

Christ Is Calling You!

A COURSE IN CATACOMB PASTORSHIP



FR. GEORGE CALCIU

St. Paisius Missionary School Series

No. 1. Orthodox Apologetic Theology

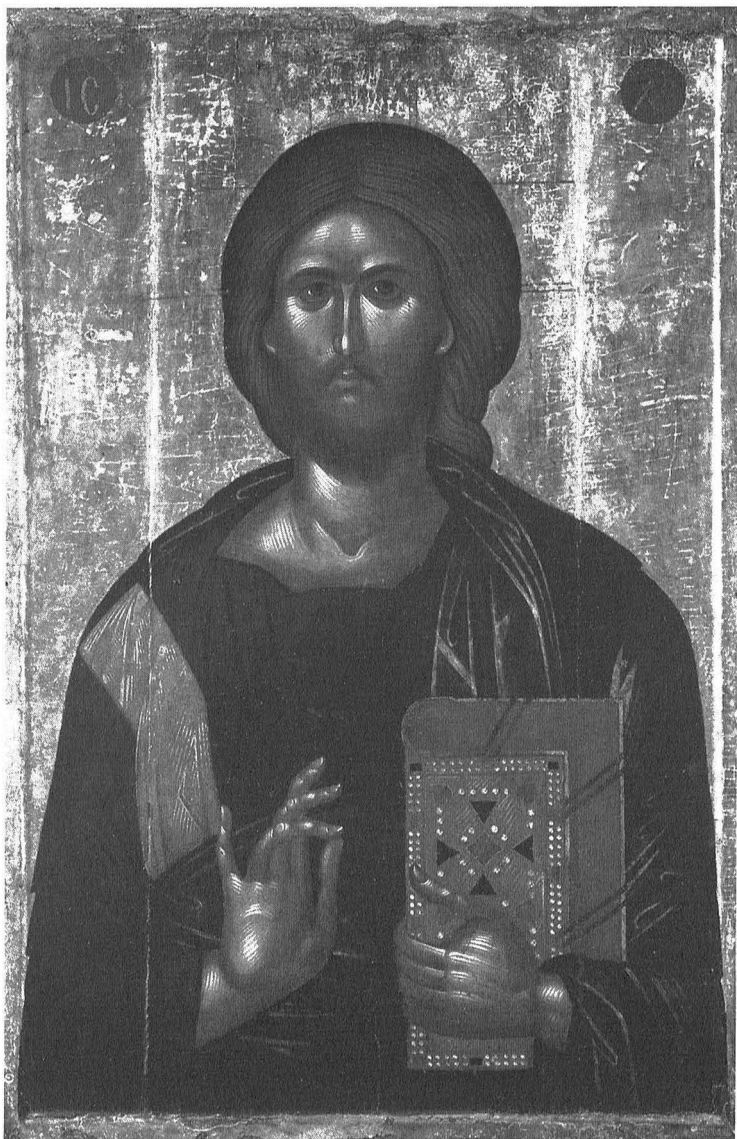
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by Fr. George Calciu



Christ Pantocrator.
From the Pushkin Museum, 15th century, Greece.

Christ Is Calling You!

A Course in Catacomb Pastorship

By FR. GEORGE CALCIU



ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA BROTHERHOOD

St. Paisius Missionary School

1997

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Front Cover: St. John the Theologian, leaning on the breast of
our Lord. *Left panel of Triptych No. 6, Tretyakov Gallery.*

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Dedicated to the memory of
CONSTANTINE OPRISAN
and all the New Martyrs of Romania
who died under the Communist Yoke.

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The angel and Ananias in the fiery furnace.
Byzantine fresco from Hurezi Monastery, Romania.

Introduction

TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF CATACOMB PASTORSHIP

*But when they deliver you up, take no thought
how or what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak,
but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.*

St. Matthew 10:19-20

1. PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Pastoral Theology incorporates all theological disciplines because it encompasses all dimensions of Christian living and *praxis*. In today's society the young pastor encounters vagueness and disagreement in the general understanding of a pastor's duties. Not so in previous societies. Historically, Orthodox Christian pastorship was understood to have three aspects: that of 1) the priest, 2) the minister, and 3) the pastor. These three aspects were perfectly blended in the ancient Catacomb Church. Later, with the rise of Christianity to the forefront of civilization, the threefold nature of pastorship proved effective in any society. Through the vicissitudes of war, politics and trade—which at times brought opportunities to reach out to new lands—the pastor was the leader of pockets of Christian culture.

In modern times, secular society is at odds with the principles of Orthodox pastorship. Since the French Revolution, there is no longer a sense of harmony between the church consciousness and the prevailing society. The pastor finds himself in a hostile, heterodox, apostate society, in which he must

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live and do his missionary work. Societies which were once Christian have come to limit pastoral activity, and, in the case of communist-dominated lands, to persecute it and seek to totally annihilate it.

Anti-Christianity is now on the rise. But since Christianity as a rule thrives under persecution, Christian pastorship can never be extinguished, even under the most trying and dangerous circumstances.

2. THE PRIEST

The makeup of the pastor, first of all, is that of a priest at the altar facing his God, with his back to the congregation. He is to pull down grace from heaven. He is to make a sacrificial offering, being himself the sacrificer. He is not to be distracted. He is to be at full attention—harkening to and pleasing the Lord. He is God's vehicle, God's conscience for his people. He is to be united with God. And only after having acquired God's grace, the Sacraments, can he turn around from the altar and attempt to minister the grace he has pulled down from heaven. Without having obtained God's grace, he has nothing to administer to his flock, which is hungry for it.

3. THE MINISTER

But once he turns around and is about to administer the grace, the priest must see that the people are in a state to receive it. Here is where an understanding of ascetic theology and its psychological application are absolutely necessary. It is imperative for the minister of grace to possess Philokalic knowledge of the human soul and awareness of its modern state. He must make a thorough study of ascetic literature. Otherwise, the grace can be "unto the condemnation" of those who receive it, as states the liturgical prayer that is read before the Sacraments are consumed.

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The classic teachers on spiritual life—from St. Anthony the Great to St. Theophan the Recluse—offer a variety of instructions, born of experience, which have proved effective throughout history. Contemporary mankind has not approached this classic experience of the saints, and thus it limps out of ignorance, developing all kinds of psychological disorders. The realm of saints is further obscured by the fact that elders of great spiritual caliber do not abound nowadays.

The priest who administers grace to people with contemporary problems must be aware that the psychological state of people of ancient times, when the classic patristic guidelines were originally used, was much different than that of today. The modern-day minister must be humble enough to see that the ancient models are to be used with extreme caution. For through our humility God can work.

The 20th century has seen perhaps the worst persecution of the Church that history has known. As Professor I. M. Andreyev has observed, proud modern man has not proven that God does not exist, but instead has proven scientifically the existence of universal Evil. In such a spiritual climate, where satanism begins to emerge as a competitor to Orthodox spirituality, the minister has to fortify himself with priestly grace in order to face new challenges. The experience of the Catacomb Church in the 20th century knows a *new realm of church consciousness*, that of the “interior monastic walls,” which render protection to true followers of Jesus Christ in our times.*

4. THE PASTOR

The duty of the pastor is not only to pasture the flock within his parish, but also to search out the lost sheep. His job is to evoke the Christian conscience on a wider scale, bringing

* See the teaching of St. Valentin Sventitsky in “Monasticism in the World,” *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 19, pp. 136-152.

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the Light of Christ to the secular world wherein his flock lives. His duty is to install obedience to God's laws in centers where once these laws were kept.

As Christianity is rapidly losing its stronghold, the soul of modern man is becoming empty, a void that is open to infernal reality. The 3rd-century writer Tertullian said that the human soul is by nature Christian, and his statement has been proven by two-thousand years of Christian mission-theology. Now that our society has become so lukewarm towards Christ, we need pastors more than ever to bring out this innate Christianity in the human soul. We need them to provide the Christian theology of life to human souls who are bombarded by anti-Christian forces. Unfortunately, many of these pastors have themselves become impoverished in the face of these forces, deprived of spiritual wealth, in spite of the high-sounding words of modern theologians. Many have become enslaved to the spirit of the 20th century.*

The true pastor of Christ is able to use the God-given gift of creativity to reach the hearts of those souls who are far from the Church. The great missionary and pastor of America, St. Innocent, is the prime model of such inventiveness for Christ's sake. In his devotion to his new-found flock, St. Innocent labored selflessly to create a written language for the oral culture of the native Alaskans. Through sensitive observation, he was able to understand the spiritual makeup of those to whom he was ministering. Today, more than ever, pastors need to do likewise: to tap their creative powers in order to build bridges for the lost sheep of the modern age.

5. MODERN CATACOMBS

The contemporary pastor/priest/minister, confronted by the growing war against Christ, is faced also with having to

* See Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*.

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pastor a *persecuted* flock, which exists today in the modern catacombs and will increase in the years to come. Few Orthodox scholars in the West seem concerned with the need to develop a new theological discipline: “catacomb pastoral theology.” During the last forty years many people, having personally experienced communist tyranny, have come to the West and spoken eloquently on that subject, but little has actually been achieved in the area of catacomb pastoral theology due to the fact that it is an unpleasant subject. This lack of interest reveals that the power of anti-Christianity has entered also into the Orthodox churches, due to the spirit of Sergianism and ecumenical co-existence with the tyranny against Christ. It is high time for conscientious pastors today to face the menace that is rapidly threatening the very essence of the true Orthodox Church.

Of course, the heavenly aspect of the Orthodox Church will not be overcome by the “gates of hell.” But still the question must be asked: How does one avoid all the refined modern temptations and pitfalls so as to be of that “Church” which will not be “prevailed against” (Matt. 16:13)? A pastor—a true Christ-like pastor who gives his life for his flock—knows that ministering to a flock that is adjusted to modern anti-Christianity requires an intense spiritual battle. Soldiers must be trained and prepared for open battle. So too must future pastors, soldiers of Christ. For the most part, however, today’s young aspirants—seminarians—are not being given the proper training.

6. THE SELFLESS MISSIONARY IN THE CRUCIBLE OF GODLESS MODERNITY

Hence, this book. The sermons of Fr. George Calciu to seminarians under the communist yoke are an urgent cry to our times. They set the tone for Christian evangelization under impossible conditions. In such conditions, no human logic can

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prevail. All that remains for suffering Christians is direct dependence on God: God Who sent His Only-begotten Son to suffer, thus giving fallen human beings a chance to be touched in their hardened hearts, to feel divine love, and to receive power from above to be selfless co-workers with God Himself.

This book contains the author's pastoral exhortations to the "new" breed of men and women of our times, inspiring them to take up the cross and follow him in his confession of the Faith, and of course first and foremost to follow our loving Saviour Himself.

Fr. George's sermons to future catacomb pastors were printed in *The Orthodox Word* in 1982, soon after they reached the West. Very little information on the author was included at that time, for then it was very difficult to have contact with Fr. George. Recently our co-editor, Nun Nina, visited Fr. George and interviewed him, gaining thereby a deeper understanding of the world from which he came—a world that is now not too far from our own.

We feel it is a great privilege to have this firsthand information. It is an obvious gift of God, which enables us to see clearly into the spiritual climate of the modern age wherein our successors and the future heroes of true Orthodox pastorship will labor.

It is with gratitude to Fr. George that we present this brief *Course in Catacomb Pastoral Theology*, hoping that this eloquent and deeply moving "Call" of a Christian pastor will be heard before it is too late. Let us be strong in the Lord, standing erect before His Majesty, our loving God and Saviour Jesus Christ, being ready, as were the Christians of all twenty centuries, to bear witness to eternal Truth and firm-heartedly hold the divine vision within our hearts until His Second Coming. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Abbot Herman, Pascha, 1997

FOREWORD

BY THE EDITOR

I FIRST READ Fr. George Calciu's sermons in *The Orthodox Word*. Fr. Seraphim Rose, the co-founder of our St. Herman of Alaska monastic brotherhood, was deeply moved by the boldness and courage of Fr. Calciu. Besides publishing his sermons, he spoke about him with great fervor in his lecture, *The Orthodox Worldview*. This was to be the last lecture of Fr. Seraphim's life. He ended his talk by quoting the powerful words of Fr. Calciu, and within three weeks he reposed.

Ever since reading Fr. Calciu's sermons, I had a prayer in my heart to meet him. So, in the summer of 1996 I heard that he was going to be at the dedication of a new church in Hayward, California, and God gave me the opportunity I had prayed for. I really did not know much about him, except that he was a confessor of Christ and had spent some years in prison for his speaking of the Christian faith. I had no idea that his years in prison totaled almost twenty-two years!

Fr. Calciu is short in stature, now in his early seventies. He greeted me with warmth and love. I could see the fire of his zeal and love for Christ in his smiling and sparkling eyes. I asked him if he had written an autobiography or if anyone had recorded his experiences. When he said no, a desperate sense of loss seized me. I knew in my heart that his life was one that must be made known, especially to the youth of today. I let my strong feelings be known. Then, in October

1996, I received a telephone call from Fr. Calciu's beloved friend, Mr. Nicolae Poppa, who informed me that Fr. Calciu was coming to California for a visit and who invited me to his home to conduct an interview.

When I began the interview, I had no idea to what depths of agony and suffering Fr. Calciu had been. I did not know that he had passed through the diabolic experiment at Pitesti Prison, which attempted to eradicate from the human soul any trace of love, devotion, integrity, virtue and goodness. As the interview progressed, my love and respect for him continually increased.

Fr. Calciu did not merely report to me cold facts of the past, but, rather, with such humility and ever so nobly, he opened his soul to me. The most intense part was when he told me how he was able to survive another moment, another day, of the hellish torture and deep despair in Pitesti by saying, "God, forgive me!" I could see that those feelings were being relived in his soul by the tears that flowed down his cheeks. He was willing for our sakes to go through it again. I am deeply grateful to him, for his life has had a life-changing effect on me.

Fr. Calciu has been to the depths of hell. He has seen evil unmasked. He knows from experience that the seed of evil is in each one of us. After having the foundation of his own soul taken apart and defiled, he somehow had the wherewithal to turn to Christ, the Living God and Saviour of our souls. He found restoration and healing—righteous men entered his life in prison cells to help. He followed the sweet voice of our Lord and His commands to forgive and to love. His soul became even stronger than before, and he made a vow to become a priest. After he left prison, his soul could not find peace until he heeded his conscience and made good his vow. He grew to love the Lord with such might that the desire for martyrdom,

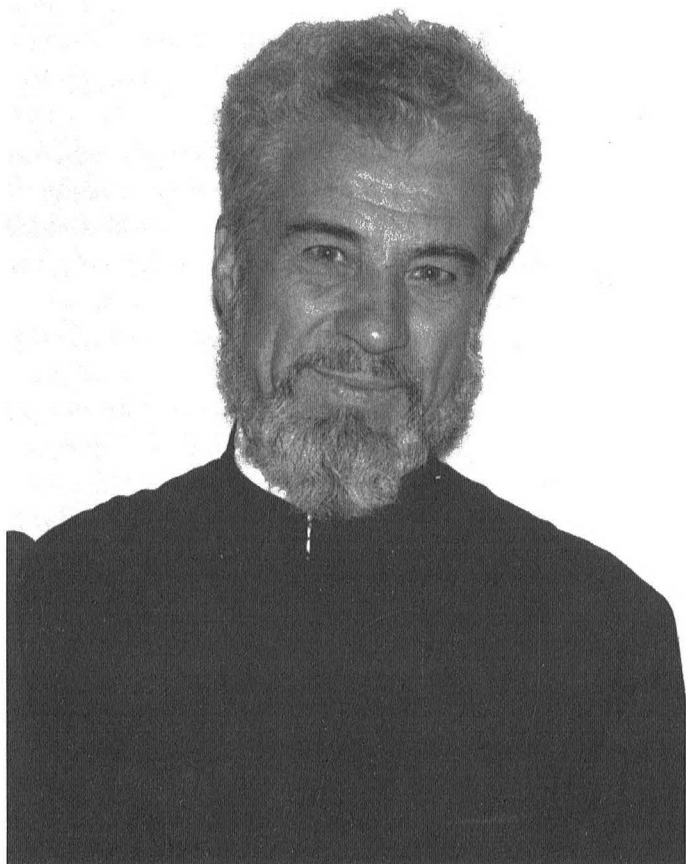
FOREWORD

to shed his blood for Christ, was born in his soul. He then confessed Christ, Who led him to stand alone, to preach to the youth, and to lead many of them to Christ.

When he returned to Romania in February 1990, right after the communist dictatorship fell, Fr. Calciu told someone that he would serve a memorial service in University Square for the young people who had been killed. Even though he was not allowed access to radio or television and the news was spread only by word of mouth, and even though the Dean of the Theological Institute was discouraging the students from attending, 10,000 young people gathered around him in University Square for the commemoration of the young people who had died there.

May his example inspire us to be fearless confessors of Christ in our own godless society and to reach out with all our might and strength to the lost youth who, if only they knew the reality of Jesus Christ and His kingdom that is not of this world, would also follow Him. Amen.

Nun Nina
April 23/May 6, 1997
Holy Great-martyr George
St. Paisius Abbey



Fr. Calciu when he arrived in Rome in 1985, after
being exiled by Ceausescu from Romania.

*CHRIST IS
CALLING YOU!*

Seven Homilies
to the Youth



Fr. Calciu with his students at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest, Class of 1976.
This picture was smuggled out of Romania in 1985.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN HOMILIES OF FR. GEORGE CALCIU

by Fr. Seraphim Rose*

THE LENTEN SERMONS of Fr. George Calciu, originally addressed to Orthodox seminarians and students in Romania, are just as appropriate to the young people of America and the Western world in general. His words will strike a responsive chord in the heart of any young person who is awake or ready to awaken to the call of Christ to this corrupt last generation of mankind.

In the communist-dominated countries of the East this call is jammed by the atheist control of education, the press, and all the means of public expression. In the West there is little of such open persecution of faith in God, but the spiritual atmosphere is not as different from that of the East as it might seem. The same unbelief and unremitting worldliness are pounded into the heads and hearts of young people in the West in almost every public institution and medium; the same violence and rebellion disturb young souls that know no other way to express their need and frustration; and religion, although outwardly free, has become a private and subjective matter that does not move society as a whole and is generally seen by young people to have no particular power or significance in their lives. The name of Christ—unlike the situation in the East—can be freely pronounced, but most often it is associated with a religion of dead formalism or, at best, of subjective

* An excerpt from *The Orthodox Word*, no. 102 (1982), pp. 16-17.

revivalism, and at worst of a self-centered exploitation of religious feeling.

The Christ of Fr. George Calciu is quite different. He calls to the suffering, longing, but unfulfilled hearts of young people who would believe in the whole Christ of Orthodox faith if only they dared, or if only someone would dare to preach Him to them, together with the call to Christian commitment and acceptance of the path to salvation which He has given us in His Church.

The voice of Fr. George is not for Romania only. What young man whose heart is burning with the love of Christ and His True Church in America—or any other land where Orthodoxy has taken root and begun to grow—will not be moved for his own people when he hears Fr. George say: “Our people are like a ripe harvest, waiting to be gathered in for Christ. But where are the worthy harvesters? Be harvesters! Be pastors! And above all, pray to God to give this nation good harvesters who will not love parents and children more than Christ.” “If, in a single year, we were to see one thousand priests graduate, full of the spirit of sacrifice, priests as Christ would have them to be, then in less than one year the spiritual face of our country would be changed.”

One can only pray that the young Orthodox people of America, and all those whose hearts are ripe for genuine Orthodoxy, will pay heed to these messages from the suffering Orthodox soul under the atheist yoke and respond to them by shaking off the worldly enticements of these decadent times and at last *taking seriously* the Orthodox faith which is given too easily to us here, thus making the beginning of the genuine, committed Christianity which this land so desperately needs.

May it be so!

Hieromonk Seraphim, 1982

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH*

*Given at the Chapel of the Romanian Orthodox
Church Seminary, Bucharest, Romania*

FIRST HOMILY

The Call

March 8, 1978

*The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus,
of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.*

Acts 1:1

THE TIME has come, young man, for you to hear a voice which has been calling you. It is a voice you have never heard before, or, perhaps, one you have heard but which you did not understand and to which you paid no heed. It is the voice of Jesus!

Do not shudder, do not be amazed and do not smile suspiciously, my young friend! The voice which calls you is not that of a dead man, but of One Who has risen from the dead. He does not call out merely from history, but from the depths

* When Fr. Calciu delivered these sermons in a hostile communist, anti-Christian environment, the youth kept returning week after week, despite the threats and danger. The profound response in their souls to God's love brought about a spiritual awakening stronger than the instinct of self-preservation.—ED.

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of your own inner being. The words written and read today [from the New Testament] issue out of depths within you, yet they are unknown to you. Perhaps you have been ashamed or afraid to delve inside yourself and discover them. You believed that within you lay a wild beast, a sepulchre of instincts from which there would rise frightful spirits of passions. You did not see the face of an angel, and yet you are an angel. If this has never been told you before, Jesus is telling you now, and His testimony is true. No one has proved Him a liar.

What do you know of Christ, young man? If all you know is what they have taught you in atheism classes, you have been deprived, in bad faith, of a truth—of the only truth which can set you free.

What do you know of the Church of Christ? If all you know can be reduced to the concepts of Giordano Bruno,* about whom you have heard in classes of so-called scientific atheism, then you have been spitefully thwarted from experiencing the light of true culture and the brilliance of spirituality, which is the guarantee of human freedom.

Friend, where did you ever hear these words: *Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you* (Matt. 5:44)? If you have never heard these words, my friend, who hindered you, and with what right? Who prohibited you from knowing that there exists a better way, more just and simple than that on which you now wander blindly? Who has pulled the veil over your eyes so that you would not see the most wonderful light of the love proclaimed and lived by Jesus unto the final end?

* Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) was an Italian philosopher whose enthusiasm for nature led him to hold an extreme form of pantheistic immanentism. Since the 19th century his name has been associated with anticlericalism.—ED.

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

I have seen you on the street, my friend, young and handsome; and suddenly everything changes in you: your face is disfigured, your instincts break loose, ravishing your being in elemental fury, and you become violent. Where did you learn such violence, young man? From whom? I have seen your mother meek and tearful and your father with his face stunned by pain, and I knew that you did not learn it from them. From where, then?

Lend your ears and listen to the call of Jesus, the call of His Church. Outside of her, your reckless violence will lead you to judgment and imprisonment, where your soul may be irrevocably destroyed. I have seen you in pain before the magistrates, where your actions have assumed horrible dimensions. I have seen you afraid, cynical, and full of bravado. All these attitudes showed me how near you are to the edge of destruction. And I ask myself once more: who bears the guilt for your fall?

Come to the Church of Christ! Here only will you find consolation for your ravished soul. Only in the Church will you find certainty, because only in the Church will you hear the voice of Jesus saying meekly to you: "Son, all your sins are forgiven. You have suffered much. Behold, I have made you whole; go and sin no more."

No one has ever said such words as these to you. Yet you hear them now. Rather, you have heard of class hatred, political hatred—always hatred. "Love" is a strange word to you, but now the Church of Christ shows you a better way, the way of love. Up until this moment you were a slave of your instincts; your body was a simple instrument through which your instincts expressed themselves. But now you hear the words of Jesus, through His Apostle, pleading with you: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (I Cor. 3:15).

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You have been told that you descend from the apes, that you are a beast which must be trained; but now you discover an astonishing thing: that you are the temple of God and in you dwells the Spirit of God. You are being called, young friend, back to your dignity as a metaphysical being; you are raised up from the low place in which false education has sunk you to the sacred office of being the temple in which God dwells.

We call you to purity. If you have not forgotten the meaning of the word “innocence,” if there is still an area within you of undefiled childhood, you will not resist this call.

Come to the Church of Christ—to learn what innocence and purity are, what meekness is and what love is. You will find your place in life and the purpose of your existence. To your astonishment you will discover that our life does not end in death, but in resurrection; that our existence centers on Christ, and that this world is not a mere empty moment in which non-being prevails.

You will receive hope, and this hope will make you strong.

You will receive faith, and this faith will save you.

You will receive love, and this love will make you good.

This is, my young friend, the first word which Jesus addresses to you in the midst of the turmoil of this world, through the thicket of your passions, with which no one has taught you to fight, and out of the transparent dreams of innocence which still haunt you from time to time.

Jesus is seeking you; Jesus has found you!

Radu Voda Church
Wednesday of Cheese-fare Week*
March 8, 1978

* The last Wednesday before the beginning of Great Lent. (All footnotes are from the Romanian edition unless otherwise noted.)

SECOND HOMILY

Let Us Build Churches

March 15, 1978

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter,
and upon this rock I will build My Church;
and the gates of hell shall not
prevail against it.*

Matt. 16:18

DO YOU REMEMBER, young friend, how I told you last time that a new voice is calling and that this is the voice of Jesus? But to where and to what does He call you? What alluring promise to assuage your thirst for knowledge and truth does the Saviour make?

The voice of Jesus calls you to His Church.

You live within a family, within a society, within a world. You are bound to your family by the unbreakable bond of blood, which you cannot deny and which seeks vengeance, if ever you betray it, through your suffering. You live in the midst of your nation which you feel to be one metaphysical entity—not a group of isolated individuals, but one immense and united soul in which you are the whole and in which the whole lives through you. And, finally, you exist in a world of suffering and joys, to which you respond because something in you unites and binds you inextricably to all your fellow human beings.

Where then is the Church of Christ to which you are called?

She is everywhere. She holds within her all human life, and, more, she contains all heavenly beings, too. For the

Church knows no history; her history is the spiritual present. Family and society bear within them the tragic fate of their own limitations within the boundary of history. History is, by definition, the chronology of unhappiness, yet the road to salvation. But you, my young friend, are called to the Church of Christ which was conceived in God's eternity and which bears within her perfection, just as the world bears within it its own limited nature. Society considers you simply a component part, one brick lined up alongside other bricks. Your freedom in it is to function as a brick, fixed for all time. This freedom is the freedom of constraint and in this lies your tragedy. For your true freedom lies within you, but you know neither how to discover it in its true meaning, nor how to use it when at last you have found it. You have been told that you are not free, that freedom is the understanding of necessity, and that necessity is imposed upon you from the outside by factors entirely exterior to yourself, as in a lifeless construction.*

The Church of Christ is alive and free. In her we move and live through Christ, Who is her Head, and have full freedom, because we learn the Truth and the Truth makes us free (cf. John 8:32).

You are in Christ's Church whenever you uplift someone bent down in sorrow, when you help someone elderly walk more easily, or when you give alms to the poor and visit the sick. You are in Christ's Church when you cry out: "Lord, help me." You are in Christ's Church when you are patient and good, when you refuse to get angry at your brother, even if he has wounded your feelings. You are in Christ's Church when you pray: "Lord, forgive him." When you work honestly at

* The essence of political totalitarianism is underlined here. However, the problem is more general: true freedom does not come from outside, but from within us, its basis being not material but spiritual. Christ represents the supreme freedom which raises us above all worldly enslavement.

your job, returning home weary in the evenings but with a smile upon your lips, bringing with you a warm and kind light; when you repay evil with love—you are in Christ's Church.

Do you not see, therefore, my young friend, how close the Church of Christ is? You are Peter and God is building His Church upon you. You are the rock of His Church against which no one and nothing can prevail, because you are a liberated rock—a soul that is fulfilled within His Church and not one condemned to stagnation.

Let us build churches, my friend. Let us build churches from the depths of our hearts ablaze with the light of the Sun of Righteousness, Who is Christ Himself, Who has told us that by faith we are free from sin. Let us build the churches of our faith which no human power can pull down, because the ultimate power of the Church is Christ Himself.

Feel for your brother at your side, ever present, and never ask: "Who is this man?" Rather say: "He is no stranger; he is my brother. He is the Church of Christ just as I am."

Look back, my friend, and be filled with awe; look forward and rejoice. History is a series of set events out of which arises from time to time living witnesses of princely faith, now embodied in our churches and monasteries. Treasures of the Romanian Christian soul, they represent the spirit which gives life to our national tradition. All which falls outside this spirituality is destined to perish. Mountains have been levelled, forests have burned, people have died, but churches have remained alive and monasteries continue offering the incense of continuous prayer to heaven. If we destroy the churches which express the national identity, we cannot affirm the continuity of a Romanian spirituality, nor can we maintain that we have preserved unaltered the tradition and soul of Romania. There are no references to Romanian princes destroying the foundation of churches, or of Michael the Brave ordering the disap-

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pearance overnight of an Enea Church. There is no wine cellar or “Dunanea” tavern, old or new, to equal a single stone from the foundation of the Enea Church.* Nor can any scientific atheism or scientific argument stop you, dear friend, from inquiring about the meaning of life and about God and salvation.

This search is the proof of your freedom in the face of any constraint and in the face of matter itself. It is your road to the Church, the gate through which you will enter. Do not waver on the doorstep, friend. Come in! How many years will you stand in the shadows of the Church without knowing her? How many years will you hear the voice of Jesus saying to you: *Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out* (John 16:37)?

The world will cast you aside; it oppresses and alienates you. Jesus receives you, comforts you and returns you to yourself. Come and build churches with us. Let us reconstruct in our own souls an Enea Church—princely, Christ-centered, alive and immortal—until we actually see her raised up again on her site, a steadfast witness to our Christian Faith and to our national identity.

Without churches or monasteries we are aliens. Whoever destroys churches, destroys the very substance of our material and spiritual endurance on this land given to us by God. Young man, you are no longer alone. You are in the Church of Christ.

Radu Voda Church
First Wednesday of Great Lent
March 15, 1978

* A church destroyed by the Romanian communist government.—ED.

THIRD HOMILY

Heaven and Earth

March 22, 1978

*We, according to His promise, look for new heavens
and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

II Peter 3:13

YOUNG MAN, I am addressing you again today because I have chosen you from all those to whom I could be speaking, for you are most ready to hear the Word of Christ. You are noble and pure; atheist education has not yet managed to darken the heaven within you. You still look upward, you still can hear the summons from exalted realms. The soaring of your spirit heavenward has not yet been barred through arbitrary concepts. The desire for heaven still exists within you; materialism has not yet made you its prisoner.

