



Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște: Prince Vladimir is truly equal to the Apostles

Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște led a delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the celebrations in Moscow, marking the millennium of the blessed demise of the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles. On the eve of the commemoration day of the Baptizer of Rus' the Romanian hierarch gave an interview to the Blagovest-Info Orthodox news agency.

– Your Eminence, you have arrived in Moscow to attend the celebrations in honour of the Grand Prince Vladimir the Baptizer of Rus' who is deeply venerated by the faithful in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. Is this saint venerated in Romania as well?

–First of all, I would like to express my overwhelming joy at representing His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel and the whole Romanian Orthodox Church at these celebrations in Moscow. Together with my brothers in faith, representatives of other Local Orthodox Churches, I will participate in the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour tomorrow.

Prince Vladimir is truly equal to the Apostles. It is very important that many Orthodox nations venerate the saints who took part in their Christianization.

The Christianization of the Romanian people began as far back as the times of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called. However, we do not know the precise historical date of the Baptism of Romania. We venerate all the saints who shone forth in other Orthodox countries and Churches. I can say that the Holy Prince Vladimir is one of the most revered saints in Romania.

–Unfortunately, this year the three Eastern Slavic capitals hold separate celebrations in honour of the Holy Prince Vladimir, while in the past several years the celebrations were held in Kiev where the Baptism of Rus' had taken place. As everyone knows, the reason for that is the current political situation in Ukraine. When it comes to this brotherly country, the faithful immediately remember that the situation in Ukraine's church life also remains difficult, for the schism has not been healed. What is the attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards this problem?

–Well, we can say that it is very regrettable. The Orthodox Christians need accord and unity based on the canonical principles of our Church. Ecclesiology and canonical discipline are closely related matters, and it is very important for the life of Orthodox Christians to observe the principle of unity. We can pray

and hope that one day the unity of the Church in Ukraine, based on ecclesiastical canons, will be restored.

The Romanian Orthodox Church only recognizes the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate as a canonical structure. We are in full canonical communion with this Church. Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev has invited a Romanian metropolitan to Kiev to take part in the celebrations in honour of the Holy Prince Vladimir. Let us hope that one day peace will be reestablished.

–Vladyka, what is the situation in the Republic of Moldova, where there is the Metropolia of Moldova of the Moscow Patriarchate and where, at the same time, for over twenty years there has existed the Metropolia of Bessarabia of the Romanian Patriarchate?

–We hope that one day we will find a solution to the Bessarabian ecclesiastical problem, which, I hope, is a temporary problem. The Moscow and the Romanian Patriarchates have set up a bilateral commission, and the negotiations are under way.

The most important thing is that, regardless of certain differences, our Churches have maintained full canonical and Eucharistic communion.

–Please, remind our readers about the current relations between the Romanian Church and the Church of Jerusalem.

–Thanks God, all problems have been solved and now our Churches are in full communion with each other. They have reached an agreement which will help avoid any misunderstandings in the future. The Representation of the Romanian Patriarchate was opened in Jerusalem before the World War II, in 1931. What we have in the Holy Land is a pilgrims' house together with a chapel. That was the subject of misunderstanding. Under Patriarch Teoctist of Romania and Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem, there were no conflicts. Perhaps, their successors did not agree. However, with God's help, the following solution was found: the Romanian priests in Jericho will be appointed upon the recommendation of the Romanian Patriarch and with the consent of the Patriarch of Jerusalem. It was a very clear agreement, and the communion between our Churches was restored in 2013.

-This year the Romanian Church celebrates two jubilees: the 130th anniversary of autocephaly and the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate. Your Eminence, how will your Church celebrate these dates?

–These dates are of great importance for the Romanian Church. There will be many publications pertaining to these two anniversaries. Various conferences will be held at all our twelve theological

faculties, at our thirty-four seminaries, and in schools, since in Romania such subject as Basics of Orthodox Christianity is taught in all public schools.

The main events will take place in Bucharest in October. It has not been decided yet to what extent we will internationalize the celebrations.

–What is the position of the Romanian Church with regard to the challenges of today's secular world?

–We are deeply concerned over the challenges posed by the modern society to traditional morality. We have to defend our Christian values in every possible way. It is very difficult in our time of 'freedom' to oppose secularism, atheism, materialism - all these "-isms" that are very dangerous for our Christian mission. We have to uphold our traditional Christian values, such as the institution of family and the values pertaining to social aspects of life. Otherwise we will lose very much of what we have inherited as Orthodox Christians. It is not easy, but it is not impossible. All these challenges are inventions of secular society which, in fact, is the main enemy of Christian tradition. That is why we have to combine efforts in the pan-Christian level. We have to unite in order to oppose these trends destroying our spiritual and moral traditions.

–What does the Romanian Church expect from the Pan-Orthodox Council, due to take place next year?

–I think that all Orthodox Churches should be happy that such Pan-Orthodox Council will finally take place. I believe that the Orthodox Church suffers from some lack of unity in expressing in one voice what the Orthodox position is concerning various problems of our time.

For example, when it comes to the social teaching of the Church, it is only the Russian Church that has a very clear point of view. Other Local Orthodox Churches know how to explain their views on the social teaching of the Church, but do not have specific documents. That is why I believe that the forthcoming Great and Holy Council can play a significant part in expressing the attitude of all Local Orthodox Churches towards social issues.

Besides, we expect the Council to raise such issues as the relations between the Orthodox Church and the rest of the Christian world, peace in the world, and defence of human freedom and dignity.

I think we have to be hopeful that after so many years we will finally hold the Great and Holy Pan-Orthodox Council. Perhaps, in the future the Orthodox Church will organize itself to have such Councils on a more regular basis.

–Vladyka, can you tell us a little bit about your life at the conclusion of the interview?

–I was born in Romania and studied theology in Bucharest and later in England, in the Universities of London and Oxford. I teach theology and missiology at the Faculty of Theology in Târgoviște. I am involved in theological dialogues at the pan-Orthodox level and take part in the work of the World Council of Churches. In my archdiocese, the archdiocese of Târgoviște, there are almost five hundred priests and three hundred and forty parishes.

Interview was taken by Dmitry Vlasov

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