserted aspect of society and the isolation."

"This year, the Holy Light was received amid general sadness."



As the faithful were exceptionally absent from the Patriarchal Cathedral courtyard on Easter night, Patriarch Daniel addressed them through radio, television and Internet.



'Christ the risen One from the dead meets mystically with us on the path of our lives, in our homes, and especially in the habitation of our soul and tells us "Do not be afraid," "Rejoice", "Peace be with you!"'

A painful experience: The Resurrection of our Lord celebrated at home. Adjustment and pastoral solutions for crisis situations

The state of emergency instated this spring in Romania to control the coronavirus outbreak overlapped with the most profound liturgical period in the Orthodox Calendar. First, religious services were held only outside the churches. Then the participation of the faithful to worship was banned. The pain was even greater as the panic and fear of disease could not be appeased inside the churches anymore.

"We had some trouble learning from this experience and we had to do some fine tuning as it was unfolding. The situation stirred controversy among Christian Orthodox thinkers who are more careful in thinking of spiritual matters. But it was a comfort for believers to be able to hear and see their shepherds continuing worship, celebrating the Divine Liturgy and praying for them. Despite the more conservative opinions, this soothed the hearts and souls of the faithful troubled by the isolation and the inaccessibility of the Divine Liturgy and the Holy Eucharist", mentions His Grace Iustin, Bishop of Maramureş and Sătmar.

The hierarch described this period in an appeal sent on May 5, 2020 to authorities, asking them to allow Christian life return to normality.

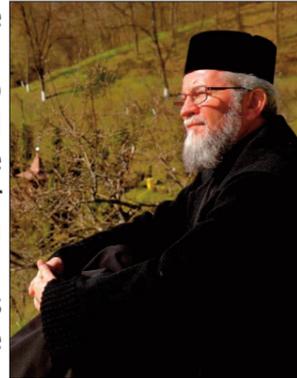
The Bishop of Maramureş and Sătmar says that, "on the other side, the name of Christ, the Divine Liturgy and the Holy Eucharist, hymnography and iconography made a breakthrough from the sacred space of the churches to where the enemy of God least expected to see them: online, from where the Church of Christ used to receive most of Her wounds. The enemy could hardly expect that".

Nearly all parishes used technology to webcast religious services and called for responsible behavior and care for our fellows.

"Moreover, every home and family made their own altar, each of the faithful's home becoming a small church like in the first centuries of Christianity".

"The most painful experience for both faithful and clergy was the impossibility to be together for the Feast of the Lord's Resurrection".

The Church complied with all the requirements and collaborated with the authorities to offer a small comfort: it distributed the Holy Light to all the homes in Romania.



Bucharest, Romania

A church volunteer delivers holy candles to worshippers' homes during Christian Orthodox Easter

Photograph: Daniel Mihăilescu/AFP /Getty



A parish from Bucharest offered the photo of the week April 13-19, 2020 in British newspaper The Guardian.

During the isolation period, the saints took pilgrimages through the country

MAP

Seeing the processions with the saints' relics, Father Constantin Necula said the saints "returned our pilgrimages" during the pandemic: "I almost shouted at my laptop display: 'Long live Orthodoxy!'", he said. But Orthodoxy is made of us all. Let us live so as to prove the saints' power.

"Now the Saints are coming to us! For they love those who love them. And they also love those who do not love them! They come to strengthen man's most fragile part: the soul."



"The time has come for the Saints to return our pilgrimages. St Paraskeva has not been out of the city of Iaşi for quite some time: since 1947."

"People came to the Saints like grandchildren coming to see their grandfathers and grandmothers in sanctity. And both people and Saints endured public derision for these hopeful visits."

"Humiliated and crucified by mean commentaries, the Saints have stood by us. In their centuries of experience they must have seen generations of people, with their specific and character, with their moral lows and highs."

"Now the Saints are coming to us! For they love those who love them. And they also love those who do not love them! They come to strengthen man's most fragile part: the soul. For which there is no better medicine than one related to God's Spirit."