Therefore, I call you, young man, seven times. Seven are the praises of the day to God, according to the Psalmist: *Seven times a day have I praised Thee for the judgments of Thy righteousness* (Ps. 118:164).

Today we will speak of heaven and earth.

I will not frighten you, my friend, with colorful descriptions of the end of the world. We stand before death daily. Its presence is more suffocating than life itself, more real than life. Death is our nightmare every moment. You live with death by your side, friend, and yet you have not grown accustomed to its presence because you are alive and authentic—more alive and authentic than you realize yourself.

Heaven and earth—the concepts remind me of a poem I once heard recited by the poet himself on television. He held

up his right arm as he spoke. His face was a picture of forced inspiration and his voice recited in a monotone, as he tried to induce some kind of trance among his hearers. Each verse was supported by a chorus of children chanting an artificial litany spontaneously prescribed: "Can you count us, heaven, one, two ... three ..." and so forth up to ten. It was a curse, a defiance, thrown up at heaven. The poem was essentially saying that heaven might be able to count the poet and his companions one, two, three ... good and well, but it could not vanquish them. That was the basic idea. He was an atheist poet, patterned for the materialists.

But to which "heaven" did he address himself? Was it to the vault made up of the successive strata of the atmosphere? If so, his monologue was senseless. The poet was obviously addressing someone who could hear and even count, at least that is what one surmises from the conviction with which he spoke. How strange! For it was not a matter of inventing a trivial personification for the sake of the poem's rhythm, but the poet himself actually believed in the depth of his being that his appeal or invocation was being heard and that it was an act of heroism. He addressed the metaphysical heaven which he was striving to diminish and to deny—by affirming it!

It is this heaven I want to talk to you about, my friend.

In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1). He created a heaven and an earth, a transcendence and an immanence, an aspiration for perfection and a material manifestation; a spaceless, timeless existence, on the one hand, and a space subjected to time, on the other. From the moment of creation to the present we keep within ourselves the nostalgic memory of our union with God's heaven. We have never forgotten that there is a place in heaven to which we, or rather, heaven within us, aspire.

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

Tell me, young man, how much have you believed the statements which you have heard repeatedly to the point of obsession—at school, on the radio, on television, in the newspapers and at young people's meetings—that you descend from apes? And how honored did this revelation make you feel?! Noam Chomsky* has said that the most stupid human beings can learn to speak, but the most intelligent ape has never reached such a height of achievement.

And now, behold, a voice from heaven addresses you: "You are my son!" And again, the voice confirms it for you, as it did before for Jesus when He lived in the world, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again* (cf. John 12:28).**

You are heaven and earth; darkness and light; sin and grace. I know, friend, that you are tortured by questions concerning the meaning of your life in this world, and on the purpose of the world in general. Do the ready-made authoritarian statements in answer to your limited question satisfy you: namely that "heaven is fiction, matter is everything, and it is matter speaking to you through your internal and external senses"? Matter organized its own structure and evolution by certain laws of great complexity before even the slightest rudiment of the human brain was formed. Thus once the higher brain of man appeared—the only means by which matter recognizes itself—it could no longer recognize itself. And from that time until now human intelligence has been struggling in a sterile and vain effort to discover laws which heedless matter fixed in a period when there was nothing but darkness and unconsciousness!

* A famous American linguist (born 1928), the parent of generative grammar.

** Every Christian is, by virtue of the Mystery of Baptism, a son of God, not by being, but through adoption. In this context, "glorifying" has the meaning of theosis. "God became man so that man also becomes God. Not God by nature, but by grace" (St. Athanasius the Great).

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

What do you think of this game of non-intelligence which annuls all human intelligence, even that of the collective one? Do you not see that the most elementary logic obliges you to admit the presence of an intelligence outside of this world?

But I call you to a much higher flight; to total abandonment; to an act of courage which defies reason. I call you to God. I call you to the One that transcends the world so that you might know an infinite heaven of spiritual joy, the heaven which you presently grope for in your personal hell and which you seek even while in a state of unplanned revolt.

This heaven, with its divine hierarchy and its divine light gradually descending only to return to its source which is God, does not count us in twos or fives or tens. For, my friend, in the eyes of heaven you are not a piece in a machine which drives you around; in the eyes of heaven you are a soul, a whole being, so free in your actions, so priceless in your worth, that God Himself, in the guise of the Second Person of the Trinity, came into the world to be crucified for you.

How ridiculous it seems to you now—the curse of the poet who believed so much in heaven that he needed to have a chorus of children to hide behind as a shield! Do not believe, my friend, in the all-powerful nature of matter. This earth is finite. We can destroy matter in minutes through fission and achieve oblivion if we do not admit the presence of God. The absolute claims of materialism are supported on a limited premise. You realize that the attributes of matter—such as infinity, eternity and self-creation—are purely spiritual notions. To deny the existence of heaven is to deny all existence which does not fall into the orbit of my feelings. To deny the spirit means to admit that, for those moments when I close my eyes or block my ears, the world becomes non-existent.

And now, my friend, I want to recite to you the most beautiful poem ever written about heaven and earth. It is the

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

beginning of the Book of the Evangelist John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not* (John 1:1-5).

How can darkness confine light, or matter confine the spirit, or atheism destroy faith and annul freedom? The heavens count each of you, one by one; for each of you is a unique and irrepeatable creation, my friend, O man.

Radu Voda Church
Second Wednesday of Great Lent
March 22, 1978

FOURTH HOMILY
Faith and Friendship

March 29, 1978

He that hateth Me hateth My Father also.

John 15:23

SO, MY DEAR FRIEND, we are half way along the road on which we started together that first Wednesday before the Lenten Fast, called "Cheesefare Week." On that occasion the call of Jesus resounded for the first time in your ears, hungry for truth; and your soul, yearning for the absolute, followed it.

At that point I was alone, but I knew that my voice was not "one crying in the wilderness," for the words were those of Jesus. I knew that the words with which I called you, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight His way into your hearts," would penetrate your ears. And I was not mistaken. For look, how many we are today to confess, even if only within our hearts, faith in Christ and love for one another.

Why have I been calling you my friend, and why have I put my soul into your hands, young one? Why have I believed in you to the point of implicating you in my actions of faith, and even to the point of placing my very life on the line for you?

Why? Because my spirit knew your soul even before you heard my words or even before we set eyes on each other. I knew of your disquiet and troubles, of your unhappiness and suffering. I understood long ago that your badness was but a shield against the world, and that your bravado was but a defense for your wounds. For you are my friend; we are bound together by a friendship which no one and nothing can de-

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

stroy, because our freedom is guaranteed by Jesus Himself. And our love is founded upon the Resurrected One, Who says to us: *Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you* (John 15:15).

Who has ever confessed such truths to you? On all sides you are surrounded by an atmosphere of secrecy, as within a conspiracy devised by the powerful of the day. A selective network prevents anything reaching you other than that which subjugates you to a certain idea or imposed concept. Where is your freedom to choose and where is the power of your word? Where is the exercise of that noble freedom given to you by God, based upon having the satisfaction of fulfilling your responsibility in history? Why then am I surprised that you do not know what this freedom is or how to use it? Why should I be amazed that you actually know nothing of friendship or love, nor to whom to give them nor how to preserve them?

Who in this world would be your true friend, or who would give his soul for you? In any social group to which you would belong, you are always excluded by the fundamental arguments themselves, which justify its existence as a social phenomenon.* Every exclusion based on these grounds puts you in the position of a slave. It is a social and philosophical secret which you are far from understanding. You are offered only the conclusion, authoritatively. Yet, if you were unfit to learn the road by which the conclusion came, how can you be fit to know the conclusion itself? And if you are fit to know the way, then why the mystery? Is someone afraid of your right to

* The exact wording in the typed manuscript is unclear. It surely refers to the justification of the existence of various social groups. The attempt to avoid the Marxist terminology, "social class," is obvious.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

judge? or of your freedom? or of your friendship? Could religion or faith be an object of prohibition?

Slavery to ideas is as serious a form of slavery as any other. But Jesus offers you, through His Church, the deep mystery of His Divinity and His friendship. You are no longer called a slave but a friend, because you discover the mystery of divine things.

You have avoided choosing Jesus as your friend for too long. Perhaps you were afraid of the ocean of spiritual freedom into which you would have to plunge. But Jesus has chosen you to hear His voice. He did so a long time ago: *You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain* (John 15:16).

The choice was made long ago, for Jesus has always loved you, young friend, but now you have responded to His call. In responding you are ordained to go and bear fruit that will remain. To be a prophet of Christ in the world in which you live; to love your neighbor as yourself and to make each man your friend; to proclaim through your every action this unique and limitless love which has raised man from the level of a slave to that of a friend of God; to be the prophet of this liberating love which delivers you from all constraint, giving you back wholly to yourself so you can offer yourself freely to God.

The most humiliating bondage is that which forbids you any theological flight, any attempt to transcend the immanent and its captivity. "You are a slave of my will," it seems to say to you, "and my will forbids you to believe in anything other than what I direct you to believe."

Why are you forbidden the right to leave the space in which you are kept a prisoner of feelings and reason? Why is only that which belongs to this dimension imposed upon you as reality and the rest dismissed and decreed as fiction? And

subsequently, why are you not allowed to penetrate this so-called fiction with your own knowledge and thus shatter it? Is it that there lies somewhere the fear that this "fiction" is more real than that which is imposed upon you as "reality"?

A philosophical or theological system, especially if it is a way of life, cannot be destroyed from outside. From this standpoint it remains unassailable to its besieger. Phrases like "religion is the opium of the people," or "religion was created by the exploiting classes," cannot even raise a smile today. They are purely and simply ignored.

Yet you, for you are young, are asked to take seriously the half-baked arguments of the atheist bible (Hazlii) or the anti-catechism [column] from *Scinteia Tineretului*,* which hold fast only because of the prohibition preventing you from responding to them. In Christ freedom means liberation from sin and death, but on the social level—the struggle for ideas. In our country atheism takes a forced course, becoming more and more narrow. But life does not lie in the authority of the state. Faith, however, is on full wing, for it is a fact of life.

Authoritarianism creates bondage, faith gives freedom.

I read in *Contemporanul* (November 11, 1977) an article entitled "With Atheists on Religion," which contained declarations of some young people in an interview carried out by the magazine reporter. Every investigation into religion is for us a source of disquiet and fear because, according to officialdom, to be a believer is tantamount to betrayal of one's country. Nevertheless, in this interview the young people, who were all Party members, replied according to their beliefs, and their faith made them free. I suggest that you all read this article in *Contemporanul*—the official literary organ of the materialist ideology of the Romanian Communist Party. You will see there that the young people interviewed set themselves free

* The Party youth paper.—ED.



Radu Voda Church, Bucharest.

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

from the bondage of terror that would have made them hide their true Faith and declare formal statements about atheism. They overcame their instinct of self-preservation and affirmed publicly and courageously their Faith and the freedom to choose it. They openly chose Christ and His Church. All were young people like you, my friend, as good and generous as you, as brave as you. They were our friends. As a consequence, some of you wrote them precious words of encouragement, through which you wanted to tell them that they were not alone, that the best believe as they do, love as they do, and wish to express themselves as freely as they have done.

Friend, we are bound by the infinite love of Christ. Our faith in Him binds us together as One Body. Our common friendship binds us together, for we are all Christ's friends. Do not be afraid to affirm that you are His friend. Do not be afraid to reject an atheist ideology which has no other aim than to kill your soul as a metaphysical entity, or even to cripple it within you. Do not be afraid to affirm that our nation has been Orthodox Christian since its inception, and that thirty years of enforced atheism and imposed [anti-Christian] propaganda cannot stop our people's aspiration towards the absolute.

Believe and love. Faith will make you free; love will unite you. You will be free in union with Jesus, and you will abide in His love.

See how high you have soared, my friend; you are now a friend of Christ! For this I love you, young one; for this I believe in you.

Radu Voda Church
Third Wednesday of Great Lent
March 29, 1978

FIFTH HOMILY
The Priesthood and Human Suffering

April 5, 1978

*Thou art a priest forever after
the order of Melchizedek.*

Hebrews 5:6

PERHAPS you have been asking yourself, my young friend, why I have even been addressing you, and by what authority? What right do I have to give this message which is disturbing you and obliging you to face up to disquieting questions? Why have I come to confirm your own misunderstood fears and to open up to you perspectives which are so new and unexpected that they may break down your fragile balance of defenses?

Perhaps, by uncovering for you the purity and innocence which you did not recognize, I have made you even more vulnerable in this wicked world. I have made you more open to suffering, and it is natural that you should ask what is the purpose of suffering. Has it a finality or is it just a blind happening, a fate traced by the stars, or an endless ocean in which you swim without hope of reaching any shore?

I speak to you in the name of Christ and His Church, in the name of the priesthood to which Christ called me, because nothing in this world is an interplay of unconscious, arbitrary happenings. All things stem from a cause and hold fast towards an end which stands outside this world. The cause is God, the end is God. He is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega (cf. Rev. 1:8 and 22:13).

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But what is the image of this world? What certainty does it offer us, what happiness awaits us at the unknown corners of life, what consolations in misfortune?

I will not begin with life, nor death, neither with the beginning nor the end; but with the given: that which happens to us every day.

Have you asked yourself, young person, what is your purpose in the world and whether everything is reduced simply to that? If we were born to be slaves of matter—even if only as a philosophical justification—then the end of your life is slavery.

If our freedom is reduced to need and logic, then our freedom is slavery.

If all our knowledge is reduced to a sterile and never-realized understanding of the laws of matter, then our knowledge is slavery.

If our love is reduced to the struggle for existence, and our sacrifice is for the perpetuating of the species, then these things too are but slavery.

And finally, if all our convictions spring from an imposed, official doctrine, then they cannot be but slavery.

And in all this series, young friend, where is the place for your soul?

You sense that there exists, away from all the materialism with which you have been intoxicated, and far from the atheism which has been imposed upon you like a violent ideology, something vaster, more authentic and yet closer to you personally than all that which suffocates you in this materialist bath. Your spirit within you propels you towards that “something,” as towards a world only envisioned and suspected. This world sees its own image, like the blue sky glistening in the sun, through the grid of prohibitions which this society imposes on you.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

You must know, friend, that neither an atheist ideology, nor the materialist order, no matter how authoritatively it might be imposed upon you, is capable of raising up an absolutely impregnable wall between you and the spiritual world. The soul cannot be made prisoner. This is a law which the materialists refuse to recognize at their own peril. *On the spiritual level there is no captivity without hope.*

Your teachers speak to you of atheism and secretly go to church! Behold a crack through which the golden light of the spiritual dimension reaches you. Your ideological leaders thunder and hurl lightning against religion, uttering the most foul curses, yet at the moment of disaster they make the sign of the cross, asking for God's help—as, for example, during the earthquake of March 4, 1977. Behold another crack through which the soul escapes the suffocating locker which the official ideology diligently built up for you.

In atheist meetings those obliged to speak condemn those who believe or who were caught in the criminal act of going to church. Yet away from the lying words, far from their false-toned platform proclamations, you discern their fear of being discovered as also having religious beliefs. The lie in which they so lamentably swim breaks down once more the wall of your incarceration, and you say as the sweet light breaks through: "Whence this unnatural light? It is a light foreign to our world."

I spoke to you about these things in my previous four sermons. I will continue to speak about them—for I am a priest of Christ. God has revealed to us through love the mysteries of His works. And Jesus has commanded me to make it known to you so that you will say no more: "I did not know it." I speak so that you might know that you can fly, and that only spiritual flight is truly exalted. The flight of materialism is flight with broken wings.

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

I speak openly to you about all these things because the Church of Christ has come out of the catacombs. She shines blindingly on the soil of this country which is highly esteemed in our hearts.

The Enea Church was destroyed—but who among us, Romanian and Christian, can forget it? A tavern, a symbol of a concept which considers the Church a plague, will be put in its place. A tavern—so once more the people will be happy!... Woe to the architect who builds there, binding his name forever with the destruction of something that was a demonstration of the Romanian genius of construction and faith. Woe to the officials who believe that they can win glory and power by the destruction of churches and the construction of bars. Woe to the concept that considers an Agapia Inn more valuable than the Agapia Monastery. Woe to those who consider that the Romanian Patriarchate is a piece of history which can be placed in a museum, and who have not understood that it has a real life which is always present. It is not a historical relic but a living soul. Woe to those who bow to force, allowing destruction which will never be accepted by history.

I have said all these things to you because I am a priest. And because we are priests we obey the command of God which says that a burning light cannot be hid under a bushel but must shine before all (cf. Matt. 5:15).

I have said all these things, young friends, that you might judge if it is right before God to listen to men rather than to God (cf. Acts 4:19). For He Who gave Himself upon the Cross for the salvation of the world commanded us not to hide the divine truth. I have said all these things to you that you might understand that through faith we shatter walls and break down the bonds of prejudice and abuse, even if we shall have tribulation in this world (cf. John 16:33).

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

There is a continual battle between good and evil, between right and wrong, between freedom and captivity of ideas, between purity and corruption. All these battles take place on only one field of combat—the heart of man. I, the priest of Christ, address this heart; for as Pascal has said: “The heart has its own way of thinking, which reason ignores.”

What, then, does the priesthood mean? It means to be an enduring witness to human suffering and to take it upon your own shoulders. To be the one who warms the leper at his own breast and who gives life to the miserable through the breath from his own mouth. To be a strong comfort to every unfortunate one, even when you yourself are overwhelmed with weakness. To be a ray of shining light to unhappy hearts when your own eyes long ago ceased to see any light. To carry mountains of others’ suffering on your shoulders, while your own being screams out with the weight of its own suffering.

Your flesh will rebel and say: “This heroism is absurd, impossible. Where is such a man, where is the priest you describe so that I may put my own suffering upon his shoulders?” Yet, nevertheless, he exists! From time to time there awakens within us the priest of Christ who, like the Good Samaritan, will kneel down by the side of the man fallen among thieves and, putting him upon his own donkey, will bring him to the Church of Christ for healing. And he will forget himself and comfort you, O man of suffering.

Who else could be moved by your suffering today? Who else would bear your burden, giving you words of comfort? From whom else would you hear today the words of Christ: *Come unto Me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28).

I have seen you, my young friend, bullied by your elders, mocked and insulted for the simple crime of being young. I spoke to you then as one in weakness and pain, as a sensitive

SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

and defenseless being. Then I saw you, to my horror and joy, bow and kiss my hand, that of a priest of Christ who brought you comfort.

Because you have overcome death, to which atheist doctrine had condemned you, because you have been exalted above the ruins of fallen materialism through your youth and faith, I speak to you the words which Jesus spoke through the Apostles to the Gentiles. They sound absurd to the prisoner of matter and materialism, to those who substitute taverns for churches and indecency for suffering. But to you they will resound full of spiritual meaning and truth:

The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? (I Cor. 1:18-20).

Where are all these men, my friends? There are none of them left. But you have remained here alive and whole in the Church of Christ, a holy people, won by God, a foundation stone on which the Orthodox spirit of the Romanian people is built. You are its only salvation and preservation through this age.

Radu Voda Church
Fourth Wednesday of the Great Fast
April 5, 1978

SIXTH HOMILY
About Death and Resurrection

April 12, 1978

*Verily, verily I say unto you,
If a man keep My saying,
he shall never see death.*

John 8:51

WE WILL TALK today, friends, about death and resurrection. What a strange and contradictory pairing for your ears which have heard only of death and life! You know nothing, my young friends, but the logical meaning of affirmation or of negation. Forcibly held by the materialist strait-jacket, you know that water flows to the valleys, that fire burns and clouds contain electrical current. But this information is intended to make you sleep easy, with your ears bent to obedience and your understanding restricted to what is given to you. The universal remedy is offered to you like a message in a fortune cookie.

The deans of atheist ideologies have received "illumination" which has placed them in possession of absolute truth: the substitution of one glaring error for another only a little less flagrant. The only problem is that each new error is imposed on you as an absolute truth. The attempt to critically consent to an ideological truth is a dangerous heresy. The officials of atheism begin at once to hunt the witch.

"The poles of our existence stretch between life and death," every materialist concept states. You, O man, are destined to be born and die by a caprice of nature, or by the simple play of passion. You have no destiny. You follow the

law of necessity and quantity, which through some miracle becomes quality, and you must accept this as the only law governing your life and death.

This means that you are the most unfortunate being on earth, for neither plants nor animals have any consciousness of life and death, but you do. You know that you live, and you especially know that you will die. Your whole life unfolds under the somber perspective of death. If our modern world has not increased at all the chances for life, it has multiplied infinitely the possibilities for death. Civilization and Death, the tragic horsemen of the Apocalypse, have been ravaging our planet for centuries. And no angel of resurrection is evident on the horizon; no archangel flashes through the heavens with his thunderous voice, to the dreadful horsemen, "Stop! In the Name of the Lord, stop!"

In the material heaven of the atheist, there are written the dismal words: "Nothing exists but life and death." And after them, a striking prohibition: "It is forbidden to believe in the resurrection!"

Friend, what has atheism given you in exchange for its dispossessing you of faith in the Resurrection? What gift has it given you for taking away from you Jesus, the Risen One? To what serene celebration has it called you when it made you labor on Pascha and Christmas? What purification and spiritual rest has it outlined for you after the Christian celebrations were soiled with the dirt of denigration and violent verbal slogans?

At another time, men sought to live out the time of God, dimensions stretching out towards infinity; today, with our eyes on the clock, we boringly measure time by meetings, like a curse. At another time we reconciled ourselves at Pascha to our fellow men with the words of the Paschal hymn: "Let us embrace one another. Let us speak, brothers and sisters, also to

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those who hate us, and in the Resurrection let us forgive everything." Today on Pascha we are offered picnics, with alcoholic orgies which inevitably end up in violence.

You know, young ones, that an idea is valid, not through the fact that it exists, but through its positive effects. So judge for yourself, my friend; compare and appreciate. But above all, commit yourself. For you must choose between good and evil; between meekness and violence; between life and death.

But now I will take you with me onto another plane. To go on this unexpected flight you must renounce the materialistic prejudices which were planted in your mind. You must purify your heart of passions which your educators have cultivated within you since your childhood, calling them by shining and virtuous names. You must wipe out faithlessness and atheism; hatred and lack of respect for men; servility and violence; cowardice and arrogance. And thus purified, you must direct yourself toward the great festival of the Resurrection.

You must understand that the Resurrection of Christ is a renewal of the universe. Through your transformation the whole world is changed. At the Lord's Supper, when Jesus announced His approaching sufferings, these suffering words were to assume a mystical and saving value for the whole world. You must understand that suffering leads to death, but death leads to resurrection. Yet if there be no resurrection, if the only reality is death, then we are more unfortunate than stones. For in seeing things without faith, our life endures but from birth until death, which could be a day, or it could be seventy years; for "from the moment of your birth you are old enough to die." What sense, then, has this short interval in the face of the eternity of death? To die like an animal means, simply and purely, to die—like a stone loosened from its pile, or a calf struck by the axe of the butcher in the slaughterhouse. Such a death has nothing human in it. It is a nightmare, for

beyond it there is no light, but only a terrible darkness. Human life appears as a tragedy because of such a death and the suffering which goes with it.

Whether a believer or not, no man can escape that ultimate judgment which momentarily precedes the agony of death and which is the tribunal of our own conscience. Who among us will feel totally innocent at that judgment?! Death with its somber absence of perspective terrifies us because our faith has weakened and because, in the general fear which rules the world, death appears no more as a liberation but as a supreme terror. For we have dehumanized death by denying the idea of God, and matter itself cannot dominate the spirit except by force.

The greatest and most rabid atheists of our century, who have not only made of matter a god, and of atheism a new mystical way, but have also used every means of persuasion to kill the true God in you, young friend, are all themselves afraid of their own disappearance, with an incurable, metaphysical fear. That is why they build grandiose tombs for themselves, attaching themselves to their earthly remains with a pitiable devotion. Tragically, they try to substitute their aspirations for eternity with these stones. The drama of their idolatrous lives ends in a more idolatrous death. They have lived in terror of suffering and have desired an instantaneous death because death itself is nothing else than a useless and unbearable blind alley of suffering. They were not spared even this ultimate act of solidarity with mankind, namely death.

But Jesus has bestowed upon us a death without fear, a reconciliation between death and happiness, for He has brought to us the assurance that death is not the end, but a beginning: the beginning of eternal life—life through resurrection.

To love someone is to say: "You will not die," and to believe what you say. This inarguable faith is in fact the only

fundamental truth which we feel in our genuine and profound love. I speak of all types of love. The mother, caressing her child, says to him with a faith that moves mountains: "You will not die." The lover, who whispers to the dear one words full of passion, says in effect with the same deep conviction: "You will not die."

Man's darkened history knows one moment of sunshine, which since then has been poured over humanity: It is the Sun of Righteousness, Christ Incarnate, the Son of God, Who came into the world to save it. What necessity could determine the Divine Perfection, Who knows no need, to become man? Nothing, save love. Only love [for man], since it is the only virtue which is both free and liberating. Not passionate love, but compassionate love. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16).

Thus Jesus became Love Incarnate, tangible Love, crucified Love. It was so hard for men to believe what they saw—for perfect Love stood before them in human form. They wanted to see It on the cross, pushed to the limit, which is suffering and death—to verify Its authenticity as if through fire, to see if Love would preserve its identity to the end. And Jesus passed the examination to which mankind subjected Him.

Remember, friends, His words from the Cross: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34). What greater proof of love could anyone give than this? And if you believe it when you tell your loved one, "You will not die," why do you not believe the words of supreme Love when It promises you eternal life? *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life* (John 5:24).

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But you believe, and you know that in truth you believe, as I also know it, even if what you believe is not very clear, my young friend. Yet to those who make room in your young conscience for the practice of their violent doctrines, and to those who incarcerate your soul in the narrow forms of atheism, your faith is a reality which frightens them more than anything else.

Ideas are preserved through their truth. An idea which is maintained through force and violence is deeply undermined by the falsehood within it. If materialists do not speak of death, it is because they are afraid of it and they pass over it in silence, just as they pass over all ideas which cannot be falsified.

Why was March 4th passed over in silence one year after the earthquake in 1977? Because death obliges you to think of God, of the life you have led and your moral responsibility. And they fear your capacity for intuiting metaphysical truth and your spiritual freedom, just as much as they fear death.

I speak to you about death as your single possibility to be victorious. For without resurrection both life and death become nonsense, absurd. The love of God, however, is the guarantee of our resurrection; and the Resurrection is the foundation of our faith in God and in Jesus Christ, His Son. It is the sublime and glorious occasion of a vital affirmation, an invitation to an amnesty of the past, as one French journalist has said; it is an invitation to a commitment in the future.

“Let us forgive all things because of the Resurrection.” Any other attitude means death. He Who died has also risen, and those who saw Him testified to the fact because they sealed it with their own suffering and death. We cannot doubt the truth of their accounts.

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week ... behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled

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back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow (Matt. 28:1-3).

This is the majestic depiction of the Resurrection of the Lord, the One Who broke the bonds of death and brought to man the unexpected perspective of the universal resurrection.

From now on, young man, be not afraid of death. For Christ is risen, being the first fruit of the Resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15:20).

From the moment you discover this truth, your life has a new meaning. It will not end between four sides of a coffin and remain there—which would make our lives a useless mockery. But passing through death, life issues forth to the glory of the Resurrection.

Go, young man, and tell this news to all. Let the light of your angelic face shine in the light of the Resurrection—for today the angel in you, which I uncovered in my first address, has overcome the world in you. Tell those who until now have oppressed your divine soul: “I believe in the Resurrection,” and you will see them coil in fear, for your faith has overcome them. They will fret and shout to you in despair: This earth is your paradise and your instincts are your heaven.

Do not stop on your path, but go on, shining and pure, giving the light of that Resurrection on the first of Sabbaths to all. You, my friend, are the unique bearer of your divinization in Jesus Christ, and with yourself you raise up the entire Romanian people to the height of its own resurrection. From death to life and from earth to heaven!

Radu Voda Church
Fifth Sunday of Great Lent
April 12, 1978

SEVENTH HOMILY

Forgiveness

April 19, 1978

*Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many,
are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom
little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*

Luke 7:47

WHEN I BEGAN this series of homilies, young friend, I did not know you. I only knew that you existed, that you were aspiring after something which the world could not give you, and I called to you as to my unknown brother, to show you a new road to walk.

I told you of Christ and His Church, of a new heaven and a new earth, of death and resurrection, and, above all, of the love of Jesus for you. Now I call you my brother, not just my neighbor; and I love you not with an abstract love which seeks after its object, but with a love which has found its object. For I know you and you are in my heart, as I am also in your heart. For if you have been coming here regularly to listen to me, you have done so because you have heard the voice of Jesus, that irresistible voice which has awakened you from your materialistic stupor and from the atheist lethargy into which you had sunk. You heard when Jesus said to you: "Come to Me!" and when you turned to Him, He put His ring upon your finger and new shoes upon your feet and the best robe around your shoulders (cf. Luke 15:22).*

This is because you came wounded and bleeding. You were oppressed by all that you had learned about the deification of

* From the Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son.

matter and by all the prohibitions, raised by the fetishes of atheism, against your inner searching. Before your eyes, blind until then, was lit a light more enchanting than any song of Siren. You left behind you the ravenous land of unbelief and the “husks” which you had eaten up until then. You forgot your teachers who said that this was the only food, without which you would die. And you heard the Word of Jesus saying to you: *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (Matt. 4:4).

Friend, when did you come to feed on the Word of God, for this is what you are doing. For the Word of God you have renounced your rest, your comfortable peace; you have overcome obstacles and prohibitions and have come here to be nourished on the Word of Christ. Honor to you, my friend! God will give His Word and His grace will be poured upon you in full. For it is written: *Everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened* (Matt. 7:8).

For your persistent asking, my courageous friend, Jesus will reward you. Because you had the courage to fight the habits and inertia which made you their prisoner; because you had the courage to break the restricting barriers which have been imposed upon you, like an uncrossable threshold, by the materialist ideology which believes that authoritarian demands do not need proof and that authoritarianism supplants faith; and, finally, because you had the courage to go forward, once released from slavery to their doctrines, towards that which emerged before you like a tangible love. And the further you advance, the better you understand that this infinite, crucified Love shines for you, O unique and unrepeatable man, as I called you elsewhere.

For your courage, you have received forgiveness. Do you not feel somehow in this spirit of love and quietness, which has

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now been placed within your soul, an assurance with which to walk on the new road of obedience to Christ? It is the grace of God which comes to you. At first this grace visits you softly, but when, as you pray, you will feel a fiery moment of ineffable joy sweep through your heart, and when on your knees, you will feel an inexplicable affection in your soul and an imperative need to weep, know then that the grace of Christ is visiting you. Persevere, my friend, and grace will come more and more often, until it lives in you permanently. You will then know a continuous state of grace, and the inner peace whose source is the forgiveness of Christ will transform itself into spiritual joy, which will invisibly radiate through every pore of your being. You will know the happiness of being forgiven and of forgiving.

Our life is hard as long as our earth and heaven are but matter, and our spirit remains blind as long as atheism is our religion. But if, nevertheless, there exists something that can save you, my friend, even during your call to Christ, before your soul is flooded with the light of faith, then it is the joy of forgiving and of being forgiven. The common life is hard. You must know how to forgive. You must know not only how to forgive—which can bring you the vain satisfaction of pharisaical goodness—but how to be forgiven, which produces in one an utter humility.

I remember telling you about Jesus and His Church as a holy institution, a spiritual reality whose threshold you found long ago. But only now have you succeeded in breaking the multitude of invisible cords of certain concepts which have dragged you back. I spoke to you of churches scattered throughout this land of ours on which we walk with joyful or sorrowful feet. I have also shown you that we have endured down the ages through our humility and glory, through our indestructible Orthodox Faith. That love of our land and the

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bond of blood and language have been expressed in our vivid and true history by the erecting of churches by princes and magistrates as living letters of stone which time can never wash away. And even now if we see a church demolished to make room for a tavern, we say: "Never," with all our agonizing soul, in opposition to those who believe that in destroying churches and forbidding the Word of God in schools, in the press and even in men's hearts, they have abolished the One by Whose mercy we live and survive.

I spoke to you about your freedom in Christ and how you should use it. I showed you that minerals do not know death nor life except in analogies—but only have one state of being; that animals have an unconscious knowledge of life and death; but that you, my friend, know both life and death, and above all, resurrection—even though it is forbidden for you to believe in it. For Christ has called you to deification, not to the simple condition of survival, not even to your present state as man; but He has raised you above the human condition when He said: *Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am* (John 17:24).

These are the things that I have said to you, my young friend, and many similar things—all from the words of Christ. And for this my brethren hate me and have forbidden you to come and listen to me—you who were thirsty for the Word of God and who wanted to know if you were totally condemned or if you have been chosen for a more exalted destiny, for resurrection. They closed the gates on you and erected walls of obstacles in front of you. To you who wrote in one of your letters (for each letter I have received from one of you represents all of you) about your search for that which transcends matter and the immanent that is deified today, about your whole hope to embark upon the road of truth and about the joy of catching a glimpse of the One Who is the Truth, the

Way and the Life, you wrote to me several days ago: "What joy to hear talks about God and about a world other than that of matter from a secular professor in a secular college the other day!*" It was like an unbelievable dream. And to understand that this layman was enlightened by a spirit of faith which he made known to us not only by his words but also by the light which radiated from his being. Thus I almost envy you theologians for knowing and living that which we do not know and yet towards which our whole being aspires."

Or you, young professor of thirty-three years of age, who said: "I have spent all these years of teaching driving students from church with a club. But now I have understood what led them there and why they returned to the Church, forgiving me. I understand now that if you, pupils in the first class in seminary, believe so strongly and know so much about the deep things of the human soul and about a world which I have forbidden to my students, then I ought to believe more than you."

Do these words not remind you of Paul on the road to Damascus? For if we admit with Albert Camus that every man passes at least once over the Mount of Olives, we ought also to admit that every one of us has experienced the road to Damascus also—when the voice of Jesus resounded out to us: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks* (Acts 9:5-6).

No man is exempt from suffering. If we suffer, let it be for Christ. If we forgive, let us forgive for Christ's sake. May truth stand before us always. "Truth before peace" is how one engineering student put it as he listened to these "Seven Homilies to the Youth." And the peace here is not the peace of Christ in John 14:27, nor the peace between the two world wars as

* He was speaking about the poet Ioan Alexandru and his classes. (Noted in the margin of the original manuscript.)

defined by Titulescu, but that spiritual and material comfortableness for which we trample underfoot our principles and justice; that state of "tolerance" which helps us to go to bed each night with a compromise in our heart, only to wake up the next morning with a new compromise under our pillow.

And now I will read to you a statement by one of the students regarding the "Seven Homilies," since several statements have been taken at the Theological Institute, by forcing the students against their conscience to write them. We know what a written declaration means—what a source of fear and terror it releases, as is so often the case. I have chosen one statement from a number of declarations given to me because this one is clearer (not more correct; for all are equally correct).

"... I declare that on Wednesday, April 12, at 9:00 p.m., I listened to the 'Sixth Homily to Young People' given by Fr. George Calciu-Dumitreasa, in the Radu Voda Church, Bucharest. I had also listened to the Third, Fourth and Fifth Homilies, but in other circumstances.... I declare that I met on this occasion, as well as during his other sermons, a large number of students from the Theological Institute, doctorate students in theology, students from other departments, people whom I had never seen before, as well as a great number of seminarians. The atmosphere in the church was always impressive, and I experienced genuine moments of spiritual exaltation and concentration. In respect to the content of these sermons, I declare that I am in total agreement with the ideas expressed by the Father Professor, who did nothing more than elucidate in a realistic way the problems which demand attention, while adhering strictly to the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

"Rev. Professor George Calciu was my teacher for a number of years at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest, from where I graduated, and he has contributed in the greatest

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measure to our formation as pupils and true servants of the Lord Christ and of the Church of the people.”

Is it necessary to add anything? Except my homage to this student's courage, and to all of you who, trampling over instincts of survival, have placed “truth before peace” and have come here. Perhaps I should also add the joy that these declarations—both written and spoken—have brought me along with your presence in this church. Finally, I should also add my sense of submissiveness to you all, for you are good and you love Jesus more than me, for without being His servants you would not have been predisposed to sacrifice your comfortableness to come and express your love for God.

Let us pray for all our brethren who love or hate us, those who have done us harm or good, those who have forgiven us or have not forgiven us. Let us forgive everyone everything.

I will close, my young friend, this final “word” to you with a quotation from the homily of St. John Chrysostom which is read on the night of the Resurrection in every Orthodox church, for Pascha—the Day of Resurrection and our joy—is approaching. Then, you will know that Christ is risen and that we will be risen with Him. When I say that you will know, I mean that your heart and soul will discover this certainty of resurrection which has been long within you and by virtue of which you are here.

“... If any have labored from the first hour, let him receive today his rightful due. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him in no wise be in doubt, for on no wise shall he suffer loss. If any be delayed even until the ninth hour, let him draw near, doubting nothing, fearing nothing. If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him not be fearful on account of his lateness; for the Master, Who is jealous of His honour, receiveth the last even as the first. He giveth rest to him that cometh at the eleventh hour, as well as to him that hath

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laboured from the first hour.... Wherefore, then, enter ye all into the joy of your Lord; both the first and the last.... Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life flourisheth. Christ is risen, and there is none dead in the tombs.”

I have read these lines to you that you might know them. I have read this homily because Passion Week is before us, before which every mouth is dumb. I have read these words that you might find that in the days which follow, we will live in spirit and in flesh the Calvary of Jesus. At the top of Golgotha there awaits us forgiveness and resurrection. I have read these truths to remind you that this Romanian people has always climbed the hill of history's Golgotha, ceaselessly recreating in spirit the way of Jesus and anticipating in faith this Resurrection which you, my friend and brother, will bring forth as a torch burning in your heart.

Radu Voda Church
Sixth Sunday of Great Lent
April 19, 1978

AN ADDITIONAL HOMILY TO THE YOUTH*

A Homily to Theologians

May 17, 1978

*He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not
worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter
more than Me is not worthy of Me.*

Matthew 10:37

I DID NOT INTEND to add this supplementary message to the “Seven Homilies to Young People,” given during Lent, my younger brother theologians, but I am forced to come back to you by internal and external pressures. Thus, I will appeal in a greater measure to our sense of justice, honor and courage in this homily than in my previous ones.

From the moment I decided to attack openly and publicly the problems of religious freedom, from the moment I decided to protest openly against the demolition of the churches—and I mean to use the plural**—I knew what would await me: persecution, terror, the tribunal, blackmail. Within a few

* This sermon was to be preached on May 17, 1978, in Radu Voda Church as part of a new series of sermons announced May 10th. The new series was to be on the theme of “Christ and Culture.” It was, however, not held because I was suspended by order of Bishops Roman Ialomiteanu, Ilie Georgescu and Octavian Popescu. Teachers at the Seminary were forced to keep watch until 10 p.m. that night to prevent me from preaching. Students in the Seminary and Institute were confined to their dormitories.

** At that time two churches were demolished: one in Bucharest and one in Focsani. In the years following, the destruction and profanation would continue. We do not have the exact statistics for the whole country. We do know, however, that in the capital [Bucharest] 28 churches and monasteries were destroyed or “translocated.”

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months I have experienced all these, except for the fact that everything was more inhuman and more degrading than I had imagined. From that moment everything that is bound up with my being, my life and my public activity indeed became public property. For this reason I will divulge to you a portion of the things that have happened so that you might know what awaits you when your faith, your love of man, determines that you act in the way I have acted. I will not tell you everything, for I do not want you to believe that the face of mankind is hideous only, but I will tell you only that which justifies this word.

Two reproaches were brought against me—totally contradictory to each other—regarding the “Seven Homilies.” On the one hand, I was reproached—and the term is such a euphemism that it in fact becomes almost insipid—that my sermons were supposed to be addressed to seminarians and therefore my accusations of atheism and materialism would fall exclusively upon the teachers of the Seminary. That argument is of such a flagrantly bad intent that it would seem a useless and harmful waste of time to occupy myself in combatting it. On the other hand, some theologians reproached me for giving priority to the lay youth and therefore neglecting the young theologians in my sermons. Here I must defend myself: I have not neglected you, my young friends and brothers. I knew that you were more faithful, more just and more kindhearted than I; that your numerous and assiduous attendance at the sermons which I preached in Radu Voda Church (or on the steps there after the school’s directors closed it against me) was a proof that you yourselves were involved in the content of the Homilies and that to a great extent your views were being expressed through my mouth. Finally, an inner reason compels me to clarify certain matters concerning us theologians.

It is the time, my brothers, when the words of the Saviour that “... the time is coming when whoever kills you will

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believe he is bringing glory to God" (cf. John 16:2) become an actual reality. I do not make such a statement without cause. Rather, I tell you these things because your senior teachers, the very directors of your consciences and the formers of our nation's future priests, have raised themselves up against the things I preached in the name of Jesus, against my protest at the demolition of the Enea Church and against you theologians who came to listen to truths spoken in courage and forthrightly, in spite of the prohibitions. They rose up, seized by a "noble wrath," strictly watching to keep you from coming on Wednesday evenings to hear the "Seven Homilies."

They were not watching to keep you from the temptations of the world: from drunkenness, from dissoluteness, or from any other sin with which the world ensnares you. In that they left you to fend for yourself. But they jumped up to stop you from listening to the Word of God spoken in a new way. They were—to use a phrase from the propaganda brochures on class struggle—"very vigilant." They made you write declarations against one another, becoming informers through official statements and denouncing all those guilty of the grave crime of listening to my sermons, including yourselves. This was the splendid spiritual action by which they transformed the Theological Institute into an interrogation center. I would like to ask the one who carried out this interrogation, spiritual father Ilie Moldovan, if he ever took such declarations from his workmates when he was an engineer? If so, it would mean that there he is continuing his former activity and that in fact it is not for theology that he is found in the Institute. If not, however, I would ask him to explain where and when he learned this system of interrogation?

He who guides his conscience with the statement, "I have children to bring up," or justifies his action by saying that, "the Dean forced me to make declarations," has a remote-control

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machine rather than a soul. They should remind themselves of the words of the Saviour from Matthew 10:37 which constitute our text today.

I know the fury with which His Reverence fights against "The Army of the Lord"—an Orthodox group of popular Christian piety who dared to put pious verse to popular melodies and non-traditional rhythms.* It would be good for them to understand one thing, which is clear to a believing man, namely, that to the extent to which false science secularizes the world, sometimes even helped by priests, to that same extent a simple faith extends into every area of human manifestation.

We know, however, that as risky as it is to combat official and unofficial atheism, it is equally convenient and advantageous to attack "The Army of the Lord," even if they should have small discrepancies, when they are obliged to hold meetings in semi-obscurity which at times are brutally broken up by the police. In fact there exists only one single solution to the problem of "The Army of the Lord": Put all its members into a single congregation under the roof of the Orthodox Church, for they are pious and devout men who want to be received into the fold. Only in this way would you solve a spiritual problem, and not with violence. In spiritual matters violence solves nothing; it only complicates things. I speak of these simple men, honorable in their faith, and who ought to be brought back into the church, because they are men who burn with faith and who defend their religious belief with zeal, which is something not everyone has or wants to do.**

* Founded in 1927, "The Army of the Lord" was abolished by the communist government in 1947 and continued its activities underground. Its emphasis on popular revivalism has caused friction between it and the Orthodox hierarchy.

** The problem of "The Army of the Lord" has not been properly resolved up to today.

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Where was the parish priest of the Enea Church on the previously arranged night that the demolitioners came? Why did he not stay in the altar to defend it, for who would dare to crush a church over its servant?

Where were the priests of Focsani when the Party Secretary of the Region, Mr. Dobrovici, as Romanian by his name as by his actions, destroyed this church? Would this gentleman have dared to blow up the church together with its servants? Be assured not! On the contrary, some of the truckdrivers and bulldozer workers showed more dignity and courage in refusing to participate in the destruction of the church. I have since learned that for this reason four of them had their work contracts demonstratively broken. What reward was given to those who destroyed these churches and what sanctions were imposed on the priests who deserted their obligations?

The time will come, and it is not far off, when we shall know the complete list of those who signed in favor of the demolition of the Enea Church. They will be covered in shame. The time will come when we shall know the complete list of those who refused to sign, rightly considering this act of destruction a barbarous, anti-cultural act. They will be honored by all Romanian souls. All I can say now is that those who refused to sign are the most outstanding representatives of our contemporary culture (history, literature and art), and their names pronounced in public will further strengthen in us the respect which we bear towards them and will prove that only he who is a barbarian in thought could destroy the religious past of our nation to replace it with the crippled puppet of atheism. These men [who refused to sign] have heard the words of the Saviour, even if they did not know how to decipher them, with an inner sense of dignity and honor: *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* (Mark 8:37).

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During the last few months I have received several intimidating telephone calls from people who hide their terrorist inclinations and instincts for moral torture behind the mask of an anonymous telephone call. A whole range of threats have been made against me and my family, ranging from calls for our moral destruction to calls for our civic and physical destruction. To the degree that it becomes necessary I will make these things publicly known, so that you may all see what honor and humanitarianism these individuals possess. Some of these men set themselves up as defenders of the regime, which it seems has been threatened by my sermons. Can there be any falsehood greater than this? What is strange is that these “defenders” strive to convince us that the regime which they defend is one ready to perpetrate any abuse and ready to destroy me, though not guilty, and my family also. These things are happening during a time when I thought our regime acknowledges certain humanitarian principles which do not endorse such abuse....

I have said all this to you for I want you to make these things public so that the blackmail and moral gangsterism, which is asking for my soul in exchange for my threatened family, may cease for good. I hope that in making them public, these actions will be condemned and our human dignity will be increased according to the words of Jesus: *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops* (Matt. 10:27). For my voice is not sufficient, and it must be amplified by hundreds of your voices, so that the truth of faith and of kindheartedness might reach the ears of all. Let us remain closely united around the hierarchy of the Church and our bishops, for without the hierarchy, the Church would be an organism without a strong skeleton. We shall remain with them and remind them that they are the spiritual leaders of at least fourteen million Roma-

nian believers, among which are to be found the finest men who know how to unite love for one's country with the universality of Christian love, and how to unite faith with true culture.

Should they possess this awareness and should they truly be Christ's apostles on Romanian soil, then we will be their humble disciples. If one single bishop had been on our side, we would not have witnessed the destruction of the Enea Church, or, in the worst case, we would be seeing its reconstruction today. Nor would we have had to painfully look on in the pulling down of the Lord's church at Focsani. We humbly plead with our bishops not to allow a profane tavern to replace the Enea Church, a tavern where drunkenness, violence and prostitution will take place. They should defend this sacred ground on which our princes walked, and may the church be rebuilt as it was. This is the duty of every Romanian Christian among us.

We will not cease to protest against this sacrilege and this illegality. We will never draw back from opposing any similar abuse of anti-cultural acts, such as those committed at Focsani and Bucharest. We will make these transgressions public. It is our right to stop their occurrence.

And who can stop us, if Christ is with us? For what price has our life outside of Christ, since He Himself assures us that *Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it* (Mark 8:35); or, *Ye are the salt of the earth ... the light of the world* (Matt. 5:13-14).

Each year thousands of graduates finish the schools of medicine, engineering, law, teaching, etc. They become lost in the anonymity of the masses and of their professions. But if, in a single year, we were to see one thousand priests graduate, full of the spirit of sacrifice, priests as Christ would have them to



Children in their regional dress from Bucovina, Romania,
at the Feast of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 1992,
celebrated at the Church of St. George, Suceava, Romania.

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be, then in less than one year the spiritual face of our country would be changed like that of Jesus on Mount Tabor. For such priests sanctify the world and bring a new spirit of truth and justice, a heavenly love and Christ-centered consolation to a world of suffering.

Our people are like a ripe harvest, waiting to be gathered in for Christ: *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest* (John 4:35). But where are the worthy harvesters? Lift up your eyes and I tell you, you will see how few there really are. And the wheat is wasting in the field outside of the Kingdom of God.

Be most diligent harvesters yourselves. Forget your instincts, which are overloaded by your teachers whose principles are: "I have a mother, father, sons and daughters, too large a salary to accept the sacrifice and suffering of Christ and His Church." Lift up the eyes of your spirit to the people who believe in you and for whom there exists no other spiritual salvation than in the Church of Christ.

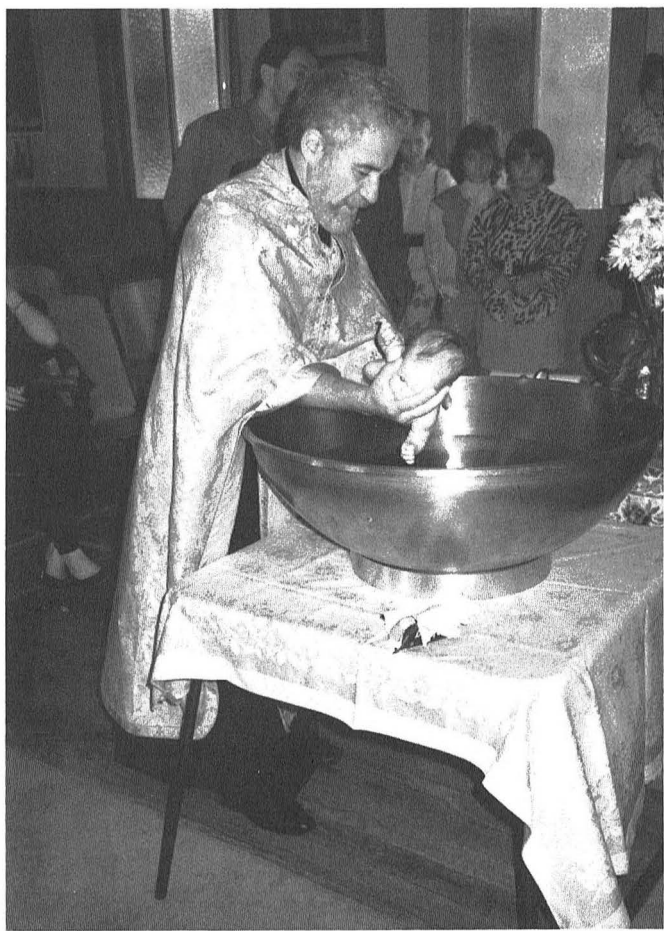
Be harvesters! Be pastors! And above all, pray to God to give this nation good harvesters who will not love parents and children more than Christ, Who seeing the multitude *was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest* (Matt. 9:36-38).

Let us pray to God for the harvest and for the reapers!



Fr. Calciu with his wife, Presbytera Adriana,
and their son Andrei, in 1985.

A Brief Autobiography of the Author



Fr. Calciu baptizing an infant, September 1988.

A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

As taken down by Nun Nina

I WAS BORN into a family of farmers, of peasants. There were eleven of us children. My grandmother lived with us, so there were a total of fourteen people to eat and work, and my poor mother had no time to take care of everyone. So my brother—I was the last in the family—helped me and the other ones to get food, to start work, and to go to school. At the same time, we received an education from our mother and the first-born in the family.

There are many things that constitute my faith and my inclination to the faith. I was born in a small village in the Danube Delta, and we did everything by hand. There were fish, and it was very simple for us to catch them.

There were lots of different birds. From generation to generation we learned not to touch the eggs—not more than one egg from every nest. So the birds were not hurt by us, and the fish were not diminished. Because we considered everything a creation of God and that everything was made for us, we had to protect the animals. There was a kind of holy relationship between us—between children and the people of the Danube Delta and the animals. We lived together; we grew up together. There was sort of an eternity between us and nature and the animals.

So, we started to love; we learned to love everyone. You can imagine a small village like ours. Everyone knew everyone,

and it was not possible for us to do a bad deed and not be discovered. And we knew that above all of us was the eye of God, Who knew everything and Who would discover our bad deeds in time.

There was a priest, a very good priest—an old priest, like a saint. He knew everything about us—about the children, about the people. For a generation everyone was baptized, married and buried by this priest, so he was like the eye of God in our village. My mother, especially, was very, very faithful. From her I learned many things. Sometimes we could not be in the church; I don't know why, perhaps we were sick, but at the table mother told us about the Liturgy and about *Cazania*. Every Sunday and every holy day of the Church, someone in church would read the *Cazania*—the life of the saints of the day. Therefore, from the time I was a child I knew a lot about the saints of the day and about the monks. We were not too far from various monasteries. From time to time we went to them to visit the monks and nuns, to bring them food and to ask them to pray for us, because everyone knew that we needed someone to pray for us.

I was very much inclined to contemplation, and I wanted to be a true Christian. I was perhaps around six or seven years old, and I wanted very much to see a miracle or to be the subject of a miracle. I remember that one time I tried to force God to make a miracle for me. There was a small field with thick nettles, and I decided to go through this field and if the nettles did not harm me, then that would mean that God had done a miracle for me. I was stepping without any care [through the field], and nothing happened. [The nettles did not prick him.] But before I had finished walking through the field, I heard the voice of a man—one of our neighbors who would curse frequently. When I heard his voice, I said in my mind, “He is a bad man.” At this moment the nettles started to

hurt me, and I knew that God was very angry at me because I had an evil thought about my neighbor.

I liked to go out into nature, and I liked to go by the Danube—the Danube was very wide. I had a boat, and I crossed the Danube in this boat. Far into the forests of the Delta there was a family, friends of our family who were very poor. They lived far away from the village and had no house. They had dug a house under the earth. It was a space with two or three rooms under the earth, covered with leaves, and it was very nice. For me, it was something absolutely like in Paradise. They were young then, with three or four children, and their life was like the life of hermits. Everything around their house had been handmade. Like us, they had fish and eggs, animals and sheep, and so on. And every time I went there, I felt like I was in a monastery. Their hospitality was without limits. When the sun was setting, they accompanied me home, and my parents were very happy to see me return. They knew I had been there. The visits I made from time to time to that family taught me a lot—about God, about God's care of men; and I understood that we can live without striving beyond measure to get everything we need. Yet, in fact, I could not understand everything at that time. Later, I realized how hard my father was working for us and how hard my older sisters and brothers were working to get food and to have everything in our family and our house. I was the only one of eleven children to go to school.

The priest from my village helped me to go to school, because my father had no intention of sending me to high school. But the priest very much insisted. I sang in the church choir and I also chanted prayers under the supervision of the priest. He counselled me to go to seminary, but the seminary was very far away. There was no seminary close to our village, nor in the city near our village, so my parents decided to send

me to high school. I went to the high school in the city closest to our village; it was about thirty miles distant. In my years there we had a priest who taught us the Orthodox Christian religion. So I was growing in my understanding of Christianity—in prayer, meditation, etc. He was a very good priest and also a philosopher. He knew how to interest the young boys in school about religion, about faith, and even about the understanding of philosophy. I entered into a prayer group with this priest and other young men. There were also people from the city—intellectuals. We knew during this time a small group of “The Army of the Lord,” as well. We learned some religious songs, how to read the Bible, and how to interpret and understand it. Thus I succeeded in becoming a good Christian.

My priest at school counselled me to go into medicine and to prepare myself to help people. He said, “You can do for people what I am doing for you. You can take care of the body of a person, but a true doctor takes care of the soul, also, because it is not enough to heal the body—you must heal the soul.” And he told me, for the first time, about the physicians who healed without pay—the unmercenaries Saints Cyrus and John, and the other holy unmercenary physicians.

Therefore, I decided to become a doctor. I went to Bucharest, the capital of the country, and there I passed the admission exam. The admission exam was very serious; I had prepared for the exam and passed it. I then started to study medicine—the first and second years. It was very difficult for me because, according to what my priest had taught me, I had no right to mutilate the body of my neighbor, so dissection was a big problem for me. In the beginning I did it, but, later, because I was gifted in drawing, I asked my friends, my colleagues there, to make the dissections, and I drew the parts revealed by the dissection—the nerves, arteries, veins, muscles

and so on. Thus I succeeded in going through the second year without touching the corpse in dissection.

During this time, I discovered that there were many, many religious groups in Bucharest. There were some very famous priests. There was Fr. Chiricutsa; he was a priest in a small but very old and beautiful church. Every Wednesday night we had a Bible study. Now for the first time I understood how deep the Bible was, because, as you can imagine, in elementary school the teacher—the priest—explained a lot of things, but we were too young [to understand]. Now I heard someone interpreting the Bible, explaining it in depth. Thus I was one of his students there.

This put me in conflict with medicine, that is, with the materialistic direction of the doctors. From time to time I entered into conflict with the medical assistants, because they considered the bodies of our neighbors as objects. I tried to tell them that the body is not an object, but the temple of God; and they laughed at me. But, anyway, I received some respect from them.

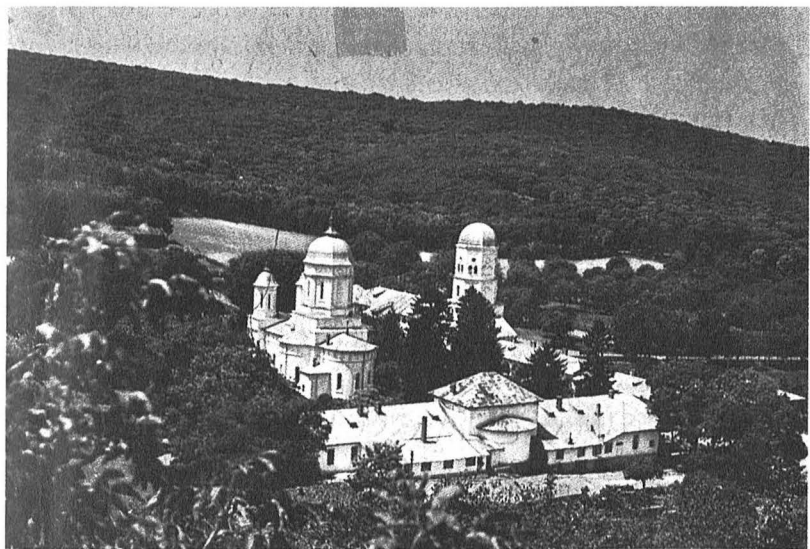
Later, I discovered a very spiritual movement called “The Burning Bush.” In “The Burning Bush” there were a lot of professors of theology and philosophy—men of science. The most important lectures were in Bucharest. They had a monk; he was a bishop from Russia who had arrived in Bucharest in 1946. He was followed by the KGB, but I don’t know why. The monastery in Bucharest, Saint Antim Monastery, gave him shelter. They hid him and, little by little, a circle of intellectuals—priests, monks and professors of theology—gathered around him, because he taught them the Jesus Prayer. In the secluded monasteries of the mountains the monks were practicing the Jesus Prayer. But the professors of theology, the priests—they knew nothing about the Jesus Prayer. This man taught them about the Jesus Prayer according to the practice

they had in Russia from Elder Basil of Poiana Marului in Romania and St. Paisius Velichkovsky of Neamts. Thus, as they discovered the Jesus Prayer and the beneficial effects of this Prayer upon the soul, more and more intellectuals gathered around him.

I came in the beginning of 1948, and discovered this circle. They were delivering speeches, giving lessons on the Prayer, on the *Philokalia* and the lives of the saints in the desert. I remember a conference led by Fr. Staniloae. It was a series of conferences called, "The Fathers of the Desert: The Life and Teachings of the Holy Fathers." They were not open to everyone, but were intended for young people. They accepted only people they knew very well, because they were being watched by the Securitate.* In 1944 communism had been installed in Romania. At the beginning [of communism], they had started to arrest people and to put intellectuals in prison—priests, monks and so on, who tried to defend themselves against this intrusion. Therefore, I was not accepted into this intimate group. They knew some young doctors, especially Doctor Nicolau who was a friend of mine. I was a young man—twenty-two years old. He was around thirty, thirty-five, but he loved me and tried to explain to me many things about the faith, and especially about the Prayer of Jesus.