"The most precious citizens of the old cities from which today's Romania has emerged are now walking among those who need their kiss of encouragement."

Holy relics and wonderworking icons were taken out of churches and carried in small processions, without the participation of the faithful, all across Romania during the state of emergency. We made a map of "the Saints' pilgrimages" announced on Basilica.ro. It looks as following:

Suceava city: The relics of St John the New Martyr

Iaşi, Neamţ and Botoşani counties, on a 300-mile route: St Paraskeva's relics

Bacău city: Parts of St George's relics

Neamţ and Bacău counties: A copy of the Icon of the Mother of God from the Skete of the Honorable Forerunner on Mount Athos, the Icons of the Mother of God from Giurgeni Monastery and Trifeşti Parish, the reliquary with holy relics from many saints which sits in the Archdiocesan Cathedral of Roman

Vrancea county: The Icon of the Mother of God from Dălhăuţi Monastery

In the towns of Sireţi and Străşeni from the Republic of Moldova: Bishop Dionysius Erhan's holy relics

Constanţa county: The relics of Great Holy Martyr Panteleimon and of the Holy Martyrs Epictet and Astion, St Nektarios' relics and the "Axion esti" ("Eleousa") Icon of the Mother of God from the Archdiocesan Cathedral in the city of Constanţa

Cluj and Bistriţa-Năsăud counties: The Icon of the Mother of God from Nicula Monastery

Braşov city: The "Platytera" Icon of the Mother of God from the "Holy Trinity" Church

Arad city: St John Chrysostomos' relics and two icons of the Mother of God from the Archdiocesan Cathedral

The town of Partoş, in Timiş county: The holy relics of St Hierarch Josef the New Râmnicu-Vâlcea city: The Icon of the Mother of God Of One Tree Trunk ("Dintr-un Lemn") Monastery, St Nektarios' and St Gregory of Dekapolis' holy relics

Craiova city: The Icon of the Mother of God from the "Madonna Dudu" Cathedral and St Nephon's relics

Argeş county: The relics of St Filofteia of Argeş

Olt county: A reliquary with parts from many saints

Bucharest: The holy relics of St Demetrios the New



Women in the Byzantine music -

Exclusive interview with presbytera Paula Cautiș, conductor of Filomelos choir



For almost 13 years, Filomelos Byzantine Women's choir from Borzești has occupied a special place in the hearts of Byzantine music lovers. Presbytera Paula Cautiș, the conductor of the choir, told the story of the Filomelos.

Photography courtesy of Lumina Newspaper / Mihnea Păduraru

Basilica.ro: First, tell us how the story of Filomelos began. Why was this name chosen?

Paula Cautiș: Filomelos is a great gift from God, and its story began unexpectedly. In 2006-2007, my husband, Father Petrică, a professor at the "Dimitrie Cantemir" National College in Onești, organized a small choir, where by chance there were more girls than boys. At one point he called me to help him rehearse for Christmas carols, where I noticed that young people catch on to me much faster and since then I have remained a conductor and a special relationship quickly developed.

In the summer of that year, we organized a trip together in Maramures and the next day after we returned we woke up with a group of some girls at the door asking us to teach them the Divine Liturgy and so began the rehearsals at home, in the dining room.

The Mother of God is our patron saint and the true conductor and manager of the Filomelos choir.

We started to work so that we could sing in the most distant churches, where only the priest arrives, in the most neglected parishes and isolated localities.

We started to work so that we could sing in the most distant churches, where only the priest arrives, in the most neglected parishes and isolated localities. On August 15, 2007, we chanted the first Divine Liturgy with Filomelos, so we believe that the Mother of God is our Patron Saint and the true conductor and manager of the choir.

Cu numele este un lucru mai interesant. Văzând noi că totul devine mult mai serios, am mers la About the name, there is a more exciting thing.

Seeing that everything became much more serious, we went to the Diocese of Roman and Bacău and His Eminence Ioachim, who was an assistant bishop at that time, asked us to write the name of the choir we want to set up.

I stayed with the Father under the bell tower of the Roman Diocese (now an Archdiocese), and this name simply came to mind: Filo - melos (lovers of music).

At the moment, many of the choir members are pupils and students. But we also have older members who work in various fields: pharmacy, public administration, education.

I think that at the moment most of the girls are at the Faculty of Medicine, then the Faculty of Letters, the Academy of Economic Studies.

How was your passion for music born?

As a child, I went to church with my father and sang. However, the passion developed during the five years spent at the Theological Seminary at the Agapia Monastery, where I discovered the Byzantine music. That's where the desire to have my own choir was born.

You are a wife, mother, presbytera and coordinator of the Filomelos Byzantine Choir. How do you manage all these "professions"?

Oh, that's a hard question. It's not easy at all. I'm just trying to reconcile them all as best I can, without neglecting any of the missions and not believing that I can do them all as well. In the end, they all converge toward the same goal: we try to do everything for the glory of God.

At the parish, I am with the Father (husband), at school I talk to the children about God, at the choir we learn hymns from the divine services. As a mother, I try to educate my children as best I

“
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can. I believe that here lies the blessing of my life, to work in the "field" of the Church. But I'm not alone in the whole mission, that's the most important thing. I was never the only one in the family to join Filomelos. We all are in. I've been working on the artistic side, and I've been driving for a few years. My husband takes care of the management part, the distribution of children on cars, the spiritual support of young people. At many rehearsals, we talk to them and get advice. The older child is an isokratis, and the younger ones grow up at the chant stand. Father Petrică is very passionate about Byzantine music, and Filomelos is our gift. Without my husband, I couldn't do anything on my own. I think it is lovely to associate the father-servant at the altar - the presbytera at the chant stand. We are privileged to have a choir that offers the answers at the chant stand and sings Byzantine music. In the period of isolation, we realized how much we missed the services through their beauty but also the spirit of singing together. [» Full Story](#)

Matchless charitable involvement of the Church in the coronavirus crisis

To the unprecedented COVID-19 medical crisis, which has marked the whole world, the Romanian Orthodox Church has offered a similarly matchless response.

There is a quantifiable part which adds to the small unseen sacrifices made by each parish and priest, and to the broadcasting

Let us show love and solidarity to the elderly, to those in isolation or quarantine, as well as special care for the health of those around us. Let us show particular gratefulness to the doctors in hospitals who defend and cultivate the health of the body, and also to the priests in the churches, who protect and cultivate the health of the soul. Let us have full confidence in the power of prayer, knowing that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28).

- Patriarch Daniel

and webcasting of prayers: 4.3 million Euros in humanitarian aid.

This is the amount of help offered by the Church between March 16 and May 4, 2020 in the fight against the coronavirus. The Romanian Orthodox Church showed exemplary understanding of the epidemic situation and proved in this period "matchless charitable involvement", as Vasile Bănescu, spokesperson of the Church said.

The Romanian Patriarchate's charitable network was called to action in order to support those affected by the disease or by the consequences of the restriction measures imposed to contain the outbreak. Dioceses inquired on the

needs of the hospitals and made important

donations in medical devices and sanitary equipment.