In 1948, the first priests from this group, "The Burning Bush," had a special icon painted by a painter of the group. [The icon showed] the Mother of God in the middle of a bush, surrounded by flames that could not consume Her or the bush. They would have their meetings in front of this icon. The icon is now in America, in the Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Michigan, with the priest, Roman Braga.

* The Securitate is the Romanian equivalent of the KGB in Russia. It was organized and directed by KGB members who had been sent to Romania. It is the secret police of the communist regime.—ED.



Cocos Monastery, Romania, the monastery nearest
Fr. Calciu's home in his youth.

He was a student at the time, a theologian and a monk, and was accepted into this group.

In the spring of 1948, I was arrested and sentenced to sixteen years of imprisonment; I finished my punishment in 1964. The rest of the history is known by you, Mother Nina. I was not arrested in connection with "The Burning Bush." As I have said, I was not a member of the group—I had only taken part in their public gatherings. My connection with them was through Dr. Nicolau. I was put into prison because I had participated with a group of students that made a stand against the introduction of Marxism and Bolshevism as the only philosophy taught in schools—in the university, high schools and even in elementary schools—because they started with the indoctrination of children when they were five or six years old. The other young people and I were frustrated by not being able to know any other philosophy besides materialism. In fact, we had done nothing bad; we only had one demonstration—when the Securitate tried to arrest our doctor, our professor of anatomy. We blocked the university. We surrounded it and did not allow the Securitate to take away our professor. The professor was saved, but he was very sick, and in a short time he died because of his heart. He was an old man; a very good man, very faithful, very Christian. He never neglected to make the connection between medicine and religion, between the body and the creation, and between the soul and immortality.

But for the communists, for the Russians who occupied our country, this opposition by the young people seemed very bad. They wanted to make a new generation—a new generation to build communism. For this, they didn't need enemies, so they arrested the priests and monks, the intellectuals, technicians and scholars. They wanted to put a *big* gap between the old generation and the new generation that they wanted to form, so they put everyone in prison. They sentenced people to

ten, twenty years, without any justice, just because they wanted to destroy a generation in order to make this gap. Thus I was arrested with the young people, the students, and sentenced with them. And my life in prison—I described a part of this life in prison—it was like everyone else's life in prison.

For our family, for the people who lived outside prison, we were as dead people. No one knew anything about us. We were living in fog, in the night. No one had any idea about us. We had no right to send a letter to our family; we had no right to receive letters or packages. So, in the beginning of the sixteen years, I had only three letters from my family. Then they changed their rules in prison and introduced a regime that had to exterminate the people. The people who were not exterminated in prison were exterminated in labor camps. So hundreds of thousands of people were killed, and millions were put in prison or put under house arrest or exiled to different areas—small areas. It was like Siberia was for Russia. In a part of the country south of the Danube, people were put on a large plain without anything. They had to dig their houses underground. They built houses from mud, thus starting new villages in this area.

I told you that I went to prison in 1948, on May 21st, the commemoration day of Sts. Constantine and Helen. In the beginning I was in Jilava Prison. Jilava is a prison built underground. Above every cell there were seven meters of earth: trees, animals and so on. My time there was very bad. Afterwards I was sent to Pitesti, where I stayed from the autumn of 1948 until 1952, when I was moved to Gherla Prison. Gherla is a very tough prison, built by the Austro-Hungarian empire; I stayed there until 1954. In 1954, I was taken from Gherla and sent to Jilava again with fourteen other friends and put in a special kind of extermination area where Costache Constantine Oprisan died. In 1961, I and my friends who survived this

extermination were sent to Aiud Prison—another prison built by the Austro-Hungarian empire. I changed my attitude—I became more and more mystical. I prayed a lot. I was no longer interested in what happened around me. After my experience,* something had changed in my soul. The directors of the administration of the prison wanted to force everyone to be reeducated in order to accept the new situation—to accept that communism would win the whole world, that there was no other political regime better than communism, and to recognize that we had made mistakes before communism.

I told the director of the prison that I was not interested, and that my intention was to leave and, if possible, to become a monk. So he isolated me with another group in a special building in the prison, with another group that refused any reeducation.

The life in “Zarka”—this special building in Aiud Prison was called Zarka—was not so bad. I mean, it was very bad from the material point of view—food and persecution and beatings and so on—but spiritually we were very, very happy. This building was full of intellectuals, priests, monks, professors of theology, and so on. We communicated amongst ourselves through signs, through knocking on the walls. We had conferences about icons, about theology, about history, and so on, because the most important intellectuals from Romania were there. So I stayed in this prison until May 1964, when I was set free—but not quite free. I was sent into a village built on this plain for exiles. I remained in this village until August 1964, when a general decree of amnesty was applied to everyone and we had the right to go into the world.

It was a very strange situation we encountered as we entered the “real world.” It was a communist world, and we were

* At Pitesti; see the interview that follows.—ED.

like ghosts for these people. We could not understand them; they could not understand us.

By the decree of amnesty, we were allowed to start over again. I tried to enter medicine, but they no longer recognized the two years I had studied, so I had to start at the beginning. It was too long—I would have to study six years; so I decided to study the French and Romanian languages. I passed the admission exam and studied French for three years. After three years, I was approved to teach French in elementary school. I completed the last two years of study: not in class with everyone else, but studying independently to pass the exams.

In 1964 I had been set free, and in 1965 I met my wife. I knew her not just as an individual, for she had two brothers in prison and I had met them there. They were students like me, but older. Through them I met my wife and we decided to get married. We were married in February of 1965. My wife was a biologist, a researcher. I can say that my life was not so difficult because she had a good salary, and I received my salary, too. We had a child, and my decision, as I told you, was to become a priest. I had given up the monastic life, but I tried to keep my word, my vow to God, that if I succeeded in getting out of prison in good health, mentally and physically, I would become a priest.

So I decided to study theology. I was now a professor of the French language. I had finished my five years of study, but I was not happy, not at all, because I felt that my life was like a desert. Anyway, as a professor in an elementary school I did everything that I could just to tell something to my students about Jesus Christ. Every year I organized an excursion with my students—actually, my ex-students. They were thirteen or fourteen years old. I would always put the monasteries in our itinerary. Thus they were in touch with the nuns and the monks who talked to them about Jesus Christ, so I had done

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something. I cannot say that I accepted not talking to the students about Jesus Christ or God. I did [talk with them about Christ and God]. With prudence, surely. I did not want to go to prison again or to be let go from my job, but I was obsessed with the vow I had taken. So I decided to go to the Patriarch, Patriarch Justinian Marina, and to get admitted into the faculty of theology.

My wife, as I told you, did research in biology. She knew a few things about religion; she had a religious education, but not a very deep one, so I had to work with her and my son. She followed me in everything. She supported me in my decision to go to theology school and to become a priest. She knew that in her work in the field of research, she could be put out if they discovered that I was a priest. But she accepted everything. I told her that if I became a priest, I would have a church and she could leave work and we could work together helping others, and so on, and she accepted this. Happily, nothing happened to her. I had been appointed as a professor of the French language and of the New Testament in the Seminary when the Securitate discovered that I was a student of theology. My wife followed me everywhere. She was a shy and timid person, but when the persecution started against me, she was with me. She fought more than I fought. She was even more courageous than I was. For this I am very grateful to her.

In 1979 I was arrested and put in prison, and at first they wanted to sentence me to death. When I came to America, I met some defectors—members of the Securitate—and they told me that Ceausescu really believed that I had organized a plot against him. They told me that after my arrest he had ordered an in-depth investigation among the students of the seminary, the young people—eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old. He was very surprised, too. He knew nothing about them—the students of theology. The Securitate told him that

the majority of my students were minors, so under the pressure made by the Christian groups abroad, he gave up the intention of executing me. He gave an order to put me in prison, and he left me there. I was sentenced to ten years.

After the arrest by the Securitate, I was initially placed in Aiud Prison. The majority of the time I was alone in a cell in confinement. Sometimes I had some friends, sometimes enemies in my cell. But most of the time I was alone, because the pressure on Ceausescu was very strong. Many congressmen and senators, and even [Vice-President] Bush, came to Romania and asked Ceausescu to set me free. They had a list of persecuted people. I was on the top of the list because I was in prison and sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. They knew about my situation, the persecution. And so I suffered in prison. Whenever they came to Romania and asked Ceausescu to set me free, the Securitate brought me to Bucharest. They did not know what had happened to me ... perhaps Ceausescu had set me free. So they brought me into the cell of the Securitate; they allowed my wife to come to me and to bring me food. Thus after months of hunger, I was being fed and was looking better. But never was one of these visitors allowed to come to visit me. I received some news from different congressmen asking me to write a petition to ask Ceausescu to set me free, to exonerate me for the rest of the punishment. They assured me that Ceausescu would accept it. But I refused for two reasons: first of all, I had put my life into the hands of God. Secondly, I did not want to make such a petition because I knew that I was innocent. In writing this petition, I would be acknowledging before communism and Ceausescu that I was guilty. For this reason I refused, but they tried to convince me. When one of the visitors left Romania, I was sent back to Aiud or to Galati—another prison. The majority of time that I was in Aiud and Galati Prisons, and part of the time in the Securitate in Bucharest.

Christian groups and even political groups, organizations for human rights, started to apply stronger pressure on Ceausescu, asking him to set me free. They even threatened to not give him the Most Favored Nation status, so Ceausescu decided to set me free. I was freed in August, 1984 and put under house arrest with my whole family. I had no right to go anywhere without the permission of the Securitate. If I wanted to go to church, I had to tell my guards. My wife was allowed to go back and forth to her job. My son had to go to high school, and later he was obliged to go into the army; everywhere he was watched by the Securitate. He had no right to talk with people, so our life was very hard. Happily, there were many people in the apartment where I was under house arrest. The neighbors could communicate with me, and many people tried to communicate with me through them.

I was well known.

My neighbors tried to transmit to my friends abroad what had happened to me; the persecution and so on. There was a radio station called "Radio Free Europe" which broadcasted news about me, and this fight or battle put Ceausescu in a difficult situation. After setting me free, in 1984, he received Most Favored Nation status. But then, a year later, the same organization did not give him Most Favored Nation status—this status was to be renewed every year.

As a result, Ceausescu decided to force me to leave Romania for America. I knew nothing about it. One day, members of the American embassy entered my house—I was very surprised to see them. There was even a lady among them. The police tried to check her body; she refused and said, "I am immune; I have diplomatic immunity. Let me enter." She told me everything. Then the men said, "Now you have to go with us to the Passport Agency in Bucharest to get your passport." I could not believe it. In the beginning I had supposed that it

was a prank by the Securitate, but I then realized that they really were Americans. So we went together, the three of us, to the Passport Service and got a passport. The passport was delivered exactly one year after I was set free from prison (in April, 1985), but they kept the passport until August, 1985. Afterwards we went to the Embassy, where we swore that everything about us was true, and in two days we left Romania for Rome. In Rome we stayed two more days, and then we came to America, to New York.

My wife, son and I were received by the delegates of our Episcopate, and one American friend said, "I desire to receive Fr. Calciu into my home. He will be given good food, shelter and so on." I stayed in the house with this American for two months. Afterwards I went to the Transfiguration Monastery founded by Mother Alexandra, the Princess Ileana of Romania, a member of the royal family. I stayed there for two more months, and afterwards the church sent me to Ohio and offered me a house. We stayed in Ohio for three years. During this time, I travelled much in America and in Europe—France, Germany, England, Switzerland—and gave lectures on the situation of the church in Romania. I talked about what had happened in prison; many things happened to me there that were a manifestation of God's love to me. Finally, I was appointed as a priest in the church of Holy Cross in Alexandria, Virginia, near Washington D.C.



The longsuffering Romanian land, having survived the communist yoke. Sihla Monastery.

*THE MESSAGE OF A
LIVING MARTYR*

An Interview with
Father George Calciu



Fr. Calciu with interviewer, Nun Nina,
in September, 1996.

AN INTERVIEW WITH FR. GEORGE CALCIU

THE MESSAGE OF A LIVING MARTYR

Conducted by Nun Nina, November 6, 1996

1. YOUTH

I WAS BORN in a peasant family, a family of farmers. There were eleven children, and I was the youngest. My mother was very pious. She was an ordinary woman, without many years of education—only four years of elementary classes; but she possessed an extraordinary wisdom and knowledge of the divine truth. We went to a church that was small. There were thirteen of us including my father and mother. We children were very little, and it was very difficult for us to stand for two to three hours in church, so we tried to move around. There were no chairs or pews in church. After church, when we came back home, mother used to say to us: “Don’t you know that this is your prayer to God, just standing there until your feet hurt? This is a child’s prayer to God.”

I would like to tell you a story: There was a tavern in a village, and the men were in the tavern drinking and speaking evil against God. In every tavern there is only one devil, just one demon. This demon was sitting there on the counter, not needing to do anything because the men were doing all the base deeds. On the other side of the village was a house where a widow lived with seven children, who prayed every night before going to sleep. This house was surrounded by an army

of devils. So, where God is powerfully present in people's hearts, there the attack of satan is greater. But if you do not have God, the devil knows that you belong to him and he has no interest in you anymore.

This is how we grew up in our family. Among all eleven children, I was the only one who went to school. The rest remained in the village as farmers. I never forgot my faith which my mother put into my heart. When we would come back for the holidays, we would always go to church together and sing in the choir. The peasant tradition was very powerful and healthy. Communism had not yet come to distort all these things. Then I went to medical school where I studied for two years. I belonged to the group of Christian students who went to gatherings and lectures of "The Burning Bush."* This was in Bucharest. When the communists started to replace religion in schools with Marxist philosophy, we were even forced to study it in medical school, and I became one of the people who protested. Therefore, I was arrested and sentenced to prison.

I was sentenced in 1948. Communism took over in 1944.

MOTHER NINA: *So, it took four years before they started sending everyone to prison?*

Yes, because the opposition was still very strong. In 1947, the king was obliged to leave Romania, and the communists took over everything. They began to create the same situation that was in Russia. The majority of the political counselors and

* "The Burning Bush" was a renewal movement in the 1940's and '50's centered at Antim Monastery in Bucharest, and based on an interest in hesychast spirituality and the Jesus Prayer. It strove to make the Orthodox Faith come alive in its hesychastic expression among the intellectuals, and to help make scientific research and all human activity a meeting place between God and man. It was stopped by the communists in 1958 and its leaders were imprisoned, among whom was Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, Romania's great theologian.—ED.



Fr. Calciu with King Michael, Princess Margaretta and
Queen Anna of Romania at a memorial service
for Romanians who died in Germany.
Soulzmat, Germany, June 14, 1986.

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Securitate were Russian. They had come from Russia to transmit their experience to the young Romanian communists.

2. PITESTI PRISON

After entering into prison I experienced great difficulties, but I kept my hearty faith untouched until I came to Pitesti Prison. All the students ended up there. There in Pitesti I went through very difficult situations. I think you have heard about what went on in Pitesti. It was an experiment, a diabolical experiment. Namely, some prisoners with sadistic behavior were selected from amongst us. They were defectors from the Communist Party or Communist Youth Union who had joined the Peasant Party or the Iron Guard Legion, but had now become communists again. Nevertheless, the Party did not forgive them. They arrested them and put them into prison and instructed them to become our interrogators. So, you were no longer summoned to an office to be beaten and interrogated, afterwards returning to your cell for some peace; now these people were permanently with us—twenty-four hours a day they were with us. This experience altered our souls and hearts, and little by little, one by one, we fell. Namely, we came to deny God and to sever ourselves from our families. We came to forget all that was good in our hearts. Fortunately, this experiment lasted only about three years.

How could you have possibly survived this experience without betraying God or your brother?

The majority of us betrayed God and father and mother and everything. But in time, this satanic experience came to an end. We went into normal prisons, and there we met the priests, because after this they started to arrest the priests.

So you weren't a priest yet?

No, I was a medical student. The priests came then, and they were better prepared for suffering than we were. I was

only twenty years old. There were students in high school fifteen years old, fourteen years old. I later met a young student in Jilava Prison who was only twelve years old.

Now, the priests were better prepared than we were. They knew what suffering was. They were prepared for it. They came with consolation for our hearts; they came with forgiveness. They brought forgiveness for us, so to speak. And in this way, little by little, our hearts healed and our souls and our faith came back to us. Eventually we were stronger than before. This experience badly hurt our hearts, but in the end when we came back to God, we were stronger. I decided to dedicate to God the remaining years of my life and to become a priest, because when those priests came into the prison, they had comforted us, forgiven us and confessed us. Some had with them Holy Communion secretly sewn into the pleats of their garment. They were prepared for this and gave us a crumb of Holy Communion. It was then when I understood the words of our Saviour saying: *Ye are the salt of the earth.... Ye are the light of the world....* (Matt. 5:13-14). Because, really, these priests were the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

3. THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

I married in 1965 and taught French to elementary school children. I went to the Patriarch, Justinian Marina, and told him everything I had to tell him, and he answered, "Good." He gave me a note (a letter) to the Theological Institute stating that I had already graduated from the University and therefore it was not necessary for me to go to Seminary. He gave me this note so that I could be admitted to the school, without being obligated to attend all the classes. I was to come when I could because I was also a teacher. He did not report that I was attending this school. He was required to report to the Department of Cults, a communist department controlling every

theology student, every priest, and every church. There was no freedom; everything was strictly controlled. But he did not report to the Department of Cults that I was a student in theology.

So I was like an underground student—I studied theology underground. Patriarch Justinian was amazing. He died in 1977. The Patriarch in 1948 was Nicodemus, then Justin Moisescu and then the present Patriarch. But Justinian was amazing. In the beginning he was not so sure about his path. But later he was very strong in his stand against the political administration—very strong. And he helped us—the people, the priests who had been in prison and were now coming out of it. He helped us very much. He made it possible for some of us to study theology.

I studied theology for four years. In the fourth year when I was finishing and preparing my thesis for my diploma, the Securitate discovered that I was a student, and they kicked me out of the school because I was not allowed to be a teacher. But Patriarch Justinian Marina appointed me as professor of French and the New Testament at the Seminary. I started this work being in close contact with the young students. I realized how confused they were. They didn't know anything—because the communists had instituted Marxist classes even at the Theology Institute and Seminary, and the children were so puzzled that they did not know where to go! They came with very pure souls from their parents—in other words, they were formed in a simple faith as I was myself at that age. But at school they came in contact with things that were not Christian at all—from the interference of the Securitate. The Securitate was always present in the schools.

I became very close to the students. I talked with them; I shared with them my experience in prison, yet I did not share too much because I did not want to. I knew that every step I

took was watched. I would speak to them especially about my spiritual experiences—not about the torture—not those things, but about how we were converted in prison, how those who were not believers converted to the Faith and how strong we were through faith. We had nothing and we could have been killed in a twinkling of an eye, but God saved each of us and gave us the opportunity to accomplish what we had promised Him.

I taught French and the New Testament, and slowly a group of young students formed around me with whom I created a prayer group. We had a beautiful church. Radu Voda is the name. In the evenings we would go there and pray. We read the Holy Scriptures, and if God gave the word to anybody to speak, we spoke. If not, we prayed, meditated and departed without saying anything. I was their spiritual father in the shadows, behind the scenes. That is, I allowed the students to decide themselves if they would speak—if God gave them the word to speak. The same applied to me—if God gave me the word to speak, I would speak, but not everything was clear to me. The Securitate would come and take some boys and threaten them and question them about what we discussed there. When we prayed in the evenings we would not turn on the lights—we would use candles. There was a very profound atmosphere of prayer. It was like that from 1972 to 1977. The group grew to over one hundred young people. Many friends of the theology students came from the university—engineering students, philosophy students—they came from everywhere and we prayed together. It was spreading, and this growth of faith alarmed the Securitate even more. They started to demand the cessation of prayers. They forbade us to use the church and ordered us to pray in the hall, but we continued. This continued until Ceausescu began to destroy the churches.

Then Ceausescu demolished the first church, Enea Church, a very old church from the fourteenth century. It was a historical church and the church of the university. It was the church for the students. It reminded the people of God, and the students attended it, which is why he destroyed it.

4. THE "SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH"

When I saw that the youth were very, very confused, I decided to deliver some sermons addressed to them. Many of them wanted to know about the Church, about Christ, about the Faith. Some had religious education from their families, but they had lost it in the university and in high school. Yet the remembrance of their first education was still in their minds and hearts. I decided to address special sermons to them.

It was during Lent. I began delivering sermons every Wednesday at seven o' clock in the evening. It was very interesting. On Tuesday I had no idea what I was going to say to the students.

But every time—during the day or the night before—God would put something into my mind. Thus, I gave seven sermons during the seven weeks of the Fast—a sermon every week. Because I knew there were Securitate agents present, I would not just speak, but I would write my sermons down and give copies of them to my students. For I knew that there would be a time when I would be arrested and judged, and they would say that I said more than I actually did. What I said in those sermons was very well said; I spoke against communism. I declared communism, together with Marxism and materialism, to be a religion, a philosophy of hopelessness, because a regime which demolishes churches to build taverns is a regime which has lost the notion of its true mission. I actually attacked like that. I asked God and prayed beforehand, together with my students, that God would give me the word to



The destruction of the Brincoveanu Church, 1983-84.

speak each of these seven weeks. And God gave me the word. God gave me the words, the ideas, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Who told me what to say. More students started to come. This was in the Brincoveanu Church.

During this time, the Department of State and the Securitate, as well as my hierarchs, all called me to judgment and told me to stop. I said, "I cannot stop because ... who should I obey? Men or God? God says that I should speak, and this is the mission of the Church." After four weeks, the church was locked, so I spoke in the courtyard of the church. In the fifth week they closed the gates. The Seminary was surrounded by a very high wall. They locked the gates and put guards around, but the students climbed over the walls.

How many were there?

Three hundred, four hundred, five hundred, sometimes. They [the authorities] were very scared by them.

I was standing alone against the Securitate!

No one stood with you?

No one! Not one of the professors. They were very scared. I was judged in the council of the professors. The representative of the Department of Cults, the bishop, the director of the Seminary, and the professors and the Department of Cults asked the professors to kick me out of the Seminary. One of the professors (he was not a priest—the priests said nothing) said: "We cannot see Fr. Calciu leave. If you want to put him out the door you can do it, but do not oblige us to do it." So God protected me, and they did not kick me out.

5. PERSECUTIONS

After the seven weeks, when I had finished, the Paschal holidays began. During this holiday period, I received threatening telephone calls and letters from Securitate agents saying they would kill me and my child. My child was twelve years

old at that time. When he went to school he was watched by the Securitate and when he came home he was also watched. It was the same for my wife. They threatened to kill my son and my wife and to put me in prison; they said that they would burn me on the street, trying in any way to scare me. So, after Pascha, when we started school again, I announced to the students that I would deliver one more sermon. God had already given me the opportunity to deliver seven sermons; now I wanted to begin a new series in order to explain what happened to me during the holiday period. So, after Pascha I intended to begin this new series entitled "The Culture and Christianity." However, it was clear that God was saying to me, "You asked for seven sermons, seven weeks, and I gave this to you. There is no need to explain and defend yourself. These sermons were not for the purpose of defending yourself, but to bring My Word to the students and to worship God."

And on the day when I was to deliver the eighth sermon, I was expelled from the Seminary and the church. This is how I began my civilian life. I could no longer wear priestly clothing; I could not serve.

How did your wife feel about all this during this time? Did she support you?

She was with me all the time.

When no one would stand with you, she was right there?

Yes, absolutely!

Did she tell you to go out there and preach?

Yes, she was very courageous. I was not the one answering the provocations—she was. She would say, "Let us alone. He did nothing wrong. He just preached the Word of God because he is a priest."

This was in the month of May. During the period from May until January, I was constantly under persecution and receiving threats. I was not allowed to go to church. When I

went there, the priests were so scared that they avoided me, they did not speak to me. The priests were very scared when I entered the church because there would be seven or eight agents of the Securitate with me. The priests were absolutely scared. They hadn't the courage to say a single word to me or to invite me into the altar to take Communion. Only one priest invited me in every time. I avoided going into the same church all the time because it could cause trouble for that church. Every Sunday I would go to a different church. But one priest from Bucharest accepted me into the altar. He would say, "Father, come into the altar," and he would allow me to receive Communion—not to serve, only to receive. This was a big consolation for me.

6. THE SECOND PRISON TERM

In March I was arrested. I was arrested and accused of being an agent of a foreign country—America, of course. I knew no one from America and had no connections with Americans. They accused me of giving information regarding the security of the state. They sentenced me under an article for capital punishment because when I was delivering my sermons, other people would attend besides. These people had recorded my sermons, and the first cassette reached Jerusalem. From Jerusalem it was disseminated throughout the world. In Germany my "Seven Homilies to the Youth" were printed.

So this is how I became renowned. Religious associations (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant) all defended me. This scared the judge, so he changed my sentence from the death penalty to ten years in prison. During the time I was in prison, I did not see my wife and child. Only when some important personage from Europe or America, like Bush or Giscard d'Estagne, visited our country was I allowed to see my wife. Usually I was



The reception of Fr. Calciu in the White House by
President and Mrs. Bush, 1989.

brought from prison to the Securitate headquarters where I would meet her.

What year did you go into prison?

In 1979. In prison I had many experiences. Ceausescu was very angry with me. I never spoke against him, I never even pronounced his name. I was speaking out against the regime, against the terror and against the forbidding of knowledge to young people. I told the youth: "You are young people gifted by God with wisdom and you have the right to know. You have the right to know about materialism, but also to know Christianity. And you have the right to make a choice. As long as you know only what the government is offering you, you are not free; you are a slave. And spiritual slavery is worse than material slavery. The slavery of ideas is worse than the slavery of the body. No government has a right to institute this slavery of ideas, of faith. Knowing nothing other than communism and materialism, you have no option. You are not free. You have no responsibility. You are like slaves, like animals. By knowing the good and the bad and making a decision, a choice, you become responsible for your choice. You become like God. This is what it is to be like Christ—to know what is good and what is bad and to make a decision for the good." I talked to them [the students] about love, dignity, the Church, friendship, faith, the Last Judgment.

When I was in prison, Ceausescu was very angry with me, and he wanted to kill me in prison. He could not sentence me to death because my case was known all over the world, so he ordered that I be put in a cell with sadistic criminals. Therefore, I was put in a cell with two sadistic criminals. One of them killed his own mother. He did not just kill her; he tortured her—days and days, cutting her fingers and her body. The other one killed two young men in the same sadistic manner. I was forced to work with them in the cell. I had

refused to work—I had told the director of the prison that I refused to work for a government that kills the people, that persecutes the people, that destroys the souls of human beings. I told him, “I do not want to work for you, the prison. I want to work for Jesus Christ. I am ready to preach but not to work for your progress.” So the director told these men to force me to work. If I refused, they had the right to kill me. Right away they began to persecute me, but not so badly. There was something human in them, you know. I noticed that all these people without anything in their soul—criminals and thieves and so on—they had something very, very dear and even very holy in them. The majority of them had a mother they loved, a wife or a child, so they were not completely lost. They had something very sensible. I noticed this and tried to reach them through this. I began to tell them about love, about Jesus Christ; to tell them that Jesus Christ loved them. At first they laughed. “How can Jesus Christ love me? I killed my mother! I killed two young men. How can He even allow me to live?” I said, “He can! And He really loves you.” Then I began to talk to them.

Before I was arrested, I had learned the Holy Liturgy by heart, because I knew that I would be arrested. It was very difficult for me not to be able to celebrate at least once a week, so I learned everything by heart. I was prepared for death, and I knew that I had to be tortured before I would be killed. Every Sunday I recited the Holy Liturgy. In the beginning I recited the Holy Liturgy mentally, just sitting. But later when I was alone in prison, I actually celebrated the Holy Liturgy. I said to myself that if I had only the bread and not the wine—because Jesus Christ transformed the water into wine—I cannot stop reciting the Liturgy because I have only the bread. So I really celebrated the Liturgy. I remembered that during persecution, the tombs of the martyrs were the altars in the early catacombs.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

I had no tomb there, but I said to myself: "I, myself, am a martyr because I am suffering for Jesus Christ. The first time I entered into prison I was not a priest. But now I am a priest. I have a duty to celebrate the Holy Liturgy." After I came out of prison, some priests disagreed with me about this. But many of them agreed with me that my Liturgy was a true Liturgy. I am convinced because, I tell you, something happened.

7. TRANSFORMATIONS IN CHRIST

Everyday these two men were called by the administration. I think they were scolded because they did nothing to me. They were working. I was not working; I was praying all the time. I think that they asked them to kill me. One day, after three months, they were called again to the administration. They were very upset when they came back. Two times a week we were allowed to go outside into a small courtyard, smaller than this room, fifteen by twenty feet. We went outside and they said to me: "Father, stay there." They went into the other corner and they talked together. I was sure it was time for me to be killed. I stood there facing the wall. I was praying; making my confession to God for my sins. After ten minutes—we had only ten minutes to walk—they came to me and said: "Father"—this was the first time that they called me *Father*—"Father, we decided not to kill you. Let the guards kill you." I started to cry. I had thought for sure I was going to die. We came into the cell and now we talked together. I told them about myself and everything. They told me about their experience, and that they now noticed that I was a good man. The next day I got their permission to celebrate the Holy Liturgy there. They stopped working; they refused to work.

This wasn't the first time you had served, is it?

No. But living with them, I was not allowed by them to serve the Holy Liturgy. Now, after a three-month interrup-

tion, I began to serve again. Sure, perhaps it was because they were never in a church before, or because what happens in the altar was mysterious for people, but they were behind me when I started to do the prayers, reciting all the prayers in a low voice. The guards would come and look in at us. I forgot where I was, but sometimes you know the priest has to turn around and say, "Peace be unto you." When I turned to them, they were kneeling! They were praying with me! I was so happy. From then on, we were really brothers. All three of us. One of them killed his mother; the other killed two boys. Really, it was for them faith and love. After a few weeks we were separated. Then my new life began.

They isolated me in a special cell. I got a piece of bread in the morning, and on the third day I got some other food, in solitary confinement.

How long were you in solitary confinement?

Seven months. I began to forget my Romanian. Every third day I had no bread. But from one day to another I kept a small piece of bread in order to serve the Liturgy every Sunday. One Saturday, the day when I received the bread, they did a search in my cell and found a small piece of bread. They confiscated it, so the next Sunday I had no bread to celebrate the Liturgy. I could not celebrate the Liturgy without bread because I needed to have the Body of Jesus Christ.

The guard was a very bad man, an extremely bad man. He was the secretary of the communist organization in Aiud Prison.

This was Aiud that you were in in 1979?

Yes. I hesitated to ask him for bread because I knew he would insult me, and so on. He was a very bad man. I think he was possessed by the devil. He was a simple man—a very simple man—but he could find just the word to hurt you. He would always find the exact word to hurt me. I think the devil was in him. This Sunday I wanted, on one hand, to have a

quiet day, a happy day, but, on the other hand, I wanted to celebrate the Liturgy. Now I did not know whether to be quiet—not to talk or ask for the bread—or to be possibly insulted and even beaten. Perhaps it was an angel of God that pushed me to knock on the door. You know, if you knock on the door in prison, the guards let you wait at least half an hour. During this time, your mind begins to work: what happened? Will he come to beat me? So the terror was increasing in my soul. During this half hour, I imagined that he would come ... and I would have destroyed my Sunday, God's day. I thought, "He will come to beat me or insult me." And I became more and more scared.

After a half hour, he came and opened the small window and asked me what I wanted. I said, "Sir, I would like to have a small piece of bread to celebrate the Liturgy." He was amazed! His jaw dropped, because every inmate asks for bread, but to eat, not to celebrate the Liturgy. He was absolutely crazy, acting like a crazy man. He slammed the window. But after two hours he came with a small piece of bread. He opened the door, and he gave me the piece of bread without saying anything! I was amazed! This was impossible! How could it be that this bad man is bringing me the Body of Jesus Christ himself—because that is what it would be. It was the most mystical Liturgy that I ever celebrated in my whole life, because it was a miracle. And in prison it was completely quiet—this guard usually went from cell-to-cell insulting and beating people. This time when I celebrated the Holy Liturgy, there was no noise in the prison. Peace and quiet. I served the Liturgy, and I was so happy. I thanked God for this. After one hour he came again, opened the door and said, "Father, do not tell anybody I gave you the bread. If they discover it, I will be fired." I said: "How could I ever say anything? You brought to my cell the Body of Jesus Christ. You co-celebrated with me! By your act,

you co-celebrated with me. You are now the son of God.” He said nothing, but then he never insulted me again. So, many miracles happened in my life in prison. I had the feeling that an angel of God was always with me; that the protection of Jesus was in the cell with me.

Before I was arrested my mother died. I was completely isolated in the cell. I knew nothing about my family. I knew nothing about what happened [outside]. I was surrounded only by the hatred of the guards. Little by little, in my soul, I started to ask myself, is there no love for me in this world? Nobody loves me? The Securitate had come and said, “Your wife divorced you. Your son has forgotten about you. Your students say that you are a crook and that you tried to betray them—to enter into conflict with the priests and the hierarchs and the state. Everybody hates you.” And so I was asking myself, “Isn’t there anyone to love me in this world?” I had the love of Jesus Christ—I knew that. And I started to have this conversation with my mother. I asked her, “Mom, will you come to protect me, to tell me something?” Soon, after fourteen weeks, I saw my mother. I think it was when I was asleep. I think so, but perhaps not. I am not sure. She was very angry, and she said, “How can you imagine that I have forgotten you? My love is with you. Be strong and be faithful. Believe in God. Believe in me.” Perhaps it was something in my imagination, but it was very real. The next morning I awoke with a good state in my soul. And after three days, for the first time my wife was allowed to come to see me. I am sure that my mother protected me and prayed for me. Then I was very sorry about my feelings and thoughts, and so on. From that time I never had bad thoughts about my wife or other people. I understood that everybody loved me. Even some inmates knocked on my door and said, “Father, be strong, be strong!” They did not even know me! They were perhaps even criminals, and they encouraged me.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

I remember, it was 1979, at Pascha. It was during the night and there was a guard, a young man, a very nice-looking man, very handsome. He had a face like an angel. He was a peasant, but he was very bad. Every day he had to beat at least three or four prisoners. He was so bad that I could not associate in my mind his beautiful face and his beautiful eyes with the cruelty of his actions. He was very elegant, very proper, and I could not understand. It was Pascha. In the morning I heard the bells announcing the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. I sang, "Hristos a Inviat [Christ is Risen]" in my cell. I did not celebrate the Liturgy because I wanted to be attuned to everyone celebrating Pascha outside. In the morning this guard was on duty. A young man, a beautiful man, with the face of an angel—but so cruel. I prayed to God: "O God, give us a quiet day; the day of Thy Resurrection."

In the morning at seven o'clock the new guard came and entered the cell. There were eight sections in the prison, and for every section there was a guard. When the shift was changed, all eight guards would come, and one would remain at each section. The other seven then went on to the next sections. When the guard entered the cell to inspect it, the inmates would have to stand facing the wall so that they could not see him. If he spoke to you, he did so in a loud voice in order to be heard by his comrades. And if he asked us something, we had to answer in a loud voice, as well. Thus, everyone [all the other guards] heard the discussion between the inmate and the guard.

This [particular] morning, I did not face the wall; I faced him. And I said, "Christ is Risen!" He looked at me and then turned his head and looked at the guards, because I spoke in a loud voice. After a moment of hesitation, he answered, "In Truth He is Risen!" And that day he did not beat anyone.

Around eleven or twelve o'clock, the chief of the prison

came into my cell. Sure, the guard had to report to him all my actions, as the guards had to report every day on the behavior of the inmates. The colonel came into my cell because he knew that I had said, "Christ is Risen." He was sure that I would say the same words to him. I heard his voice. I heard his steps in the corridor, and I knew what he wanted to tell me [FG laughs], and he knew what I had to tell him—it was like a play. He entered the cell. I did not face the wall. I faced him directly and I said, "Christ is Risen!" and he said "Did you see Him?" [FG laughs.] "No, I did not see Him. I did not see Him, but I believe what the apostles and the martyrs say. Did you see the North Pole? Did you see Stalin or Marx? But you believe in them by the authority of those who wrote about them. Because of the authority of the apostles, of the priests, of the martyrs, I believe in Jesus Christ. And I know that He really did rise from the dead." He had no response, but he left me alone. So this day of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was a very quiet, holy day for me. I did not celebrate the Liturgy because I knew that Jesus Christ had come into my cell and changed the minds of these guards. He closed the mouth of the colonel, and he gave me the words—not big words—but just what I needed to say. So it was a wonderful day for me.

8. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

During the seven months that I was alone in that cell, I had no right to talk to the guards. I was only supposed to execute their orders, you know. Sometimes I would try to talk to somebody, even to the walls. It was impossible. I started to forget my Romanian. My wife was allowed to visit me, perhaps because George Bush, who was then vice-president, had come to Romania after a number of organizations outside the country began to protest on my behalf. Everyone then who would come to Romania would ask about me. Because he came to Romania,

my wife was allowed to come visit me with my son. But I was unable to talk to them! I had lost the ability to speak, having been alone in my cell for seven months. I had so many things to tell them that my tongue could not express everything. She could not understand anything I said. She said, "Be quiet. Keep your silence. Try to explain to me what you want to say."

How long did you have together?

Half an hour. After she left, I went back to my cell. I had a fly in my cell, and I put some bread out to feed her. I decided to talk to this fly, to make her a spiritual friend. [FG laughs.] But her commotion exhausted me. I also had a spider. I tried to talk to the spider and he paid no attention to me. Absolutely none! Not to my words, not to my presence—he was not impressed by me. [Laughs.] I was very tired. But from time to time, there was a big cockroach that came into my cell, which I tried to domesticate. I put out some bread. He did not trust me. If I made a movement, he disappeared. Have you ever read *The Little Prince*? Well, I remembered that when the little prince arrived on the earth, he had met a fox. He tried to approach the fox, and the fox said, "Do not approach me. You have to domesticate me. You have to institute a ritual. You must approach me each day, one step at a time. By this ritual we will become friends, and when we leave the country, I will see your blond hair blowing in the wind." Well, I remembered this, and I began to do the same. He started to eat the bread. When I moved, he disappeared. As I was lying on my bed near the piece of bread, the cockroach, little by little, came closer and started to eat it. I watched his every movement. He was amazing, like a monster. If you look at him from up close, he is like a monster. Little by little I began to talk to him, and he actually came to visit me for weeks, until my isolation came to an end. I was saved in my ability to remember my language by this cockroach. It was amazing for me. You know, God sent all

kinds of beings in order that we would not be alone. I am sure that in every movement, every insect, every conflict with the guards—it was the hand of God that tried to save me, to help me, to make me *sure* that I was on the right path. Because, you know, in such a situation, doubts come, but God....

9. THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IN PITESTI

That's a good point, for earlier you talked about when you were sent to Pitesti Prison as a student, your soul was confused and you were not prepared at all.

No, one is not prepared for it. We are only prepared theoretically. We lived a normal life. We had no experience that would have prepared us to be arrested the first time. We were unfamiliar with what happened in Russia. Oh, we heard about it, but as history, like a novel. So, we were not prepared for the worst. But in Pitesti there was a fight between the spirit of good and the spirit of evil. It was not just the persecution of a regime against some people, you know. It was really the battle between God and the devil. In relation to this, I said in my sermons that the whole history of humanity is a fight between God and the devil, and that our heart is the battleground. But it is not dead ground; it is living ground, and it can decide the victory—whether God or the devil will reign in our hearts. We are responsible for this. Fr. Nicolae Steinhardt accepted my words.* Later, we understood it is not just the

* “The only chance of survival for Eastern Christianity is that of a war within the Word. Our solution is that of Calciu-Dumitreasa....” *Jurnalul Fericii* (Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1991), p. 417. Fr. Calciu explains: “The idea of this war between good and evil on the battlefield of our heart was confirmed by Monk Nicolae of Rohia.”

Fr. Calciu tells us about Nicolae Steinhardt: “Nicolae Steinhardt was a Jew who was arrested and sent to prison, where he met the Iron Guard. They made a very big impression on him and convinced him to become a

hatred of men against men, or the violence of the strong against the weak, but a spiritual fight between good spirits and evil spirits. And we failed on the field of battle; we failed, many of us, because it was beyond our ability to resist. Only the students who died were saved—they did not fail. However, some of us died after failing. I think the limit of the human soul's resistance was tried there by the devil.

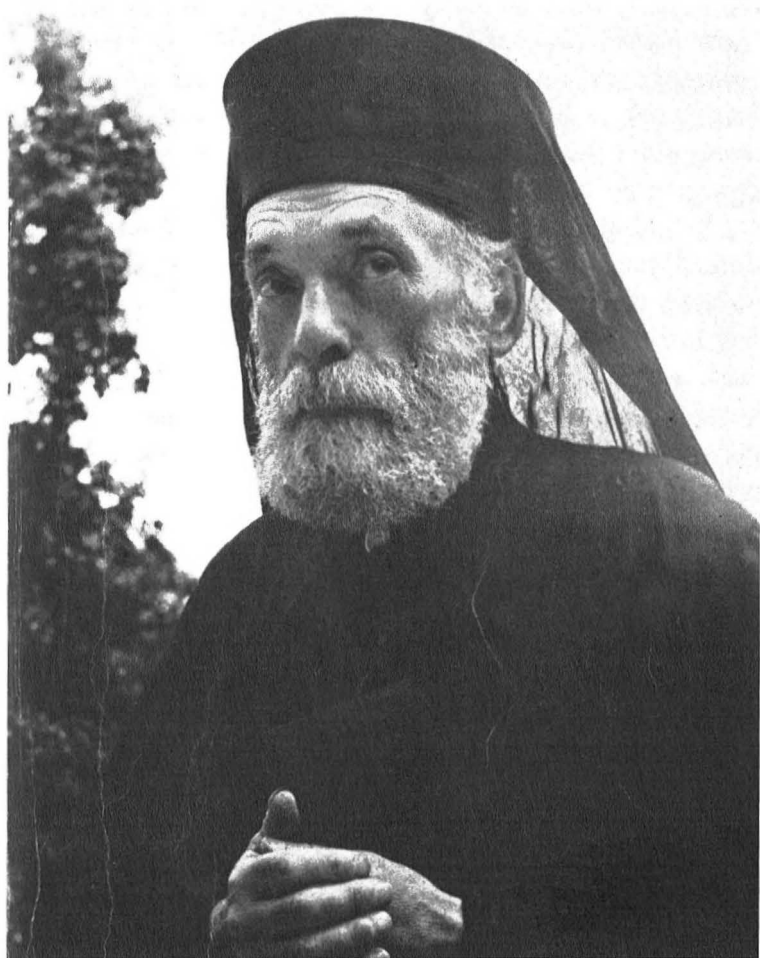
How did you survive it? What went on inside you...?

I, myself, I tried to commit suicide. Many of us committed suicide. I tried, but I was saved at the last moment. I was on a big staircase, three stories high. The moment I tried to climb over it to throw myself down, a friend of mine caught me and saved me. I was cruelly beaten for this because you were not allowed to kill yourself. But, anyway, I was saved, and I am grateful to my friend. He died after the Revolution. I am grateful to him. Otherwise, I could have been lost.

So, only by God's grace you survived, for it was beyond you....

Absolutely. You can imagine. Even the second time I was in prison. I was alone. Without anything, no protection. Ceausescu was the supreme chief of Romania, of all the security, the guards, even the inmates—the two murderers. They had to kill me. They could have killed me any time, like a fly. Nevertheless, God saved me. Who protected me? Who put me under their protection? It was God.

Christian. He was baptized in the Jilava Prison. His godfather was a professor, a foreign minister during the government before communism, called Vidrashcu. Later, when he left the prison, he became a monk in a monastery called Rohia. For this reason he is called 'Nicolae de la Rohia.' He wrote many books. The most important is *The Journal of Blessedness* in which he describes his experience in prison. He wanted to say that since suffering in prison had such a spiritual result in his soul, he called this time—and the events in his diary—*The Journal of Blessedness*. He also wrote another book called *If You Give, You Receive*. It is a very interesting book. He died four or five years ago as a monk with a very, very spiritual life."—ED.



Fr. Nicolae Steinhardt.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

You were speaking of the heart as the battleground. As Orthodox Christians, how should we live now? You learn to forgive or you learn to not hold grudges. What is important now in our hearts if those times of testing come? How do you look at your torturers? How do you see them? What do you do if someone is beating you, or forces you to take off all your clothes? One of our young sisters asked me to ask you how you retain any human dignity in that situation?

I think before human dignity is Christian dignity. Many times I forgot my human dignity. I was humiliated. I was insulted. But beyond this is Christian dignity: forgiveness and prayer for the other one. I remember when that one colonel came into my cell on Pascha, he was very angry with me, and he said: "I know that you are praying for me!" I said, "Yes, I do pray for you. I pray that God will forgive you. I pray that God will give you the light of His Resurrection." He was very angry. When I told him this he became even more angry with me because the devil in him wanted him to deny in his soul and mind that Jesus Christ *really* is resurrected. Many times it was a split between human dignity and Christian dignity. According to human dignity—as a human being or as a good man—it is very difficult to forgive. But it is not so very difficult for us, as Christians, to forgive. I do not deny human dignity, but I say that before it comes Christian dignity.

Following the commandments.

Absolutely. Sometimes when my human dignity failed, I became very angry with them. I was ready to ask God to punish them. I said, "God, they are Your enemies, not only mine. They are Yours, too." But as a Christian, I said, "Oh, God, forgive them. Give them the light of Your Resurrection."

Did you ever see any of your torturers converted?

Many of them, yes. The guard who gave me the bread of God. Afterward he stopped insulting me, and I had the most

quiet time during his time on duty. Before, he would come to the door when I was praying and insult me and blaspheme God. But after the incident with the bread, he stopped. I am sure he was converted. I never met him again. Also, those criminals: I saw them in front of me praying, kneeling and even crying. There were many others. God worked miracles in the prisons—many, many people were converted.

Afterwards I was put in prison with a young man. He was not a criminal—he was a thief. It was very interesting. I will tell you this because I remember how Fr. Staniloae said that at the Last Judgment, we will answer before God, not only for our deeds, or for our faith, or for our sins, but for all the people whom our attitude influenced. So, this young man, he was a thief. Did you hear about Tudor Arghezi? He was a famous poet after the Second World War. He was a monk, but he left monasticism because he felt he was too big of a poet, a genius. He felt that as a monk he was not allowed to express himself as a poet. In the beginning he retained his dignity, but in time he began to collaborate with communism. He wrote a book of poems entitled “1907,” which was when there was the peasant revolution in Romania. This book is full of hate, absolutely like the communists. Some of his poems, the worst ones, the most criminal in intention and in word, were put into the students’ elementary and high school textbooks. This young man [the thief] had tortured an old couple. He did not kill them, but he tortured them so that they would tell him where they kept their money, their jewels. He was arrested. I met him in prison, and I liked to talk to him about Jesus Christ. He was very reluctant. He said, “I am not a thief.” He was only sixteen or seventeen years old. He said, “I was a man of justice because I took money, and so on, from rich people, not from poor people.”

[I asked] “Why did you torture them?” “Because they

refused to tell me where the money and the jewels were. They started to cry out and I told them not to cry. But they cried continuously. For this I tortured them.” And I asked him, “Who gave you the right to torture those people?” “I learned this in school.” And he recited that poem of Tudor Arghezi, who said, “Take the rich man, torture him, kill him; take everything from him.” “I listened to what Tudor Arghezi said, and I know that I did the right thing.” I thought of this young man being at the Last Judgment, saying, “God, I learned to torture people from Tudor Arghezi.” I told him that Tudor was a sinner. He denied his first vocation as a monk. He denied his human dignity because he collaborated with communism. And besides that, he made a criminal out of you! You knew nothing about this. You learned in school from the poem of Tudor Arghezi that you have the right to kill everybody, to steal and so on. It is not right. I talked to him about Jesus Christ. We were together for two months in Aiud Prison.

This young man asked me, when he saw that I was praying, “Father, can you teach me a prayer?” “I can!” I taught him the “Our Father.” This he began to pray. Soon afterwards we were separated. But after this, his soul was changed. He was not completely converted, you know. Perhaps he lost it after entering the company of thieves and criminals. But, anyway, in hell he will keep this [ray of goodness]. He was praying and he would say, “Father, I do not feel big things in my soul when I pray, but it is good for me.”

What was his name?

Simeon.

We will pray for Simeon.

I was amazed, because he was a young man, only sixteen years old. He was completely corrupted by somebody. He was in a bad group, you know. He was a very nice guy, a very

young man. He had beautiful eyes—there was even some innocence in them. Then, I understood what Fr. Staniloae had said. It is a big responsibility to know that your words, your poems, your novel or articles caused someone to become a criminal.

Our spiritual father quoted someone who said that the biggest crime, even above abortions and murders, is the passivity of the Orthodox pastors: the silence and the passivity of Orthodox pastors who are not reaching out to those who are hungering and thirsting for the Truth.

In the Orthodox Church often the priesthood is merely a profession. I tried not to fall into this attitude. I tried to make my priesthood a living action, a vocation. There was a priest in my village when I was a child. He would never touch money. He never took a coin into his hand. And if he had to go somewhere, he took someone else to pay. He would never touch money. I could not understand then and everyone was very amazed by this, but later I understood: by touching money, you start to love it. And, loving it, it becomes your treasure. It is better to have one's treasure in heaven and not here, because the heart has the inclination toward corruption. It requires great struggle to keep the heart pure. The devil attacks every time.

10. RELEASE FROM PRISON

The majority of the students I had in seminary are good priests. I remember when I was set free, I had forty agents of the Securitate watching my apartment. The apartments were surrounded by the Securitate. There were forty-two, in three shifts, you know. Night and day; night and day. One of my students who was a priest came, and the Securitate stopped him. The priest said, "I want to see Fr. Calciu because he was my teacher in seminary." This was in 1984. I was under house

arrest. I was freed in 1984 and under house arrest with my wife and my son, and then expelled [from the country] in 1985. This priest came—he was young—and he said, “I want to see Fr. Calciu.” They said, “You have no right to see him. Fr. Calciu is under house arrest, and no one is allowed to see him except his family.” So he sat on the steps of the stairs and said, “I will stay here until Fr. Calciu goes out or you will let me go into his house.” And he stayed there perhaps seven hours. Finally, the Securitate called me to talk to him. It is an expression of love, you know.

How did you support yourself? What did you eat? (Fr. Calciu thought I was asking about his prison years so his response takes us back to the prison.)

During the seven months [in solitary confinement] I ate bread for two days, and the third day I had hot food. For seven months. But I made a vow to Jesus Christ, and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I ate nothing. But I was not hungry, I was fasting for God. During my first arrest, there was a nun from Vladimiresti. She was arrested and died in prison. Her name was Mother Michaila. I did not know her, but for three months in prison she ate nothing. She only received Holy Communion. She did not eat anything during her three months in prison and she survived. I think it was the same for me. I heard about her later—at that time I did not know about her. I think that having Liturgy every Sunday and receiving Communion was quite sufficient for me. I was never hungry, nor was I obsessed with food. During the first time of arrest, I was obsessed by this, as were the others. Perhaps because we were not so resolved to give everything to God. Now I was resolved from the beginning because I knew—I never thought that I would survive. I was sure that I would be killed by Ceausescu and his agents. So, if I came out of prison, I knew that these days, these years of living, after being in prison, were

a gift from God. I knew I had to be killed in prison. They had decided that. But God had other ideas. I think that these days, these years, are given to me by God as a gift; and I pay nothing for this gift. I pay no interest on these years of living. Therefore, I am praying to God and preaching Him according to my powers and possibilities.

What happened after your seven months in solitary confinement?

After that, I was with different people. They kept moving me around to different prisons. I was in Galati, for instance, with some thieves, and in Jilava with some crazy people. Yes, they put me in the section of crazy people. I do not know why, but I think they wanted to declare me crazy. Perhaps, under the pressure of organizations and governments, they wanted to let me go free. I suspect that they wanted to let me go free but not to let people know that they did this under pressure. They wanted to declare me crazy and then put me back into society.

There was a woman doctor in this section. She was very hard on me. I remember, there were three crazy people [in the cell with me]. They were simulating. You know, they were not really mad people.

You mean they were not really crazy—they were pretending?

Yes. This doctor.... One day I was praying and the guard cried from the door, "Stop praying!" I paid no attention, and continued to pray. He entered the cell and started hitting my hands with a club. It was interesting; I felt nothing. I was not able to separate my hands, but I wanted to. I did not want to make him angry with me. I was in prayer. God does not want to make him crazy.... But I was not able to separate my hands. Because he wanted me to separate my hands and I was not able to, he hit me and my hands started to bleed. Then this lady doctor came, and she said, "What happened to you,

Father?" She said, "I do not want to hear anything about it. Tell me about your liver." I did not have anything wrong with my liver. I was really angry with her. But when I came out of prison, I found out that this doctor came to my wife once a month to tell her about me. Can you imagine this? She was very harsh with me, but in secret she was coming to my wife. My wife was working in a medical institute; she was a biologist. Because it was a medical institute, this doctor could come [without arousing suspicion]. Looking from floor to floor, room to room, she succeeded in reaching my wife and telling her about me.

How did your wife endure all those years of your being in prison and not knowing what had happened to you?

She was very courageous; she was very strong. Generally, she was a shy woman, but God gave her the right words—there were a lot of people supporting her, talking to her. There were also priests who helped her. Different people, the faithful, would send her money or oil. Oil was hard to get.

I was told that during the years that you were out of prison, it was the young people who helped you. Can you tell us more about that?

During the time I delivered my sermons to the youth, the students of theology were obliged to stay on the campus. They were not allowed to leave. I finished my speeches and discussions with the students around midnight. What was very interesting is that the majority of the students who came to listen to me were not in theology school but were engineering students. I think their souls yearned to learn about other things that matter. Their souls wanted to know more. Leaving the Seminary and going to my house, I had to walk about seven kilometers, which is about four miles. During the night, at midnight, with the Securitate on my heels, these students accompanied me to my house to protect me. Many times the Securitate tried to

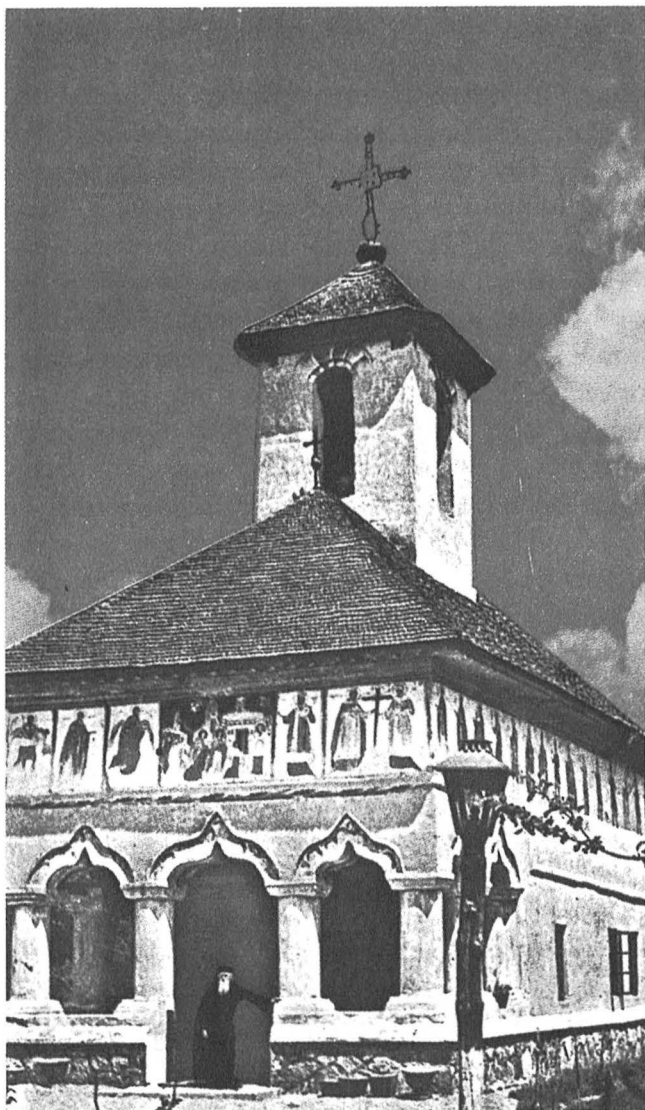
attack me, not as the Securitate, but as though they were drunk, or thieves, or under the guise of someone who wanted to insult me because I was wearing my priest's robe. But the students protected me. They were very courageous; they were with me all the time. One student of the School of Engineering said something to me that was shocking and, how do I say, very spiritual. He said, "Truth before justice." It was a very deep thing. Afterwards I started thinking about it and I understood that, really, before justice is Truth. I experienced this during my trial, you know. I told the truth before justice and I did not ask for justice. I only asked that they respect my truth. I said that I had nothing to do with espionage or foreign powers; I had to deal with only one Power that is not foreign to anybody—the power of God. It is not a foreign power; it is an intimate Power to everybody. I said, "I am a simple priest. Why are you so scared of me? I am a simple teacher in the Seminary. I have no army. I have no power with me. Absolutely, me and God. Why are you so scared of me? Do not make me a martyr; let me be a simple priest." They sentenced me to ten years.

When I came out of prison, many young people knew about me. These young people, who were now about sixteen years old, had been only eleven years old when I had been preaching my sermons. (I was in prison five-and-a-half years.) So they had not heard anything about me, but, by word of mouth, from one faithful one to another, I was known by these young people. For example, when I went to the market with my wife and my son, I would be surrounded by these young people. They would say: "It's Fr. Calciu, it's Fr. Calciu!"

You were a hero to them.

And later, this fame was increased by the presence of the Securitate around my house. Everyone was asking themselves—why? Why is Fr. Calciu being watched by forty agents?

So would they bring you food and money?



Lainici Monastery, Romania.

Yes, through my son. They would come from school and give him money. There was a young man who came from the countryside, not from Bucharest. I do not think he knew I was being watched by the Securitate. He entered the apartments, the main door, and was surrounded by six Securitate agents. Everybody was interrogated. "Who are you? Where are you going now?" In the hall there were mail boxes with everybody's name on them. He read a name there, of someone on the fourth or fifth floor, and he said, "I am going to see this lady." They let him go there but accompanied him to the apartment. He knocked on the door; the lady opened the door. She saw the young man and understood instantly what was going on. She said, "Oh, come inside, come inside! [FG laughs.]

She did not even know him.

She supposed, because she did not know him, that he was coming to see me. So he entered her apartment, and after half an hour or an hour he left. During the night, the lady came to us and gave us food that he had brought for us. She said, "Do not tell anybody that I brought this food to you. I did it because I love you and I love Jesus Christ."

So it seems that people served God in various ways. Maybe there were even some servants of God in the Securitate; would that be possible?

Yes, sure. I was a priest before I was arrested. I very much liked to visit the monasteries, and I would go from monastery to monastery, sometimes with my friends and sometimes with my family. Once I was in Lainici Monastery. There was a Securitate officer there with his wife. Securitate officers came to the monasteries to watch, or whatever, not to pray. We were together there for one week. I was with my wife, and he was with his wife and child. One day he came to me and said, "Father, I do not believe in God, but my wife is a believer. We were not married in the church, and my wife feels that without

the blessing of the church, our life will be very bad. Can you be my sponsor, my godfather?" "Yes, why not!" And I was the sponsor of this Securitate agent. My wife was very cautious. She said, "Be attentive, this man is trying to put you into a bad situation. He will denounce you, saying you agreed to be his sponsor." But I felt it was God's will, so my wife and I became his sponsors, and the hieromonk married them. Any time after that when he saw me on the street in Bucharest, he would say, "How are you, godfather?" Perhaps he was a believer. He denied belief in God to me. "My wife," he said, "is a believer and she wants to get married in the church." Many of them would also come to the monasteries to baptize their children. But, officially, they were against Jesus Christ, and they could even kill you in prison or even during the trial. But in their hearts, many of them were believers. I think God works in many ways. To me, He gave the words and the courage to speak out in front of the people without fear. To others, He gave the courage to work underground with "The Army of the Lord" or with people. There were the young monks and nuns who, as you recall, were forced to leave the monasteries.