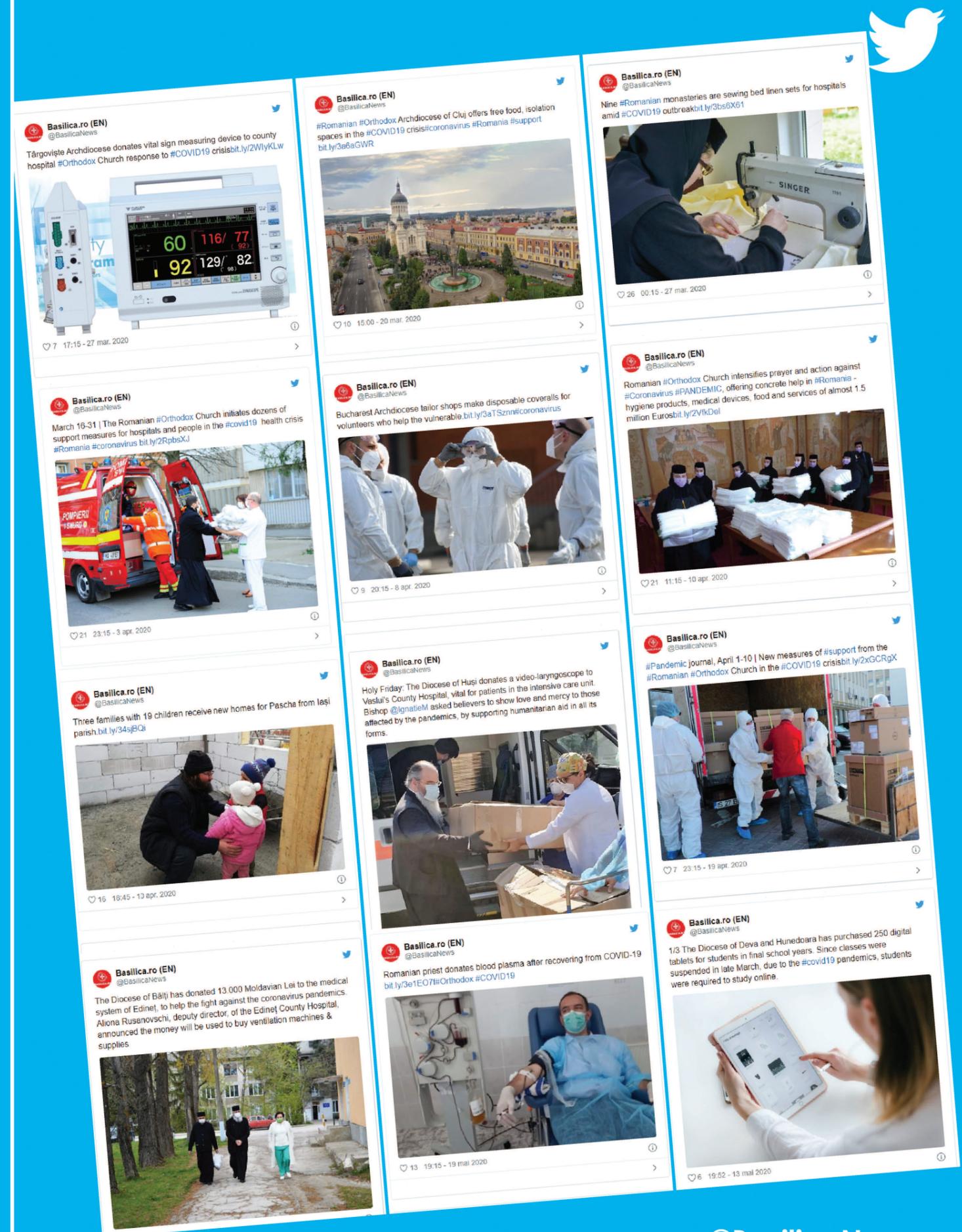
Help included quarantine spaces, food for the elderly, for the disabled and those without income, and also donations for hospitals: pulmonary ventilators, testing devices and testing kits, bed linen sets, protection masks and coveralls made in the Church workshops and offered to hospitals and communities.

In the meantime, spiritual support continued through religious services broadcast and webcast, while catechisms and religious education moved online. Diocesan communities fundraised and donated electronic devices to the isolated students who could not afford them so they can have access to education from home, according to isolation rules.

While all these proofs of solidarity were unfolding, the context was not easy for the people of the Church. A financial crisis was added to the fear of disease, the isolation anxiety and the lack of liturgical communion in the church. Since the priests' income is based mainly on the faithful's donations, many found themselves without salaries.