What year was that?

1959. Many of them had to leave. At first the monks and nuns refused to go into the world. They would hide in the forests and would come into the monasteries secretly.

So when they had to leave, they would all go off into the forests?

Yes. But in time, the Securitate discovered it, and they had to enter the world. But even in the world they had their groups. I had a friend, a colleague from my school in the village. She had been in a monastery but had been forced to leave. She became an employee somewhere, but she immediately founded a group of young girls and other people who gathered to pray in her house. It was like a monastery,

except that they could not wear monastic clothing. It was forbidden. God works in different ways, you know. These nuns, now dressed like ordinary people, were openly preaching the Word, calling people to Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the old monks and nuns could stay in the monasteries, and they became a center of spirituality. Those over fifty years of age could stay in the monasteries. And the monasteries were a center of attraction for people. Those in authority in society tried to instill a materialistic philosophy into the most simple man—to make him accept that there is nothing other than the material. They [the people] wanted something else and would come to the monasteries. Every summer, I would go from monastery to monastery with my students.

This was after your first time in prison?

Yes. For example, one year I would visit the monasteries in Moldavia. The next year I would visit the monasteries in Transylvania, the next year Oltenia, Muntenia, and so on. And every time, I saw hundreds and hundreds of people visit the monasteries.

The Securitate didn't try to stop that?

They tried to stop it, but it was impossible. They couldn't. There is a monastery in Transylvania called Nicula. This monastery is dedicated to the Mother of God. There is a miracle-working icon of the Mother of God there. Before I was arrested—in 1975 I think—every summer, for the Dormition of the Mother of God, I would go there; and that summer there were 60,000 people! They came, walking—not by train—but walking, a week ahead, with priests; walking and coming for the feast of Mary, singing all the time. In villages, in front of the *troitsa*,* they would sing songs dedicated to the Mother of God. And when they arrived at the monastery,

* *Troitsa*: the beautiful wooden shrine-crosses that one finds on the roadside in Romania.—ED.

they would walk on their knees three times around the church. Three times around the church! As you can imagine, the Securitate was there, but nobody cared about them, for the Securitate had not the courage to stop 60,000 people.

Why was the ground ripe for communism in 1944-1945 to come into Romania?

It was not ripe. Communism came because the Russian army was in the country. Terror was installed between 1944 and 1945. In 1947, the Russian army forced the king to leave the country.

St. John of Kronstadt in Russia, who died in 1906, prophesied the coming of communism to Russia. He saw it coming because people did not treasure what they had. They were not treasuring and teaching. It sounds like your faith was passed on from your parents, in your villages.

Yes, in my country the faith was very strong; it was very strong. The intellectuals—they betrayed the Church. They were attracted to this American freedom, to the liberty of sexual freedom, freemasonry and so on. But the people—the peasants and the workers—were very good and very faithful. “The Army of the Lord”* did a very good thing: it traveled through the villages preaching, singing, and preventing the spread of sectarianism, for the sects were coming with songs as well. The people, the simple people, wanted to take part in the

* Fr. Joseph Trifa, a priest, was the founder of “The Army of the Lord.” He noticed that in the milieu of society and the village, the sects had started to win more and more people. Because of this, people were leaving the true path to salvation. So he founded “The Army of the Lord.” He noticed that the sects won the people by singing, by putting different parts of the Bible into verses and melody. He did the same thing, only he used Orthodox hymns addressed to the Mother of God, Jesus Christ, etc. Thus he succeeded in keeping the people in the Orthodox Church. He made great reforms in the *manner* in which the simple people were made to understand the Bible, but without any modification or forcing of Orthodoxy.—ED.

singing. So they would sing Orthodox songs. The Protestants were also coming with songs. Fr. Joseph Trifa started this movement. It began after the first world war. "The Army of the Lord" was strong in Transylvania.

It was controversial, wasn't it?

It was controversial because during the Church hierarchs' collaboration with communism, "The Army of the Lord" split and went in two directions. Some broke off and went toward Protestantism and the others stayed in the Church.

11. THE "REEDUCATION" EXPERIMENT AT PITESTI

*This may be more difficult for you to talk about—I know a little bit about what happened in Pitesti Prison in Romania, but most Americans have never heard of Pitesti and what happened there and the whole experiment of reeducation that took place. Can you tell us about what happened?**

Pitesti was a copy of Makarenko's experiment. Makarenko was a communist educator who reeducated children and young people who had infractions against the communist world. In his book called *Pedagogical Poem*, he describes in very pink colors what happened there. But if you are very attentive, you can see that it was a real terror. The communists extended this experiment of Makarenko to Romania's students—the young generation.

How old were the students?

Eighteen to twenty-five. Communism wanted to make a gap between the generations. The most dangerous category for them was the students, the young people. We had inherited a Christian education, family values, and basic Christian principles. The older generation was a generation that had to

* There is an entire book written on what took place in Pitesti: *The Anti-Humans*, by D. Bacu (Soldiers of the Cross, 1971).—ED.

die, but this generation had to be transformed. So they tried this experiment in a very concentrated medium. They wanted to break the people, the whole country. Romania was not a primitive country. We were connected to European culture. We are a Latin nation, not a Slavic one. We believed in Christian values. Therefore, they wanted to do this experiment with the young people, to create a gap between the children and the older generation, and make this generation of students a communist one. They wanted to build a new world—a communist world; a new man—the communist man, and so on. So they arrested the young people—the students—and put them in a special prison, in Pitesti, for this very experiment. But you have to understand that it was not just a fight between two political principles. It was a fight between God and the devil.

They took very distinct steps. The first step was to destroy the personality of the youth. For example, the guards would come together with a group of young prisoners who had converted to communism into a cell where there were perhaps twenty young students, and would try to intimidate them. They would beat them without mercy. They could even kill somebody. Generally, they would kill one of them—the one who opposed them the most; the most important one. Generally, he was a leader. They would beat him and even kill him. Thus, the terror began.

After that, they began to “unmask.”

What does that mean?

They wanted to force you to say: “I lied when I said, ‘I believe in God.’ I lied when I said, ‘I love my mother and my father.’ I lied when I said, ‘I love my country.’” So everyone was to deny *every* principle, every feeling he had. That is what it means to be “unmasked.” It was done in order to prove that we were the products of the bourgeois, and the bourgeois are

liars. We lie when we say we are virgin, we are Christian, and when we try to preserve our bodies pure for marriage.

They were against that?

Sure. They tried to say that I was a prostitute, a young man that had connections with all the girls; or that in the Legionnaires or Peasant Party there were perversions. We would be tortured until we denied everything we believed before. So, that is what it means to be "unmasked." It was done in order to prove that Christian principles were not principles, that we lied when we said we loved Jesus Christ, we loved God, mother, father, and so on. It was to show that I lied when I said that I was a chaste man, when I held an ideal of nation and family. Everything had to be destroyed in our souls! This is the second step.

After this came a declaration against everybody who was in touch with us, everybody who believed as we believed. I was to make a declaration against everybody who knew about my organization or my actions, to denounce everybody—even father, mother, sister. We were to sever completely any Christian connection and moral principle.

The final step was to affirm that we had given up all the principles of our faith and any connection we had with it. With this we began to be "the new man," "the communist man," ready to torture, to embrace communism, to denounce everybody, ready to give information, and ready to blaspheme against God. This is the most difficult part, for under terror and torture one can say, "yes, yes, yes." But now, to have to act? It was very difficult.

It was during this third part that the majority of us tried to kill ourselves.

That is when you tried to commit suicide?

Yes, this was the most difficult part. Thus was a new category of man built by communism. And we were forced to go with some of our own former torturers into another cell and

to start doing the same thing. It was very difficult. It was a very devilish directive.

At this time we could not understand the mystical implication of this action. We were political prisoners and the communists wanted to learn everything about us—about our friends, our families—because the majority of the people were against them. They wanted to terrorize my father and mother, for example, by saying to them, “I know that you were going to church,” or, “I know that you gave some food to some people who tried to escape the Securitate.” They wanted to strike terror in them and in the country. It was like a political fight.

Only later did we understand that there were mystical implications. All these people were just instruments of the devil.

How long did it take you to realize that?

After the actions stopped, some of us understood. But, we were too involved in the political fight before we were in prison. Even if I and others protested against the introduction of materialism into the schools and the forbidding of the students to go to church, I think the majority of our effort was being involved in the political fight. However, little by little, under the terror, the torture, and suffering, we understood that this political implication was just the surface. In fact, it was a fight between good and evil; between God and the devil. It was the devil who had taken Russia, Romania and other countries into his possession.

When we understood that, we started praying even more than before. God sent us illumination. We understood it and we were aware of the nature of this fight. We understood that it was not [a name] who was our enemy—it was the devil. He tried to destroy our soul. It was not just a political fight or someone's struggle for power. They wanted to destroy our

soul, our faith, our spiritual connection with our families. We understood this, and we tried to resist.

Was the reeducation over a long period of time?

For some, it lasted three years. Happily, I was among the last ones. But for others, it was for three years: After they had passed through all of these steps, it was discovered, let's say, after one year that one of them did not say everything—he had kept some secret in his mind. They would then put him back into the same situation as in the beginning. He passed again through all the steps of torture. It was impossible to resist.

How long did you pass through this?

One year.

So there were four steps: the installation of terror, the unmasking, the denouncement of other people, and, afterwards, the changing of our souls. These four steps were strictly thought out and planned. It could not be only images in the mind. They had had long experience of this in Russia and were now bringing this experience to Romania.

I do not know if you want to go into this. But did they do different kinds of tortures? I remember someone saying that they were extremely humiliating tortures.

There was no torture, moral and physical, that was not used.

Do you have nightmares from that now?

No, now I am free, but for years and years I had nightmares. The others also cried out during the night, trying to escape the agony. It is too humiliating and absolutely inhuman to tell you every torture. Too humiliating. You cannot imagine, to be completely naked and to be beaten and forced to submerge your head in a bucket of excrement. You cannot imagine. We never imagined that it is possible, you know. Only the devil could give images like that.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

But you can pass through the tortures. The problem for us was the moral problem. To deny the Faith, to deny everything, to say that all my life was only lies: that I did not believe in God, I did not love my parents, I did not respect my parents, or that I did not respect the Church. To deny every Truth, real Truth you believed in before. To say now it was not true, it was a lie. This was the problem for many, for we can pass through the tortures—or we can die. But, to survive, and to deny everything you believed before, *everything that was the cornerstone of your soul*. This was our difficulty.

It was not the torture that was the most difficult problem, because they could torture you today, but tomorrow they had to torture someone else, so you had one or two days to rest. But you were always watched and forced to say bad things, blasphemy. They did not have time to beat you every day, from morning until night. But they could force you to say something against your friend, something against God every-day. When you were tortured, after one or two hours of suffering, the pain would not be so strong, but after denying God and knowing yourself to be a blasphemer—that was the pain that *lasted*. Spiritual pain is more difficult to bear than bodily pain.

It is difficult now to remember exactly the physical torture. You cannot remember now if you have eaten something good, or, to imagine, to remember, exactly what it means to be hungry. The ability to remember this is very weak. But the regret in remembering spiritual denial is the same all the time. It never diminishes in intensity.

Were there moments when you thought you were going to lose your mind, go insane?

Yes.

What do you do? What if it happens to me; what would you say?

Only prayer. Only prayer. Without prayer, you cannot survive.

How did you even pray during those moments?

One cannot pray during those moments. But during the night, when everyone goes to bed, you gain your strength and you find your repentance. You pray for this. It is not complicated. You say, "God, forgive me!" It is enough! Just to say, "God, forgive me!" It is enough for your soul to regain its strength and to resist one day more ... and one day more ... and one day more. Not to die. Not to go crazy. Many of us went mad. But just to say, "God, forgive me," was like a shield. Just to say, "Forgive me, God." You knew very well that the next day you would again say something against God. But a few moments in the night, when you started to cry and to pray to God to forgive you and to help you, was very good.

You just washed away all that anguish.

Yes.

So, in the moment itself, when you thought you would go insane, you relied upon those prayers of the night before? There was not much you could do during those very moments?

Perhaps not every night, but maybe once or twice a week, during the night, you had these moments of repentance. Many times we were quite angry with God—if You exist, why did You allow all this? But, there was one moment when the mercy of God would come upon you and you could say, "God forgive me; God help me." It was enough to help you. For another day, another day, another day.

It is incredible, you know. It is very difficult for us to call back into our memory what happened there. Not the torture or the torturers—we forgive the torturers. But it is very difficult to forgive ourselves.

Because of this, I was very well prepared for the second imprisonment, you know. Because I accepted prison and I

fortified my soul with Liturgy, with prayers, with songs. I was very protected. I consider this second time in prison to be an expiation [an atonement].

Well, you are heroes to us. One of our nuns said to me, "When you talk to Fr. Calciu, tell him we are warriors that have never been in direct battle before. We realize there is an unseen war going on, a battleground in our own hearts." Some people think we are morbid in being interested in what happened to you and what happened in Russia....

It is not morbid. Perhaps it is morbid to recall every physical torture or physical humiliation; it can be morbid. But to recall what happened in the spiritual plane is very important, even for me. But for you, more. Because God helped me to pass through the second prison, and He gave me the strength to resist. There was a collaboration between me and Jesus Christ before I went into prison. I prepared for it. I accepted it. I knew I had to enter prison, and I wanted to enter prison.

During my second time in prison I had a very strong desire to become a martyr. I wanted to die in prison. I was completely isolated from the world, even from my family. I loved them; I did not stop loving them, but it was like an exaltation. I wanted to become a martyr for Jesus Christ. He decided otherwise.

You are a living martyr. You survived so that you could tell us all of this.

Perhaps, yes.

I never denied the hierarchy, even in my sermons. Everytime I told the hierarchs they are the framework of the Church. They are the ones who give the Church the strength, the verticality, and so on. We had to expose the hierarchs, but most of the time we had to support them and tell them to have a Christian attitude, not an attitude of political power.

The bishop is supposed to be as the apostles, feeding their flock.

Absolutely, yes. I said in one of my sermons that I am a simple priest. My voice cannot be heard. But a bishop's voice is strong; if he took action, he would be heard. Or the Patriarch.... Who could stop the voice of the Patriarch from being heard by the whole world?! But they did not have the courage.

I was very fortunate in that God opened my spiritual eyes to understand the importance of material things and the importance of spiritual things. What is most important for me is that I understood this fight between good and evil; between God and the enemy of God—the devil. Nothing in this world just happens in a mirror. All of this visible phenomena is only a reflection of what happens on the spiritual level, you know.

You probably really saw that with all the veils removed.

Absolutely, yes. If every priest, monk, nun, hierarch—and all Christians—could understand this, *we would have the key to victory against the devil.*

Unseen warfare must be conducted in the heart.

Most of us are prisoners of matter, prisoners of physical things, and we are not able to make this connection.

This experiment went on three years at Pitesti, after which it was stopped?

They stopped it because people heard about it in the West. But the torture continued—I mean forced labor, hunger, beatings, and so on. But not with the same intensity as in Pitesti. It was carried out only by the guards and administration.

They did not bring in students to beat other students anymore?

No. For instance, because we were very weak, skinny, and did not have the strength to work and to meet the norm that they asked of us, they would beat us. They would put us in isolation. They would not give us food to eat. After not eating for three days or a week, or eating only a piece of bread and

water, we would come back to the shops to work completely exhausted; and then we would work less than before, you know. Those who were not so resistant died or became very ill with tuberculosis, and so on. The persecution and torture continued, but not with the same intensity. I mean, you were sure that there would be no torturer with you in the cell. It was difficult, sure; they would beat you, they would not give you food to eat; they would force you to work more than you are able to work. Many of them became very ill.

You were not allowed to work in Pitesti?

No, we had no right to work. They had no interest in our body. Our body was just an instrument through which to reach our soul. They were interested in our faith, in the destruction of our souls.

Was it just young men at Pitesti?

Yes.

Did they do the same thing somewhere else to young women?

No, only the men. The experiment was conducted not only in Pitesti, but also in Gherla, as well as in all the other camps. The adults were also subjected to it, not just the youth. But the first experiment was with us.

I was very, very opposed to the communist regime. We were fighters—very strong, courageous, and faithful. We were praying. I remember at Pitesti, before they started this experiment, we had a month of continuous prayer in the cell. I would pray, let's say, half of the night until midnight. At midnight, I would knock on the wall to the cell next door, and they would continue the prayers. And so, night and day, we never stopped the prayers. The authorities knew this.

How long were you in Pitesti before they started this diabolical experiment?

One year, during which we made these continuous prayers. We were connected, we were strong, we were optimistic.

So when the tortures started like that and you had such a strong brotherhood amongst yourselves, were you able to sustain some of that? For example, your friend saved you from killing yourself—so you did not all turn against each other.

I was very good friends with this young man and they knew that. So, after beating me and torturing him, they forced him to torture me and me to torture him—to destroy any connection between us, to isolate us. This is the tactic of the devil—to isolate everyone. God intended man to be in a spiritual community of prayer. Therefore, they isolated everybody; they made everyone to be alone. We can be one in Jesus Christ, but this was oneness in the devil. Everyone was completely isolated; no one believed in anyone; no one trusted anyone. Thus everyone was isolated and the resistance was annulled.

I cannot tell you how grateful I am. These are deep things you are telling me. As hard as they are, it is really what we need to know.

You know, in ancient icons they represented the devils as single—one, but the angels in twos. It has very deep significance, because the devil was alone, but the angels were in twos. They were not alone; everyone was with someone else. After Pitesti, I understood the iconography of the ancient icons, because we were put in this diabolical situation when we trusted no one, loved no one, were not in connection with anyone—we were absolutely alone. Around us it was like a desert. No cornerstone. No indication—we did not know where we were going. At this, the spiritual terror was complete.

So after this stopped and you had to torture those to whom you were closest and they tortured you and the reeducation stopped, were you able to rebuild?

Little by little. It took years.

Can you tell us how you did it?

I started to pray, first of all. I reinvented the prayer.

Reinvented?

It was a special prayer. It was a prayer I made myself. I did not have the courage to repeat the prayers I knew [the prayers of the Church]. I did not want to defile them.

Because you felt that you were defiled and you did not want to defile those prayers?

Yes, so I made my own prayers. In the beginning, I was still in conflict with God, reproaching Him about what had happened to us. And little by little I started to recognize that He is good, He is great. But it took months and months.

12. CONSTANTINE OPRISAN

I was very fortunate because I was among the sixteen people that the Securitate took to Jilava Prison where my healing began. In Jilava they built a special cell in a half-cylindrical shape. It was like a cylinder cut in two. We were underground; Jilava is built underground. Above the cell were seven meters of earth. You cannot see Jilava—the whole prison is underground. In this cylinder they built four cells with no windows, only a door. We had an electric bulb, day and night. They put four of us in each cell. In each cell there would be either a very sick man or a mad man. In my cell, I had a man—Constantine [Costache] Oprisan—whose lungs were completely emaciated by tuberculosis. Twice a day he had to cough up fluid from his lungs. We would help him by giving him a hat or something, and he would cough and bring up all the discharge from his lungs—blood and everything. It was horrible to see him. On the first day I entered this cell, with me were Constantine Oprisan, my friend who saved me from suicide, and another student younger than us. Constantine began to cough up the fluid in his lungs. I was leaning against the door—surprised because I had never seen anything like that. The man was suffocating. Perhaps a whole liter of phlegm

and blood came up, and my stomach became upset. I was ready to vomit. Constantine Oprisan noticed this and said to me, "Forgive me." I was so ashamed! Since I was a student in medicine, I decided then to take care of him.

So I decided to take care of him and told the others that I would take care of Constantine Oprisan. He was not able to move, and I did everything for him. I put him on the bucket to urinate. I washed his body. I fed him. We had a bowl for food. I took this bowl and put it in front of his mouth.

He was like a saint. It was the first time that I was in contact with such a man. He was in this condition because he had been tortured in Pitesti for three years. They had beaten him on his chest, on his back and had destroyed his lungs. But he prayed the whole day. He never said anything bad against his torturer, and he spoke to us about Jesus Christ. All the while, we did not realize how important Constantine Oprisan was for us. He was the justification of our life in this cell. Over the course of a year, he became weaker and weaker. We felt that he had finished his time here and would die.

Once a week we were obliged to shave. I was watching Constantine Oprisan, and my friends were shaving. Afterwards, I began to shave and one of the others was watching Constantine Oprisan, because we watched him day and night. When anything happened, they would tell me to go to Constantine Oprisan, because I had told them that I should be the only one to take care of him, since I had hurt him that first day. I was sure that I had hurt him, and I felt very, very guilty. While I was shaving, Marcel, the student who was younger than us, saw that Constantine was ready to die. He said, "Go and see Constantine Oprisan; he is dying." I looked at him. His face was completely emaciated. His eyes were open, but I saw that over his eyes there seemed to be a curtain of mist. His eyes turned inside himself. I was so scared, so afraid. I felt that

he would die and I would be alone in his cell. I put my hand on his and said, "Constantine, don't die; don't die! Come back; come back!" I cried with a great voice! Immediately he came back. His eyes became clear. He looked at me. I was right in front of his eyes, you know, bent over him. I don't know what happened in his soul, but I saw an immense terror in his face. His eyes were full of terror and he started to cry. I had the feeling that he had been ready to enter the spiritual world, and I had asked him to come back to the cell. This was a great terror, and so he started to cry. Tears were flowing out of his eyes. His face became the face of a child, a newborn child. He was crying like a newborn child coming out of the womb of his mother. Constantine Oprisan cried because I forced him to come back. In a couple of minutes he died.

How long were you with him in that cell?

One year.

After he died, everyone of us felt that something in us had died. We understood that, sick as he was and in our care like a child, he had been the pillar of our life in the cell. Then we were alone without Constantine Oprisan.

We took a towel and washed his body to prepare it properly to be buried in the earth. Then we knocked at the door and told the guards that Constantine Oprisan had died. They came after three hours. We had never before left that cell, which had neither light nor windows. The water was seeping into the walls; the straw mattresses were putrid under our bodies. So, after two hours, for the first time, the guard commanded me and my friend to take the body of Constantine Oprisan and go outside.

Outside it was so beautiful. Flowers and trees and blue sky. As long as we were in the cell, we forgot about the beautiful world. When we went out, we saw that the world had not changed. This vegetation, these flowers—*hurt* us. It was like an

insult to us, because we were suffering, dying ... but the universe did not care about us! The sun was going down and there was a golden light. Everybody was shining like gold. We put Constantine Oprisan on the ground. He was completely naked because we had to give his prison clothes back. His body was *completely* emaciated. We could not believe that he was a human being. He was completely emaciated; only bones, only bones. And I think that the bile at the moment of death must have entered the bloodstream, because he was completely yellow. My friend took a flower and put it on his chest—a blue flower. The guard started to cry out to us and forced us to go back into the cell. Before we went into the cell, we turned around and looked at Constantine Oprisan—his yellow body and this blue flower. This is the image that I have kept in my memory—the body of Constantine Oprisan completely emaciated and the blue flower on his chest. He was nothing but bones and skin—no muscle. Nothing else ... his body lying on the ground with a blue flower.

Afterwards, it was very difficult. I may have sinned because Constantine Oprisan, before he died, said, "I will die, but after death, I will pray to God for you. All my prayers will be for you, because I do not want you to die in this cell." And I am sure he prayed for us, because all three of us succeeded in leaving this prison to go to Aiud [Prison]. I am sure that Constantine Oprisan was praying to God for us. The sin I committed was that all the time I was thinking and invoking the soul of Constantine Oprisan to come and give us light. He never came, though for months I asked him to come and give us light. I think this was a sin I committed, for perhaps it gave him some unrest. I am sure he was very grateful to me that I took care of him. I am sure he loved me very much. He loved everybody. But I think for me he had a special love because I had a special love for him.

Was he older than you?

Yes, he was about six or seven years older. And I never had a repulsion for him after that first time. I took care of him with love and respect. He was like a child in my hands. I had to put him on the toilet, to wash him—to do everything for him. I was thinking that for this love through which we were connected, he had to come to me to give us the light of God.

I am sure he prays for you. You probably pray for him now all the time.

Yes, all the time. At every Liturgy, I remember him and all the people who died in prison. But for him I have special prayers.

I named this cell the ship of death, because, really, everybody in this cell was destined to die. In the cell at our right, two men died. In our cell, one died. In the cell at our left, three died. In another cell, one died. Thus, out of sixteen people, seven died during one year because of the bad conditions. We had no medical assistance, no food, no air; the water was seeping in through the walls; the mattresses were putrid. We stayed in Jilava, and then after two years in this cell, we went to Aiud. I stayed at Aiud for four years, after which I was freed and kept under house arrest in Beragan. Beragan is a very vast plain north of the Danube that served for the communist government as Siberia did for prisoners in Russia. It was a village created only for former political prisoners. I stayed there one more year—in 1963-1964.

And then they let you out. What happened in 1964 that everyone was let out of prison?

Romania was accepted into the United Nations under the condition that all the political prisoners be set free. When I came out of prison in 1964, I tried to go back to my school of medicine, but they did not accept me.

What did you go through interiorly? All of a sudden you are free, or somewhat free, after all these years.

When I was in Aiud I refused to work, so I ended up in isolation. I remained in isolation for two years. It was a special section, but it was not solitary confinement. We had no right to read anything, to get newspapers, or to go outside. We would just stay in the cell, day and night. There were four people in each cell. We had a very spiritual life there because in this special section were special people. Some priests were there. There was a priest in that prison who had been there since 1941.

So he must have been a Legionaire.

Yes, he was a Legionaire. There was also a student of theology there. There were also some writers and ministers from Antonescu's regime who were very faithful, intelligent and cultured people. We were, therefore, very busy all the time with edifying and educational conversations, as well as prayers. We began to teach each other and to learn new things—foreign languages and so on. We were very busy! There was one professor, Manu, who was a physicist. Before he was arrested, he had worked with Madame Curie in France. He told us about the atom and its properties, for at the time we entered the prison these discoveries about the atom and its properties were only beginning. We knew about the explosion of the atom bomb in Japan, but very few knew what occurred to make this happen. He described it to us, and we understood the structure of matter. There was also a writer who had written many books before he was arrested. There were also priests, and everyone had his moment to say something about himself. Then we would have prayers. The priest who had been in prison since 1941, Fr. Grabenya, celebrated the Liturgy with our bread.

I remember the night of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The guards made a search in the cell—a fire drill. And they came in the cells with a machine and sprayed. We had started the Liturgy of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ right at mid-

night. They then announced the alarm and everybody was forced to lie on their bellies. For three hours we stayed on our bellies. They entered the cell and sprayed everywhere, leaving the cell full of whatever it was they sprayed—a white chemical. For three hours we were forced to lie on our bellies—three hours. Fr. Grabenya recited the Liturgy of the Resurrection, and we sang “Christ is Risen from the dead....” It was so beautiful to celebrate the Holy Liturgy under pressure, lying on the ground. When he finished the Liturgy of the Resurrection we sang “Hristos a Inviat [Christ is Risen]” all the time.

There were special people in this section. I felt they were special because I was still wounded in my heart and my soul, and Fr. Grabenya and others took care of me. They healed my heart, and when I left the prison I was very strong.

So he was a real pastor, a real father to you.

Yes. I think he died during my second imprisonment. But he was like a saint, you know.

In a certain way, he reminded me of Constantine Oprisan from Jilava. He had a very, very illumined face. He never got angry with anyone. He was like Christ in the midst of us, you know.

Why did he go to prison?

He was a Legionaire, but they put him in prison because he was a priest. He had done nothing wrong. He was very helpful to us. I was the only student there. There was a professor, a doctor and the priest. I was the youngest, so they treated me like a child. They also knew my history, for I had told them the history of Pitesti. I told them about Jilava and what happened to us there. They were very affected by this, and so they were very kind to me. They healed the wounds of my soul.

So, when I left my decision was made. I learned from Fr. Grabenya many things about theology, about the priesthood,

and so on. I knew of the priesthood, but I idolized it too much. Fr. Grabenya told me about the difficulties of the priesthood, the temptations—what it means to be a priest. I left prison before them. I finished my punishment in 1963, left prison, and went to this village under house arrest. They left the prison in 1964. But I was decided! I talked to Fr. Grabenya about the priesthood—what it means to be a priest and what difficulties a priest has to face, especially in a communist country. He warned me about the possibility of being sent back to prison, so he prepared me for everything.

Thus, after I was released I wanted to study theology, but the doors of the theology school were closed for us. Therefore, I started studying French, but I never gave up. Being a professor, I was able to arrange my classes to be in the afternoon, so that in the morning I could study theology. I was surprised to see that Patriarch Justinian Marina was so understanding with us. He helped me a lot. In fact, I studied theology underground. Nobody knew about me.

So you were not even registered in the school?

I was registered, but nobody told the Department of State that a former prisoner was enrolled in theology school. It was great, like a plot. The students were young and did not know about me. But the professors covered for me all the time. As I told you, in the final year, when I had yet to receive my diploma, the Securitate discovered me and threw me out of theology school. They took advantage of the fact that the Patriarch was not in Romania at the time; he was in Belgium. They threw me out of the school while he was gone. But when the Patriarch returned, I asked him for an appointment. He received me immediately without any opposition. He said, "Do not worry. I will arrange everything for you," and he appointed me as a professor in the seminary. He was very courageous!



Patriarch Justinian (Marina).

THE MESSAGE OF A LIVING MARTYR

You said that at first he was not very courageous.

No, at first he collaborated with the regime. But, little by little, I think he understood his responsibility. And so he accepted all the priests back who had been in prison. He put them back in their parishes. Professor Staniloae was also appointed a professor in the theology school. It was a very important move. Thus, I was able to get a diploma as a professor of theology. One year later, in 1973, he said that I had been accepted as a candidate to the priesthood. I did not ask to become a priest because I did not consider myself to be worthy—I had passed through Pitesti; I had denied Jesus Christ. But God decided otherwise. He said: Be a priest, and on Sunday, the Patriarch ordained me a deacon, then on Thursday he immediately made me a priest. It happened very quickly. I had asked for a delay between the diaconate and the priesthood. I was ordained a priest in January 1973, on the day of the Three Hierarchs. They were the patrons of the seminary. Thus, I was made a priest on the day of the patron saints of the seminary. I think it was a decision of God.

This gave me more courage and more spiritual understanding, and forced me to take care of the students, to learn about the lives of young people. Therefore, I made a strong connection with the youth in the seminary and universities and decided to give them direction.

You became a father to them.

I decided to give them direction, to make them understand what Christian dignity is, what human dignity is—to open their eyes to another world beyond the material world. The spiritual world is more important than the material world.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the youth of today in America?

You have to make them understand that this world means nothing. Justice or injustice, riches or poverty—it's all noth-

ing, because the soul is above everything. It is also true that this world can destroy the soul. But they have something that is very precious—their souls. The body can get sick, it can grow old, disappear; but the soul is the most special thing we have. This is our crown.

I read in the newspapers just a few days ago that the Pope made a statement—did you read it?

That he believes in the theory of evolution.

Yes. He tried to justify his statement by saying that only the soul of man is made by God. But until the appearance of man—what did God do—did He sleep? When did He start to make the soul of a man and why? If you accept that the body of man and the body of animals are not created by God, that they are the result of evolution, then why did God begin to make the soul of man?

I loved this Pope. When I was in prison in Aiud, I heard about the election of this Pope from Poland, and I asked the administration of the prison to let me write a letter to the Pope. I composed my letter in my mind and had every sentence, you know. I had it all in my mind. Sure, they thought I was a crazy man, but I insisted. I refused to eat; I declared a hunger strike because I wanted to write this letter. I knew that the letter would never reach the Pope, but I wanted to write it anyway, because the Securitate were obligated to give me a piece of paper and to put the paper in my file. So after ten days of not eating, the chief of the prison came to me and asked, “Do you think that we will let this letter reach the Pope?” I wanted to make this historical act of writing this letter to the Pope from the prison. Did you read my letter? I will give you a copy. I wrote: “Sanatate [Health]. It is a great joy to us to hear that a bishop from one of the communist countries was elected as the chief of the Catholic Church. We think that it is a manifestation of the Providence of God. We

want the people from the West to know what happened in the communist countries. God called you to a big responsibility. Do not forget the churches in the communist countries. We are living in persecution. We are denigrated by the communists. We have no right to catechize, and so on. Do not forget that we are the Church of Jesus Christ.” Something like this. I wrote this letter and stopped the hunger strike. Time passed and I was freed. During my house arrest, I succeeded in rewriting the letter, for I had kept it in my memory. I sent the letter to the West with somebody. It reached the Pope, was transmitted by Radio Free Europe, and was printed. I wanted to say to you that I loved this Pope. I was sure that he was a man under suffering with his church and that he would understand and would keep the Christian tradition. So now I am very disappointed.

Maybe you need to write another letter.

This Pope made many mistakes. I remember, I think it was in January when the Pope celebrated the family. Do you remember this? I watched it on television. It took place at the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral, and the people brought some special families. There was, for instance, a family from Spain—mother, father, and twelve children. They were Catholics. They had raised their children in the faith, and one of the children was a priest. Anyway, it was a very Christian family. They presented some Catholic families from other countries. The atmosphere was very pious, and the Pope always kept his eyes down. I thought he was a man of God. But from time to time, someone would cry out from the crowd, “Viva Papa.” All the people started crying, “Viva Papa,” and the Pope waved his hands like a political man! I was very disappointed. It was a very mystical atmosphere, and it was during the war in Bosnia and Serbia. The atmosphere in the beginning was indeed very mystical. I expected the Pope to say, “Everybody kneel and

pray for peace in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia. Pray to God to put an end to this war." I was sure that all these people, the majority of whom were Christians, could do that. They never pushed anyone to cry, "Viva Papa," but every fifteen minutes the crowd was crying, "Viva Papa." He was like God. They forgot they were there to celebrate God, not Papa. The second time I saw the Pope, he was doing a special mass for the victims of the holocaust. He was surrounded by Jews; he prayed for the Jews, etc. He did not mention the Orthodox priests and the Orthodox Christians who died in prison. Does Orthodoxy not exist for him? He forgot the true holocaust of the Christians—the whole of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia. Perhaps tens of millions—he did not mention it.

And now he is speaking about evolution—limiting God to a being that could only make a soul from time to time. I think he is in the hands of Freemasonry. I cannot explain it otherwise. Either that or he has lost his mind.

There was a professor of Apologetics at the seminary. He said that now is the time for science to be in accord with theology—not theology with science. And that is right! We have discovered many things, and all these things induce us to accept that energy comes before matter—spirit before matter. And the Pope says that God has no role in the creation of the world? That matter created itself without having any brain to organize the laws of the universe? And now human beings, who do have brains, are unable to discover the laws of the universe made by matter without a brain? And God only created the soul of a man? If we accept the theory of evolution as the Pope said we should, it would mean accepting that in the beginning was a cell, and only afterwards a man. When, then, did God decide to give man a soul? To Neanderthal man or to modern man? Thus it is absolutely stupid for a Pope to say a thing like that.

Well, there are even many Catholics and other Christians who are "pro-choice"—who are supporting the slaughter of unborn babies. They just do not see this fight between God and the devil that you have spoken of.

What is surprising to me is that more and more the church sides with the devil in this fight. If the Pope now supports the devil, what will happen to the souls of the millions of Catholics? Until now, some bishops have supported evolution, but there had been no decision within the synaxis of bishops saying: yes, evolution is right. But the Pope has said it? For this reason I suppose that he is, to a certain extent, in the hands of Masonry. He is very inclined toward the Catholic worldly empire; he travels often. He tries to make the church stronger, but he completely forgets the spiritual life.

13. CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS OF THE CHURCH

You know the situation of the Orthodox Church in America, with its many jurisdictions. Do you have any thoughts or insights?

This is the time of the splitting of the church, you know.

Fr. Seraphim Rose said that every ecclesiastical organization will bow its knee to anti-Christ. He also did not support ecumenism because it attempts to unite the churches outwardly, but it is not being true and faithful to the Orthodox Faith, the Creed, the Seven Councils and the whole tradition of the Holy Fathers of the Church. By remaining true to the Holy Fathers and drinking at that well-spring, we can still love our brothers. This does not imply hatred for Catholics or Protestants, but unity cannot be achieved by celebrating the Eucharist with them. Fr. Seraphim was concerned about the spirit of ecumenism that was entering into the Orthodox Church. When I was in Romania, I noticed most people were very interested in ecumenism. But I think I understood why. After being closed off for so long from the rest of the world, perhaps



Fr. Calciu with members of the National Peasants' Party in Bucharest, when he visited Romania after the Revolution of 1989.

it was not possible to think about it properly. I might be wrong. I am just telling you some of my thoughts.

Because I was in prison for sixteen years, I knew nothing about ecumenism. When I came to study theology, I saw that the professors were for ecumenism and I could not understand this. In the beginning I was caught by them, but then I began to see what it really meant. For instance, I was kicked out of the church and the school. There was a conference on ecumenism in Bucharest; the Secretary of Ecumenism (World Council of Churches) associated with Switzerland came to Romania. Because my case was already known, he asked Patriarch Justin Moisescu, "What happened to Fr. Calciu?" It was not so easy for him to give an answer. He knew something about me, but not much. So Bishop Anthony Plamadeala said to the Patriarch, "Let me explain to him." The Secretary of Ecumenism asked the Patriarch after the banquet was over, so that he would not disrupt and thus miss it. Bishop Anthony said that Fr. Calciu was a rebel. He said that he rebelled against the Church hierarchy; he did not respect the rule of submission to the hierarch. Furthermore, he introduced elements of neo-Nazism in his sermons. He taught our students about neo-Nazism. Now, I am sure that this man from the World Council of Churches knew the content of my sermons, but he was very satisfied with Bishop Anthony's answers without even calling me. I had not yet been arrested. It was January and I was not arrested until March. He did not call to ask me about this. He accused me, saying, "You are a neo-Nazi." He did not call to ask me what happened, for he was very satisfied with this answer. Thus, I began to lose my faith in ecumenism. I had been intoxicated by my professor: "Ecumenism is very good. Ecumenism is the future of the religions, you know. We have to make one single church." I heard later that at the ecumenical conferences they could not pronounce the name of

Jesus Christ in order not to offend anyone. What kind of religion is this? Now I see that it is a great heresy of the 20th century. Every conference of ecumenism has meant concessions made by Orthodoxy. The Protestants grow stronger and stronger—they begin to build, to provide the priests opportunities to go outside the country, to have opulent banquets and eat very well. Is this serving God? They spend a lot of money. This is not serving God—going to the most beautiful resorts on the Black Sea, in the mountains, going on excursions, attending banquets, and so on. How can this be serving God? They are only interested in worldly comforts.

Can you tell me about the women who went to prison in Romania?

I met some women in prison when I was transported from prison to prison. I can say that the women were often more courageous than the men and very resistant to torture. I heard the Securitate beating one woman who was very courageous. All the time she would say, "You are criminals!" I had no courage to say something like that. She was saying, "Why are you torturing me?" protesting and crying. She was very courageous. I never learned who she was. It was in the prison in Bucharest—during the inquiries, the first time.

Later, I met a woman who was in prison in Mislea. They had a very spiritual life there. This prison is not far from Bucharest. They told me about their spiritual life—their life of prayer. I think they are more courageous than the men.

You mentioned this Mother Michaila.

Yes, she was a nun from Vladimiresti. She was the secretary of the monastery. When the monastery was destroyed by the communists, by the Securitate, Mother Michaila and other nuns were arrested. She was very spiritual.

Did you know her?

No. In prison she lived for three months only on Holy

Communion. I think the Securitate had something against her, because she was very tortured, very persecuted, and isolated. She died after a few years in prison. She was not an old woman; she was a young woman. I think she was around forty years old at this time. In Vladimiresti, all the nuns were virgins. This was a cause of conflict with other monasteries. The nuns from other monasteries accused them of being too proud. Now Vladimiresti has been rebuilt. All the nuns that survived have returned, and many other young girls are joining it.

Do you have any desire to go back and visit?

Yes. A lot depends on this election on November 17th.* If this election will be in the hands of the opposition, I will not go there.

When I was in Romania the first time (in 1990), I wanted to go to the Patriarchate to meet the Patriarch and the bishops. I had no intention of insulting them, but I wanted to tell them something about my experience. I wanted to entreat them to be more active, to spend more time amongst the people, to renew the image of Jesus Christ. I was at the Patriarchate, but all the bishops had left—I was the only one there. They left; they avoided meeting me. Some went to the monasteries or elsewhere.

So they knew you were coming?

Yes, they knew because I had told them. I asked them to allow me to come to them.

Maybe you need to go back and do something. They will probably be unable to reach their young people unless they sincerely

* When this interview was conducted, Romania had just had their presidential elections three days previous, and the next Sunday there was to be a run-off between President Iliescu, a communist, and Emil Constantinescu. To the great joy of Fr. Calciu and many others, Emil Constantinescu became the new president of Romania.—ED.

account for what has happened and repent. "We are sorry that it happened because of our human failings and our human weaknesses." They would have to face themselves as you did. If the Church does not do that, it will have no moral authority in the lives of the young people, and they will turn away to Eastern religions.

I think the sin of the hierarchs and the theologians in Romania is intellectualism. They pass everything through their minds. They forget the soul and the heart. They are very cultivated people; they speak very well and so on, but everything is dry [and boring]. I think that is why the youth came to me.

Because you were alive.

They came to me, and they loved me.

You know, during these sermons I delivered, there were moments when I was ready to give up. Many of my colleagues and priests came to me and said, "Father, stop it, or they will destroy the Seminary. The communists are waiting and looking for motives to close the Seminary. Can you understand what will happen if the Seminary is closed?" And sometimes they convinced me to stop. But I would talk to the students and would tell them what the priests and professors said—that the communists could close the Seminary—and ask them what they thought about it. "Father, go ahead [and preach]," they would say. "We are with you! It is too late to go back now. We are with you. If they throw you out of the Seminary, we are going with you." Thus the students, the young people, would not let me stop my preaching. For this reason, I knew that it was an inspiration of God. And God took measures to protect me in a miraculous manner, because, as I told you, the whole Department of State, the Patriarch, the Bishops, the professors and everyone were against me, yet they did not throw me out before I had finished the sermons to the youth. Can you imagine this!? It's incredible! It's incredible! Everybody was

against me, but they did not have the courage to stop me. They closed the door of the church, but they did not throw me out. I had asked God to let me deliver these seven sermons, and He said, "I will let you." When that was finished, I asked God to let me deliver the eighth sermon to justify myself, but He said, "You do not need to justify yourself, because I am justified."

Amen to that.

That brings up another question. Fr. Justin told me the Romanian people made many compromises with the communists in order to prevent the churches and monasteries from being closed and destroyed. He said that he did not know if that was God-pleasing. What do you think about that? You may have answered this question by recalling how the priests had said that the communists would destroy the Seminary if you kept preaching, but you kept preaching. But if you were responsible for a whole parish, and they were going to destroy your parish, what would you do?*

I have thought very deeply about this. Fr. Roman Braga has said that the compromises saved the churches and the monasteries.** I do not believe it. I think every compromise is wrong. Jesus Christ did not make any compromises. Why?

Because it would water down the Truth?

Absolutely. He did not give us any right to make compromises. I think the devil is the winner in any compromise. This compromise made by the churches saved nothing! Perhaps it saved the walls, but it did not save the souls. There were bishops who went from monastery to monastery forcing the

* Fr. Justin Pirvu is a beloved spiritual father in Romania today, to whom many come for spiritual counsel. He is the founder and abbot of Petru Voda Monastery. Fr. Justin was in communist prisons as a hieromonk from 1948 to 1964. See *The Orthodox Word* no. 174 (1994), which contains three interviews with Fr. Justin.—Ed.

** See *Exploring the Inner Universe* by Archimandrite Roman Braga (HDM Press, 1996), pp. 65-66.—Ed.

monks and the nuns to leave. They were sent as messengers of the communist regime to force out the monks and the nuns, because the monastics *refused* to leave their monasteries. The bishops told them: "Go outside. Go into the world. Become honest citizens." They forced the monks and nuns to go outside and help build communism. They lost, I am sure, a lot of souls, because monks and nuns who have left their monasteries and their faith—and the majority did, as I have said—could be a stumbling-block. That is, they could cause another to leave God. And the priests were speaking for the communist regime. In every letter that the Patriarch wrote at Christmas, he never forgot to praise the communist regime, Ceausescu, and so on. All of this lost many people. There were compromises! The Church in Romania has no moral authority, no power, because the priests and the bishops made compromises. And now they have not the courage to speak out and to say, "We made compromises! We made mistakes! Now we are ready to stand firmly against atheism."

14. MISSION TO THE YOUTH

What can you and others do now for those lost youth in Romania?

I think there are now in Romania many monks, nuns and priests who talk to the youth. Your mission is here in America. God will protect Romania and Russia and the Orthodox countries against modernism, against the immorality of the West—but here in America *nothing* protects the youth. Only you. Your mission is here.

Is there anything that you can do? You have a moral authority in Romania because of all that you have suffered and all that you have done, and your voice is known. You could go into the universities in Bucharest, where many of the intellectuals have

turned away from Orthodoxy, and reach out to them, showing them the fullness of Truth that is their inheritance in Orthodoxy—that there is another world and it is worth dying for. This needs to be passed on to the youth there.

I tempted God three times. I wanted to do something, and I did not know if God agreed with me or not.

I thought I had the right to try three times, and if I did not succeed the third time, I would give up. Now I have tried three times in Romania. The first time I had to leave in five days because I was watched by the Securitate. My students came to me—perhaps you do not know it. When I was in Romania in February 1990, I announced that I would serve a memorial service in the University Square. [This was right after the overthrow of the communist dictatorship in 1989.] I did not have access to the radio or television; I only told someone. But through word of mouth, 10,000 people heard of it and gathered there in University Square for this memorial service. The Dean of the Theology [School] issued a statement saying: “We are against Fr. Calciu. We warn the students not to go to University Square because Fr. Calciu has the intention of making a new revolution against the government. So, do not go to University Square. Stay on your campus, and let Fr. Calciu do whatever he wants. He is responsible for the trouble he makes.” I had no intention of doing such a thing! The students came anyway—students that had never met me—and we celebrated the memorial service. I went to every cross, said a prayer for those who had died and sprinkled holy water on it. The students were very sad about the statement of the Dean of Theology. They [the Dean and other authorities] did not want me to be there. Afterwards I spoke on Radio Free Europe. Twice a month I delivered sermons and addressed the youth. The last time they stopped me from preaching....

Now I am not as strong as I was ten years ago. Now I let

God decide. I am still needed here in America. Even the Romanian youth in America are exposed to all the temptations. I am sure in Romania there are priests and monks who will speak to the youth.

It seems that most of the immigrant churches in America are losing their youth. They have no interest in the faith of their forefathers, and, if they do, it is usually only to stay connected with the culture. There seems to be no awareness of Orthodoxy as a rich wellspring that, if put into practice, leads to the fullness of truth. Most children of Orthodox parents from the old country are blending into the godless, modern American society.

I have this experience in my church, too. It comes from the parents. Many of the parents had no religious education in Romania. They came here and considered the church to be a place to meet other Romanians. Their children do not speak Romanian and have no Romanian culture. Their parents want them to be integrated in America, because they have lost.... I have tried to approach the young people in the church, and I have a very good group of young people helping me. They have little connection with the church in Romania, but they are connected with me. I have succeeded in teaching them to sing Psaltica (Byzantine Church music). I am very connected with them.

On the other hand, I do feel this impulse to go to Romania. Maybe next year.

Even though you have been rejected? Perhaps you could reach some members of the hierarchy and make them see the need to go through the suffering of facing the sin of cowardice in not confessing the Faith and standing up against atheism. One thing my spiritual father always says to us is that every Orthodox Christian is responsible for the fullness of Orthodox Christianity. If just one bishop would take responsibility in his own soul for all the souls that suffered and died in Romania, and would bring that before

the people—would bear the pain of that responsibility—this could bring about a healing and reconciliation of many souls with the Church.

There is a pious story in our country about John the Apostle. He was praying a long time for a thief who lived somewhere in Asia, very far from him. He had heard about him. There was a thief who was robbing the caravans, and he felt very guilty about this. So he started to pray for him, because he said every neighbor of mine who commits sins in crime is a part of me. Thus he decided to pray for him. Through his prayers this thief was converted. He did not know that John was praying for him, but the prayer worked. There are no bars for prayer.

In my cell, from time to time, other inmates would pass under my window and cry, "People know you; people are praying for you." Sometimes I had moments of great spiritual joy in prison. There is no explanation for this, you know. I was tortured, I was isolated, I was alone, I had no connection with the world. I felt sometimes completely lost in prison. I had no prospect of liberation. The only prospect for me was to die in prison. But I had some moments of spiritual joy. I did not laugh—it was something in me—a happiness in me. Not all the time, but from time to time. Afterwards I heard that groups were praying for me all over the world, and I am sure that this joy was a moment of communion in prayer with these people, for there are no bars, no guards to stop prayer. Thus I had these moments of spiritual joy.

Everyone I have ever talked to who has been in prison has said the same thing.

It is impossible for people outside of prison to understand. We were freed and we were very happy to be free, but we had a kind of nostalgia about the prison. And we could not explain it to others. They said we were crazy. How could you miss

prison? Because in prison we had the most spiritual life. We reached levels that we are not able to reach in this world. Isolated, anchored in Jesus Christ, we had joys and illuminations that this world cannot offer us. There are no words to express exactly the feeling we had there. Those who have not had our spiritual experience cannot understand that we could be happy in prison. Many times we were not happy at all, but there were moments of happiness there. When I took care of Constantine Oprisan in the cell, I was very happy. I was very happy because I felt his spirituality penetrating my soul. I learned from him to be good, to forgive, not to curse your torturer, not to consider anything of this world to be a treasure for you. In fact, he was living on another level. Only his body was with us—and his love. Can you imagine—we were in a cell without windows, without air, humid, filthy—yet we had moments of happiness that we never reached in freedom. I cannot explain it.

Everything is stripped away, and God becomes real. He is not a theoretical God anymore. For most Christians ...

A living God.

How did you keep from cursing your torturers in prison?

I did curse them. [FG laughs.] The fight is very difficult because we have to fight against the devil, and we have to fight against his servants, and we have to fight against ourselves.

If you had known what you were going to pass through at Pitesti before you went to prison, how would you have lived differently?

I don't know. Now, because I have passed through this and because I have explained it to you, you can make a judgment about it. But we could not imagine something like that. Knowing, even the first time, that we would have to be arrested—our generation was not able to think about this in these dimensions. Now I am able to imagine everything. I

know that the human being can be a devil or an angel. But *really* a devil, not like a literary expression, you know. I know that man can be a devil. And I know that I can be the devil. So I have to be very very cautious with myself. I have to watch myself, to stop *every* small inclination towards evil, because this small plant of evil can invade your soul. From the beginning, cut off your hand.... [It can be an evil thought or an evil wish toward someone.] The devil is very subtle, you know. Jesus said to cut off your hand or your leg or take out your eye. That means to cut off this inclination from the very beginning, the very first impulse of sin.

So that is what we can learn from this.

You have to. Especially the youth, because they are full of passion. Many times they have movements of the body more than older people and they have to be very attentive to this. You must also dedicate every action to Jesus Christ. Even if you do not pray a lot, at least say, "I offer this action to Jesus Christ." "Oh God, I did it for you." It is very important. This will create a kind of rhythm in your life. It is very important.

15. THE LEGIONAIRES

Can you tell me anything about the Legionaires?

It was not meant to be a political organization. It was spiritual. They were focused on the virtues, on prayer, honesty, etc. They were dedicated to the Christian formation and education of young people in the "Legionaire Movement." And they succeeded. They taught a whole generation, and all the big cultural personalities in Romania entered this movement. There was the great philosopher, Nae Ionescu; there were poets, men of sciences. The most beautiful generation between the ages of twenty and thirty-three entered this movement because they felt they needed to protect the Romanian nation



Romanian fresco of Archangel Michael, protector
of the Legionaire Movement.

against the influence of Russian communism. But they were persecuted from the beginning.

Why?

The king of Romania, Carol II, was a very bad man. He wanted to be the king of a totalitarian government—to be the chief. He forbade even the other political parties—the Peasants' Party, the Liberal Party. He started a new organization called—I forgot (I was fourteen years old). But he failed and in 1940-41, he was forced to abdicate under the pressure of the people led by the Legionaire Movement.

It was like a brotherhood, wasn't it?

Yes, it was. They had an organization for youth called "The Brotherhood of the Cross." They inculcated in the character of the youth the Christian Faith, honesty, a certain discipline, respect for the nation and for the people. It was very interesting. I was in this organization for six months. But in 1940 it ended—in January, 1941. It was very interesting, really. It was very Christian. It was not a political movement; it was a spiritual movement. But I do not know why they entered into politics in 1940, and I think that this was their mistake. The majority of the youth who entered the prison in 1948 were arrested on a Legionaire basis. They were former Legionaires, former members of "The Brotherhood of the Cross." Even in prison they continued the same spiritual life.

What was the spiritual life they learned in "The Brotherhood of the Cross?"

There were some exercises. I do not remember exactly, but every student was obliged to keep daily a kind of journal of what he did—if he did good things or bad things that day, to examine if he was upright with others, if he prayed every morning and night. In school they had to be first. They learned discipline. One was sometimes ordered by the chief of the group to do something—to go from here to there, to give

something to somebody. So, there was obedience. It succeeded in inculcating these values. The people who succeeded in passing through Pitesti, and in surviving and regaining their balance, were Legionnaires.

Later, it became political....

The intention was not to make a political man but to make an honest citizen. No matter what politics he practiced, he was to be a man of conscience and a man of justice and a man of faith. It was destroyed in a short time.

It hardly had time to get off the ground. It was persecuted almost before it even started.

I want to tell you that Constantine Oprisan was a Legionaire. He was the chief of the youth after the Second World War. He was the chief of the youth of "The Brotherhood of the Cross," and was educated in the Legionare Movement. He learned the spirituality of the faith, and he was very penetrated by Christian principles. I remember in prison there was a young man called Viorel Gafencu. He was put in prison in 1941 by Antonescu. At that time he was fifteen or sixteen years old. When I met him he was twenty-seven or twenty-eight. He died in prison. He was really a saint. A real saint. He was like Constantine Oprisan. After the Revolution, the Legionnaires wrote his biography and asked the Patriarch to canonize him. That was three years ago, but they did not get any answer. I am sure that the Patriarchate, the hierarchs, were scared because Gafencu was a Legionaire. They were afraid to declare him a saint.

Can you tell us more about Constantine Oprisan? How he taught and strengthened you?

He did not talk much. He talked to us everyday for about one or two hours because he was not able to talk very much. But every word which came out of his mouth was a holy word—only about Christ, only about love, only about forgiveness. He

said his prayers, and [what a deep impact it had on us] hearing him say those prayers, knowing how much he was suffering. It was not so easy. Out of his gentleness of soul—he wanted to protect us, not to cough too much to spread the germs in the atmosphere. He was like a saint in the cell with us. We felt the presence of the Holy Spirit around him; we felt it. Even during his last days when he was no longer able to talk, he never lost his kindness toward us. We could read in his eyes the spiritual light and the love. It was like a flood of love in his face.

Did he tell you stories about when he was head of "The Brotherhood of the Cross"?

Yes, he did. He told us about how he worked with the youth. I am sure he loved the youth and that he was loved by them. He was completely dedicated to man. He was a very clever man—amazingly clever. He was so kind with us. He did not talk much about himself. He talked about faith, about love, about prayer. He was praying all the time. It was not so easy to be in the cell all the time with the same people, you know. When there arose some conflict between us, he prayed. And his prayer was very effective. We were ashamed, just because he was praying, and we knew it. He was not praying in a loud voice, but his face was completely transformed. We understood that he was praying for us and we stopped [arguing].

And what about Gafencu. You knew him?

Yes. He died in Pitesti. He was not tortured; he died before they started the reeducation. He died in 1949, before they started all of this. God protected him. I met him only two or three times. All the inmates living with him in the cell were separated by categories; I mean: forced labor, jail with a special regime, and correctional. He was in the forced labor [category]. So we met sometimes at the doctor before they started the reeducation, because he was very sick. He was transported



Cornel Codreanu.

by the fellows from his cell. It was enough just to see him and to pass [by him], to immediately feel the influence of Gafencu. We men who were freed from prison were moved many times. So he might have spent time with 400 different people as they moved through his cell. The moment they were in the cell with Gafencu, they completely forgot any bad thought, any rebellion against Jesus Christ. A church was established there in the cell. There were young people, rebellions, conflicts and so on, but he changed their soul and their mind. Therefore his memory is greatly revered, and the people who stayed with him in the same room still pray to him as to a saint.

Did he know Cornel Codreanu or would he have been too young?*

I think so. Cornel Codreanu was killed in 1939. Gafencu entered the prison in 1941. It is possible because Codreanu organized the camps of young people. I am not sure because I did not talk to him, but he probably did because he was very dedicated to Cornel Codreanu, to the Legionaire Movement. He kept this (special) spirituality.

There was a group of about twenty to twenty-one young men who were in prison since 1941. This entire group was completely dedicated to Jesus Christ. They lived together during the Antonescu regime. They were not separated as was done under communism. They were living in different cells, but during the day they were together. They could organize, they could pray together, they could read books and so on. This whole group was under the influence of Gafencu. Really, they were amazingly faithful. We learned from them many things regarding the Faith. Everyone was like a monk, praying. Under their influence we established this continuous prayer in the prison. They initiated it.

* Cornel Codreanu was the founder of the Legionaire Movement in Romania.—ED.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

So you could say that you gained your spiritual foundation in prison from the Legionaires?

Yes, in a sense. I had received a spiritual education from my mother, but I learned from the Legionaires how to use this spirituality, how to practice it and to become strong. It is interesting, but these old prisoners were dying. They had a very bad period before we came.*

The Legionaires were put into prison by the regime before the communists. When Russia invaded Romania, all of the political prisoners were set free except the Legionaires. And I remember a moving event: In Bessarabia, in the city of Chisinau, there was a prison for young boys. There were perhaps sixty or eighty young men between fourteen and twenty years of age there, and when Russia took over Bessarabia, the director of the prison told the boys that they had to make a decision. They would not be allowed to immigrate from Bessarabia to Romania, so there was only one possibility: to let them stay there and be killed by the Russians, or to give the director their word that they would promise to go from the prison directly to Aiud Prison [in Romania]. The director knew that the Legionaires were men of honor. Each one of them gave their word. They went by many different ways: by train, by cart, however they could. And every single one of these boys, without exception, went straight to Aiud without even going to see their parents, because they had given their word. They were children! This was 1944. They were in prison from 1941 to 1948. When we came in 1948, we found

* Fr. Calciu explains further: "In 1940 the Legionaire Movement took power in Romania with General Antonescu. I do not know what happened between them because the explanations of the Legionaire Party differ from those of other parties, but they had a conflict and Antonescu put them all in prison. Those who were adults were sent to the front during the war and the majority of them died. Those who were too young to be sent to war were put in prison."—ED.

them already there. By then they were twenty and twenty-one years old. Because they had passed so many years in prison in suffering, they did not survive. They all died in prison except for two or three of them. At the time I did not consider communism to be the devil's organization. I considered them to be men, bad men who tried to kill us and so on—but not the servants of the devil in the spiritual sense. They [these Legionaires] considered them to be the soldiers of the devil, and they were right. So, later, when I began to review what happened, I remembered what they told me and then I realized that the communists were members of the army of satan.