Romanian Christian journalist Răzvan Bucuroiu noted that "this lack of income produced by restricting the faithful's access to churches and monasteries should be added to the financial effort of the Church".

"Therefore: 17 million RON (4.3 mil. EUR) + much more makes the combined effort of the Romanian Orthodox Church? A difficult issue our government members surely do not think about. But the people of this country, witnesses though all this, surely think of that?!" the editorial director of Lumea Crediinței ("World of Faith") magazine wrote on Facebook.



@BasilicaNews

Religion professor creates animated video lessons to help children learn the Orthodox faith from home



The coronavirus pandemic did not only generate panic and fear. It was also the source of constructive, useful projects, a true materialization of Christian love and creativity. The “Minute of Religion” is one such example, an atypical way for a teacher to address his students on religious topics using short animated videos.

Florin Zărnescu, the teacher who brings the Minute of Religion

Florin graduated from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest and currently teaches religious education classes at the “Matei Basarab” School in Brebu, Prahova.

Most likely, the initiative is unique in the Romanian Orthodox space, but Florin keeps a modest attitude and says that the idea is not original. “I picked it up from other educational YouTube channels I’m watching.”

At first, he looked at the activity as a way to repeat the subject with his students and chose to present the information in a concise style, in which the



graphic element plays a vital role so that children “do not feel the burden of writing.”

And for success to be complete, he chose the online environment, the place where young people want to live longer and longer, even in the absence of a pandemic.

“Compared to other learning methods, I think it is more accessible, reaching where children spend most of their time. It also offers a fairly large volume of information concisely and, I hope, as visually pleasing as possible, being easy to assimilate.”

In addition to the project’s strengths, Florin also highlighted some shortcomings. “It cannot, in any way, replace the personal presence of the priest or the religion teacher. The same way, it can not replace the listening of children, their understanding and the collective effort to find practical ways to apply knowledge, according to the spiritual needs of each.”

Why a Minute of Religion?

“Because the capacity to focus decreases drastically, in the absence of personal presence and in front of the phone, tablet or computer screen. Not only the attention of the children but also of us, adults. I wanted it to be as concise, approachable and playful as possible, but to be associated with religion classes in children’s minds.”

“I wanted it to be, first of all, a recap. And I wanted it to have logical continuity. So we started with an overview of the Holy Scriptures, followed by a look at the main biblical themes and events,” said Florin Zărnescu.

Theological Studies at Sibiu: New dean on pioneering the dialogue between his academic institution and the secular part of society

The Theology School in the city of Sibiu can undoubtedly consolidate and update inter-confessional and inter-religious dialogue. It also needs to pioneer dialogue with the secular part of our society, which is underdeveloped in Romania, says the new dean of “Lucian Blaga” University’s Theology School.



“My activity at the External Relations Department of the World Council of Churches in Geneva offered me the almost unique opportunity to get a global view of Christianity and especially of the Orthodox world and of international theological studies.

I hope this view allows me to identify more easily and quickly the challenges which our Church and our theological studies are confronted with. I shall strive to use my many contacts with the world’s theological institutions to give a more international feel to the Theology School in Sibiu”, said Fr Daniel Buda in an interview for Ziarul Lumina (“The Light”), official daily newspaper of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate.

“Concerning the opening of the Theology School in Sibiu to inter-confessional and inter-religious dialogue, there is a rich tradition for that”.

“In these complex times, we are called to prepare theologians to serve the Orthodox Church in the country as well as in the Romanian diaspora.”



“In these complex times, we are called to prepare theologians to serve the Orthodox Church in the country as well as in the Romanian diaspora. Our students need solid theological education, need instruments to witness their faith and consolidate other people’s faith, to strengthen non-believers and those who question their faith. An opening to the world is necessarily based on knowledge about it, about the world’s culture and mindset. For such a complex training we need an inspired mix of so-called “classical”, or “traditional”, student activities (lectures, liturgical program, reading) and recently implemented activities like social activities, online research, case studies, study travels, research and training abroad”.



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