I remember another Legionaire. He was not an old man—I was twenty-one and he was perhaps twenty-five, twenty-six years old. He was a professor of philosophy, and he told us in Jilava before he was sentenced that these were the times of the Apocalypse. He said that we have to build an apocalyptic conscience in order to resist communism to the death, because the communists are the servants of the devil. I did not pay too much attention then, but later I remembered it and knew it to be a reality. These men, especially the Legionaires, realized that the fight between communism and nationalism was not just a political fight, it was a spiritual fight.

You said something earlier about that certain moment when you decided to give all your life to Christ—where prison becomes easier and you have nothing to lose....

Yes, my life changed completely. It was after the experience of Pitesti. I told you that I met a priest in prison in Aiud. He taught us about Jesus Christ. We knew, but now we heard it in a new manner of understanding. Our understanding was enlarged. We could understand Jesus Christ. We could understand His suffering. It was perhaps pride to compare our suffering with the suffering of Jesus Christ, from one point of view. But we felt we were fellows of Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

You shared in His sufferings.

16. ON THE PRIESTHOOD

This gave us a new understanding of Christianity. We also came to understand the importance of the priest. I told you before that I understood what Jesus Christ said about the salt of the earth, the light of the world. I then made a vow to Jesus Christ to become a priest—to become, myself, the salt of the earth and the light of the world, not to put the light under a bushel.

I tried to respect my own vow. No one forced me to make it. I made it in my own soul. I think that God put some obstacles in my way before I entered theology school. He wanted to test me and to see whether I would persevere in my decision. I was a professor of the French language. I talked to students in high school. I made some trips with them to the monasteries in order to teach them in a hidden way what Christianity is. But I felt I was missing something. I missed my promise to Jesus Christ, and I never had peace in my heart. This was in 1968, after I was released.

So you did not have peace because you were not yet a priest?

I had no peace because I wanted to be a priest and I wasn't. I did everything to fulfill my duty as a Christian professor, but I did not have the courage to be open and to risk being arrested again. Yet, I wanted to be a priest and God helped me. It was amazing to go to the Patriarchate—from the very first moment he said, "You are accepted into theology [school]." I understood that I was under the protection of God. And when the Securitate discovered me and kicked me out, I was not scared. I trusted God. The Patriarch came back from Belgium, and he called me and appointed me a professor in the seminary.

Who ordained you?

The Patriarch ordained me.

THE MESSAGE OF A LIVING MARTYR

*Is there still an underground church in Romania since the communists are still in power?**

I don't think so. For instance, "The Army of the Lord" is now out in the open. The conflict between the Protestant faction and the Orthodox faction is very bad now. On the other hand, there are some priests who accept "The Army of the Lord" in the Church, while other priests do not accept them. Therefore, this group has split from the Church. They have their meetings outside the Church. I remember, in my sermons I said the Church has to open her doors to "The Army of the Lord," because people are working for Jesus Christ and they are spreading the true Orthodox Faith all over Romania.

If you do not embrace them and use that energy, you are going to lose them.

I was with them. I participated in their meetings many times. I counselled my students to go to the meetings of "The Army of the Lord." While travelling from monastery to monastery in the summer by train, we would even sing the songs of "The Army of the Lord," and the singing would spread many times from our car to others. Many people would come from the other train cars to sing with us. It was very, very spiritual and good for us and for the others. I really loved "The Army of the Lord," and I really suffered with them when the others split off and became Protestants. I suffered with them.

When did that happen?

It happened after the hierarchs started to collaborate with the communists. "The Army of the Lord" was forbidden then, and they went to prison. They were very faithful, and they suffered much. Many of them were killed in prison. Coming

* This was before the November 1996 elections, which removed the communist president.—ED.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

out of prison, I tried to meet some of them and reestablish a connection with them. I counselled my students to go into the midst of "The Army of the Lord" and tell them about the Truth of Jesus Christ. If someone was inclined to become a Protestant, they were to tell him that the Truth of true Orthodoxy has nothing to do with the [particular] hierarchs, priests and so on. The Church is holy, without any wrinkles.

You have been in America since 1985?

Yes. I still have connection with them; I send them letters and my bulletin.

How can we prepare ourselves?...

I do not really believe that what happened in Romania can be repeated. I think America is under a big threat from a religious point of view, but it will be easier for a Christian to resist here than in Romania because the people are still accustomed to a certain freedom. It would be very difficult for a regime to come in and take away that freedom. There are millions of people; they would have to put too many in prison. On the other hand, I know that Americans have had a very good life and they are not prepared for shortages of food and everything, you know. I am sure that if something like that should come, they would be ready to collaborate with satan without any hesitation. For this, you have to prepare the young people for difficult times as Christians. We have to accept, you know, that bad times will come for us. But those who are good, by the mercy of God, will be able to resist. God will shorten the times for this. People must be made to understand that spiritual resistance is more important than anything else. The body must submit to the spirit.

The scariest thing is that children in our culture are actually being taught to torture through television, movies and music—which is very demonic. Performers kill chickens and suck their blood on stage, doing horrible things. Many of our young people

have a fascination for that. So it seems that being fed on that, they could turn around and torture and gain enjoyment out of it.

Yes, I saw it. I was in Canada and a Romanian woman came to me. She had four children. She had a sixteen-year-old and an eighteen-year-old—good children. The others were ten and twelve years old, and these younger ones were in a satanic cult. The mother said, “Father, pray for my sons to come back to Jesus Christ.” What was amazing to me was that when I tried to make the sign of the cross on them, they became furious with me. The mother was very unhappy. Small children, and already they belong to a satanic cult! It is very rare in the Romanian community for somebody to be in a satanic cult.

Did you know any of the monks and nuns who were forced to leave their monasteries in the '50's?

Yes, I met a lot of them. During the persecution, many of them, nuns especially, did not want to go into the world. They would go to the men's monasteries and would serve as cooks, and so on, but they were living like nuns there.* I met some monks during my pilgrimages with the students, and many of them preferred to become priests in the parish. And they did a big, big job there. These monks who were parish priests succeeded in filling the church with people by their example of Christian life, by their love, by their care for the

* Fr. Calciu later gave more information: “Generally, the nuns and monks hid in the forests (the majority of the monasteries are in the forest), and during the night they came in order to pray and to get food. For monastics whose monastery was near a village or town it was easier. They could find shelter in the houses of the people, or even work. Many of them lived together in apartments and continued their monastic life. For the others it was more difficult, especially in winter when they were obliged to sleep in the attics of the monastery or of their families' houses. Sometimes the Securitate came to the monasteries, searched everywhere and arrested the monastics. All the nuns and monks I knew did not interrupt their monastic life.”—ED.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

poor, the sick, and so on. You know, the other priests—the married priests—they had a lot of problems with their family. They had to take care of their children; it was a difficult time. So even if they felt their obligation as a priest, they were not able to fulfill it. The monks did it. I was amazed by this one monk in a village. He sent ten children who lived in this small village to the seminary to become priests. I was surprised to see every year one or two children from the same village. I asked them, “Who told you to come to seminary?” “My family and the priest.” “Who is the priest?...” I went there to see the priest, the monk. He told me he had been in a monastery. He was still a young man—perhaps forty years old. He had dedicated all of his life to Jesus Christ. I said in my sermons every year in the universities and the schools: Perhaps one million young people enter the world and they are lost in their profession. But if every year one-thousand students would leave the seminary and become good priests, I think in three years the face of the country would change.

What is a good priest? How would you train your priests?

I train my priests to be really faithful, to practice prayer; to love everyone, not to hate anyone, not even the communists. They are not to hate. They were coming with resentment against the communists because they were children of peasant families, and these peasants had lost everything—animals, land, everything. Many parents of the students were coming to me for confession because the children talked to them about me. On the other hand, perhaps they were ashamed to go to their priests or perhaps they did not trust them. Everyone confessed—not great sins, but that they stole something from the land, such as grains or chickens. I said, “But it is forbidden by Jesus Christ. How can you steal such things?” And they said, “Father, they took everything from me. They took my cart, they took my plow, they took my animals—my horses and cows.

THE MESSAGE OF A LIVING MARTYR

They took my land, my garden, my orchard. They took everything from me. And you tell me that I sinned to take a small piece of my own property?" I was very embarrassed, you know.

What did you say?

I said, "Stop sinning, stop sinning, because it is not ours, but Jesus Christ's." "But it is my property." They could not understand, and it was very difficult for me to convince them. I, myself, passed through the same thing. All of my family's things were taken away. My father died because of it. He was not able to survive losing everything. All his life was to be a farmer, to have his animals. Because of this, my father became ill and refused to go to the hospital. I understood this peasant's confession to me, but I knew I had to tell him it was against the commandments of Jesus Christ. I told him this, but my heart was aching.

The priests were subjected to the same situation—having children, being forbidden to preach, or to catechize their children, and so on. I can understand that it was a sacrifice on their part. Nevertheless, to stand and to pray and to convince people to come to church.... I understand that they were torn between their family and their obligations. But the monks did not have these problems; they were completely devoted to Jesus Christ. Because of this, they did a very important job as priests. When the situation called, they went back to the monasteries. I remember, after the Revolution I got a letter from one of these monks. He said, "Father, I left my parish and am now in a monastery. I have to tell you that the whole parish cried when I left the village. Everyone accompanied me to the railroad station; and the children, the women and the men were crying, and I was crying with them. But I felt it was my duty to go back to the monastery."

What monastery?

Cernica.

17. PREPARATION FOR PERSECUTION

Would you recommend learning prayers by heart? You said you only said your own prayers for a long time because you did not feel worthy. But, for example, reading the Psalms.... You probably learned prayers at home, but our young people....

I do recommend that they learn prayers by heart: the prayer to the Holy Trinity—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. “O Heavenly King” is the prayer to the Holy Spirit; it must be learned by heart. The “Our Father,” and prayers to the Mother of God. The Morning and Evening Prayers—let them learn them by heart. I learned these prayers when I was a child, and when I was in prison I would recite these prayers before God in my mind and in my imagination. I felt that my mother, my father, my brothers, my sisters, the whole Church, and my friends were praying with me, because I knew that they were praying the same prayers at the same time. I felt that in my prayers I was not alone in prison. Afterwards, I also had my own prayers. But these prayers make a communion between me and other Christians. I knew at a certain time, for instance, that these same prayers in the morning were recited in the whole Church in Romania. Everybody was repeating the same prayer. I was in a communion of prayer with them. It is very important not to be alone; to be two angels, and not one. For this reason, it is very necessary to learn the prayers by heart.

What about Akathists and Canons?

You can. I met monks in prison who knew four, five, or six Akathists by heart, and they were able to recite them. They were strengthened by this. I learned the Holy Liturgy, and it was very good. It was the same feeling of community. We felt in communion with the whole Church. Praying, “O God, I

am in this situation, save me" is a very personal prayer. But praying "Our Father," "O Heavenly King," or the 50th Psalm puts us in communion with the whole Church. It is very important to learn them. I think it is your duty to have catechumens and those who come to your church to learn the Creed by heart. You could be in a difficult situation, or imprisoned, or arrested. One has to pray the common prayers; afterwards comes personal prayer. But before everything, we are in the community of prayer with others. If you say, "O Heavenly King," or "Our Father," you know you are in a communion of prayer. This feeling of community is very important.

I am happy because I had this opportunity to tell you these things and to tell this to the young people. They have to be prepared—not for torture, physical torture, not for hunger, or something like that, but they have to preserve the moral integrity of their soul and their face (divine image within man) unchanged. They have to trust God and trust themselves because Jesus is in their heart. I have tried to make them partakers of my experience. As long as I had Jesus Christ in my heart, I resisted. Whenever I forgot Jesus Christ, I was lost. People who completely lost their faith and trust in Jesus Christ became very weak and died. In such a situation, only faith in prayer is able to save them. These are not just words. I do not say only words; I speak the Truth, because I lived it. I am not an intellectual or a poet or a writer, speaking words just to make a beautiful sentence. I say this from the depth of my heart. I lived it. I understood it. I lived it. I know it. And I am speaking the Truth, not beautiful words. God bless you.



An icon of "The Burning Bush."

Other Writings of
Father George Calciu



Fr. George Calciu in discussion with King Michael of Romania.

FR. GEORGE CALCIU'S LETTER TO THE CIEL*

DEAR FRIENDS,

First of all I thank you for the letter of September 13th 1978, which reached me miraculously, and in which you shared the news that I have been accepted as a member in the Committee of the Intellectuals for a Free Europe. As far back as when I, as a priest and teacher, began my battle for the religious rights of man, I considered myself to be a member of this Committee. The official acceptance certifies something that I had chosen long ago. Thank you for your brotherly assistance and protection, for your solidarity of which I am now, and will be, in need.

I have been pushed to the edge of society, left as prey to all attacks and defamation, at the mercy of all. It was not enough that I was expelled from the Theological Seminary of Bucharest where I was Professor and was deprived of all human rights. It was not enough that I was forbidden to speak and that my theology pupils and students who were on my side were hunted. Now they want to fire my wife, and my eleven-year-old son is subjected to all kinds of mockeries. They want to let us starve to death. What seems to me to be most frightening is that the Church hierarchy itself asked the authorities to take all these actions!

* This is a letter written by Fr. George Calciu to the CIEL (Comite des intellectuels pour l'Europe des libertes) during the time of intense persecution, after delivering his sermons to the youth and right before his second arrest and imprisonment.—ED.

CHRIST IS CALLING YOU!

Why? Because I asked the freedom to preach unrestrictedly. Because I have protested against the demolition of churches, in place of which they now build taverns, as is the case with the Enea Church in Bucharest and Voivode's Church in Focsani. Because I asked for exemption from military service for theologians; for the spiritual purity and sensibility of these young theologians should be protected. Because I intervened in favor of religious liberty for Romanian young people, no matter what confessional denomination. Because I demanded that any Christian, young or old, should have the right to enter the monastic life, which the government forbids. Because I have drawn attention to the dignity of the priesthood which is above any other human dignity, insisting that the priests be freed of the obligation to make political propaganda from the altar, since for a priest there is only one great theme for a homily: *Jesus Christ*.

All these assertions were imputed to me as offenses. But I did not consider myself for even a moment to be unhappy. And I consider myself neither victorious nor vanquished. I am merely a fighter amongst many others in this battle of man to regain his dignity.

When will the threats against "the parasites of society" really cease, the sending of anonymous letters—a method learned in the Soviet Union school which has now spread to us like a plague? When will the tactic come to an end of confining those who fight for human rights to psychiatric hospitals?

Fr. Costica Maftei suffered many months together with his wife and children and was finally exiled because he committed the crime of wishing to build a church!

Fr. Gavrilă Stefan had to endure years of suffering because he dared to refuse to utter political slogans in church!

The monks who do not want to abandon their monastic life are expelled from theological education!

OTHER WRITINGS

Members of the "Christian Committee for Defending Religious and Spiritual Rights in Romania" are driven away from church and are constantly molested by the police, forced to pay ridiculous fines and even arrested on the pretense that the founding of associations is forbidden!

We ask that these persecutions be put to an end! The endangering of human and religious rights should stop! We appeal to all international organizations to defend human rights and to help us! There is only one righteous battle to which the whole of Christianity is called: the battle for the freedom and dignity of man.

Fr. George Calciu-Dumitreasa
Bucharest
October 17, 1978

FR. GEORGE CALCIU'S PREFACE TO
Pitesti BY D. BACU

THIS BOOK is a book of facts. Their shocking accumulation creates a history, a tragic one, inconceivable and absurd. But this book is meant to be a spiritual phenomenon. Suddenly, struck by the concreteness of the events, the spirit of the reader rears up in an attempt to rise above the circumstances, because everything that was suffered in the material world, in the flesh, is nothing else but the later reflex of what was long before consumed in spirit.

The subject, Pitesti, with all its train of consequences, will never be exhausted, because this history is inscribed in the human spirit forever and will not be concluded even when the last survivor of these events shall pass away. It is a Golgotha bearing general human significance, a Mount of Olives where we, who were there, drank the cup of despair, of abandonment and of self-denial.

It is interesting that not one of those prisoners with whom I was in Pitesti wrote a book about it.* Books were written only by some of those who had been in other prisons and saw the phenomenon [of Pitesti] from outside, not as sentimental non-participants, but as those who found it impossible to integrate the phenomenon of Pitesti; because it was not only something anti-human—like a war, a plague or a communist revolution—but it was also something superhuman, an infer-

* Please note that this text dates from 1988. In the meantime, many books have appeared by former Pitesti prisoners. [See footnote p. 211 in the Appendix.] At that time, there was only one book by Grigore Dumitrescu (*The Unmaskings*, 1978), printed in Munich and not widely known.

nal war against God, the battle of devils against angels, an upside down liturgy, aiming to invert the vertical order of heaven and to replace the heavenly hierarchy in the victims' souls with a diabolic one.

There were books about Pitesti written by people who did not even see the communist prisons and who thought that they were solving a problem which was in fact metaphysical, by using aesthetic criteria or laboratory psychology. The antidote is wrong, the solutions are false, the feelings are unjust and the criteria are absurd.

There was something there that is beyond human comprehension because it was a war between two superhuman armies. Seen from outside, there was a space in which the war was won by satan, because psychologists and aestheticians confuse appearances with the reality of the spirit and ignore the fact that this world is an interval given to attain salvation—the only time given for a person to attain salvation.

The depth of our soul's enrichment is difficult to apprehend, for its defeats are spectacular, the deaths are dreadful, madness is logical. But the wisdom and spiritual martyrdom of the survivors, as well as the immeasurable vibration of the spirit, represent something too subtle for the dull sensitivity of the aestheticians, too mystical for the perception of a psychologist and of any human being who has not lived in madness but only within the limits of common sense. Only he who possesses a dose of madness can understand somewhat, although not all. Not even we who lived through it can understand everything. And this is because God cries shame upon the wisdom of this world. We need an apocalyptic sensitivity.

In 1948, at Jilava Prison, Stanesco, at that time a young man possessing a rare intuition of future events—and I am talking not only about what was happening at Pitesti, but about the whole historical absurdity from that time until now,

there [in Romania] and in all the world—said that humanity began to live the Apocalypse and that anyone who does not develop an apocalyptic consciousness will not survive either physically or spiritually.

We have not succeeded in forging this type of consciousness yet. None of us. We still live according to the same human logic which bows down before the formal perfection of syllogism. We fabricate major and minor premises and draw serene conclusions, well established in accordance with human wisdom, forgetting that the battle is fought in a space in which not only logic or reason, but even concrete facts have no significance.

In 1958 we were on a death ship: sixteen people placed in four blind cells at Jilava. It consisted of four cells built out of one larger cell, in the shape of a horizontal semicylinder. It was a ship with death as its destination, sixteen people, each with his own madness and wisdom, sickness and tragedy. Most of the prisoners had passed through Pitesti, more than two thirds of us had been imprisoned there. We were sick in body and wounded in soul, hungry and trembling from cold in those cells with water seeping into the walls, where the moistness would penetrate into our bones. We were a hodgepodge scientifically doled out according to all the knowledge of the Kremlin, to determine how long a man can resist terror, famine, torture, brawling in the cell, and diseases which infested every cubic centimeter with millions of germs.

It was then, in my cell, that the best among us died. He was so sick and weak that death itself was more present for us than the wet walls, or even more real than the hand of the guard which would hit us or would open and lock the door. His death was more real than our daily bread and water. The tubercular cough of Constantine [Costache] Oprisan, the abundant and fetid matter expelled from a lung almost com-

pletely eaten away by bacteria turned our stomachs in spite of the immense love all three of us had for him. However, he, Costache, the dying man was our axis and support, our justification for being there, the angel defeating the devil for us. The moment he died, our universe lost its meaning; the world collapsed groaning. A cataclysm had been produced, and we remained three people in a desert of despair. There were no guiding arrows. The one who guided us had died; we were surrounded by a hostile world of six square meters oozing death and hopelessness from every atom of matter.*

* Constantine Oprisan had been the President of "The Brotherhood of the Cross." Being extremely ill with tuberculosis, he was refused medical assistance. Following is a portion of his death episode, as described in Marcel Petrisor's book, *The Secret of Fort 13*, pp. 127-133, where G. Calciu appears as "Gore Bolovan" and the author himself as "Mircea Petre": "For him, forcing the impossible, G. Calciu would open his own veins: 'O God!' said Mircea jumping toward Gore. 'What are you doing?!' 'Be quiet!' ordered Gore. 'I am squeezing a kettle of blood from my arm to give Costache some lymph. Don't you see he lost so much blood that he will die if we do not do something?...' In the meantime, Gore had filled half of the kettle with blood and put it on the water canister, covering it with a rag. 'I will let it sit for a while for the red cells to form sediment and then I will give him only the lymph,' he explained to Mircea, whispering as he summarily bandaged his arm joint from where he was drawing blood.... They understood quickly when they saw how he poured off the lymph from his kettle into Mircea's. 'Drink!' he said to Costache, with a commanding tone. But Oprisan was smiling motionless. He answered with an unearthly grin at everything around him. 'Costache, drink this!' Gore tried to make him drink the lymph at any cost.... 'Too late!' exclaimed Joseph. 'Costache is far away now; so far away that nobody can do him any harm.... Leave him alone!' 'Costache! Costache!' cried Gore, as if he wanted to make him return with a kettle of blood. 'It is mine, mine, I have more!' he murmured. 'And they ... will give you theirs.' But he did not finish his word, when Oprisan quivered three times as if he saw something unseen and gave up his spirit in Gore's arms. The kettle with lymph had fallen down, and he [Gore/Calciu] hugged Costache as if he wished to stop him from going...."

It was July of 1958. At about sunset, ten hours had passed since Costache's death, time in which we tearfully and desperately prayed: "With the Saints give rest, O Christ, to the soul of Thy servant who hath fallen asleep, Costache ... Costache...." After we had washed his body so he would enter clean into the earth of which he was made, we took him naked on a litter into the prison courtyard. The sun was setting and its golden light fell upon a luxuriantly wild and overwhelming vegetation. The world did not care about us. The universe did not vanish into non-existence, the sun did not darken its light, the earth did not split to its depths, nor had the flowers lost their beauty. Once again, nature did not care about us. Our universe—the locked-up cell! To the world—unknown and indifferent....

We came back into the cell overwhelmed, hating the flowers and trees, the pure blue sky and the golden sun. There was the naked body of Costache on the dirty little litter in the middle of the immense courtyard, guarded by a watchman in uniform. Thin, only skin and bones (it was incredible how that could be a human body!), under the hard light which emphasized the weakness and ugliness of an emaciated body, it rested there like a monument of Death. And no angel with a fiery sword was guarding him against future profanation. No one. Only a watchman in uniform.

On his naked and fleshless chest shone two blue flowers, big and unknown—all flowers became unknown for us. Joseph had put them there, taking advantage of the watchman's moment of confusion. He picked them hastily and placed them on the bony chest, thrown askew, but sincerely and decisively. The watchman yelled at Joseph, "Take them out of there, take them quickly!" (He was afraid to touch the dead.) Joseph did not listen. "I will teach you a thing or two, you and him!"—yelled the watchman again. For the first time, Joseph answered back—

since Costache had died, except for tears and prayers, we had not exchanged even a word; not with each other, not with the guards. "You can show us even more, but to him you cannot; he has escaped from you forever."

You see, they, the watchmen—the angels of matter—thought that they had power over us, even after death!

Since then, years later, I kept calling Costache Oprisan, day and night, to give me a sign, to tell me something about death and everlasting life ... and he never answered. Since then I have wondered and I keep asking myself: "What is the boundary between death and life, who is dead and who is alive—we or Costache Oprisan?"

Let us remember the verses of Sergiu Mandinescu:

Of those who passed that way,
the dead only are alive.
Like him, like you.
I, for instance walk and talk
but my life is not;
friend, it is nothing but a living death....*

In 1977, I started to write a kind of journal of my memoirs of the spiritual history of Pitesti. I tried to avoid the facts and to decipher the meaning of the infernal and the divine Providence in our lives and deaths. I tried to avoid passion and to write impartially about friends and about enemies, about prisoners and about guards, about those who had died and those who had fallen, so I could extract the oppressive and delusive dross of a solidified reality from the fiery core of the senses, to reveal the divine or the diabolic unseen mystery. After writing around eighty bloody pages I was suffering terribly because I was no longer under the vertigo of madness and I could no

* This author died while being cruelly tortured. From the poem, "Amen," Pitesti, 1949.

longer understand what had happened at that time, how all those things could have happened. I was no longer under the alternate or concurrent influence of the beast and the angel who lived in me, but I was authentically and painfully reviving life and death—Pitesti, the unmaskings.

Nevertheless, my memory was a sentimental one. Sometimes I was hammering at one word, timidly, then persistently, then intensely, to madness. The word became nothing other than a sequence of letters or sounds. It had no meaning. It didn't tell me anything. I would say : "beating" or "pain" or "prayer" or "curse"... and I would substitute one for another without any change; none told me anything! I would say "cell" and the word would not speak. I could say instead "lelc" or "clel" or "ellc" with the same result. Everything was mute and absurd. And suddenly a curse from that time would re-sound in my mind, or a song somebody sang during the unmaskings, and the whole atmosphere would install itself with a painfully striking character and with a reality more real than it was then.

Affective memory! Proust was a genius in his intuitions, a part of the literature he wrote.

Shortly after I had started my memoirs, events changed and came tumbling rapidly one upon another. God had called me to an intense preaching, to an awakening of young Romanian souls to the Christian truth, toward human dignity and the supreme Christian dignity. The memoirs were put into the shade, the passion died out. They became unimportant; the value I had given them was only a sentimental one. Their importance was nothing other than a form of my selfishness.

Then events precipitated once again. God rewarded me for obeying His call, and I was arrested and convicted.

I am not just writing a beautiful story when I affirm that which I have said, and I am not boasting of my heroism in a

romantic view of a triumphalist Christianity, like heroes that come forth after the war is over.

God did reward me. Out of my sickness He made me sound, from the vainglorious temptation which had begun to make itself known. He cast me out into the deepest darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth, so that I would remember that He is the only One who decides everything.

The manuscript was confiscated by the Securitate when I was arrested. The rest of the story is known.

Now I am reading the books about Pitesti and making an attempt to draft a preface. Anything one could write about these things is insipid for us, for those who were there—trying to explain what is inexplicable, what is not to be explained. And I am afraid that I will end up adding to cheap literature, like certain leading intellectuals who think that literature can save a nation which is dying of cold and famine.

I wrote a long and incomprehensible introduction. I did not take into account the words of the Apostle to the Gentiles: *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?* (I Cor. 1:20).

After we were set free from prison, we (Marcel Petrisor and I, as well as many others) were summoned from time to time to come to the Securitate. It was the same blackmail practiced for seventy years by the Soviet Union, and for forty years by the satellite countries. Each call to go there scared us terribly, and after each trip we met and told each other, "From now on we should behave! They will send us to prison again and this time we won't escape alive!"

In fact, we didn't make much trouble—a meeting now and then to reminisce about the time spent in prison and to recast the poems learned there for a possible future edition,* discus-

* We owe to them, among others, the reconstitution of the poetry of Constantine Oprisan, especially of the "ontologic poem" *Psyhaion*, a vast

sions about people who had died and people who had survived, about the Canal* and its victims, so that we would not forget anything and would be able to reproduce them at times. We could not live outside the prison spectrum, or without meeting with those who had been there.

A month later, Marcel told me: "Ghitsa, these people want to make us wise in a worldly sense, in their world. They want us to be quiet, to sit like an obedient dog on his tail with his head on his paws, and to howl at the moon, only at the moon [i.e. to speak futilely without anyone paying any attention to you]. I can't be such a philosopher!"

We started meeting again, looking for those who had been in prison, and remaking the old connections and memories, until the Securitate summoned us again and the story repeated itself, like the ring "of the eternal return" from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

I remember that a group of poets from the period between the two world wars decided that the ultimate and supreme form of poetry was its own negation....

lyric-philosophic panorama of the spiritual development of the human being, which can be compared in many ways with *Faust II* by Goethe, or *Panorama of Vanity* by Eminescu, or *The Tragedy of Man* by Imre Madach. A modest edition was issued in 1995 by Majadahonda Publishing House in Bucharest, under the aegis of "Professor George Manu" Foundation. (Fragments of *Psyhaion* appeared also in *Cardinal Points*, Year II, no. 8-9/20-21, August-September 1992, p. 7, accompanied by a note of Fr. George Calciu and a presentation signed by Demostene Andronescu.)

* A communist labor camp for digging a canal between the Danube River and the Black Sea. According to the official statements of Gheorghiu Dej, the chief of the communist party in Romania, the Canal was to be the cemetery of the Romanian bourgeoisie. They exterminated there—by hunger, torture and forced labor—peasants, workers, intellectuals, members and leaders of the former political parties, women and teenagers. —ED.

OTHER WRITINGS

Perhaps, from the whole story about Pitesti only this should remain: *And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

And, on our human plane, the finale of Sergiu Mandinescu's poem:

Oh, Lord, here I am, at this precious hour,
under the heavy tombstone of passions and pain,
embracing my affliction,
I await the Archangel of Dawn,
I await the Resurrection,

In the name of the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, Amen!

INTERVIEW OF FR. GEORGE CALCIU WITH THE JOURNAL *Cardinal Points* OF SIBIU*

REPORTER: *It is more than one year since your first and only visit in Romania after the fall of the Ceausescu dictatorship. It was, if I am not mistaken, February–March 1990. Did that visit leave you with such a bitter taste that you won't be tempted to come back again?*

FR. GEORGE CALCIU: My visit to Romania, a short time after Ceausescu's fall, was made indeed in a context of facts not only unpleasant but also extremely alarming. At that time, under the wide smile of the future president Iliescu, the first massive invasion of miners in the Capital city took place.**

* Vol. I, no. 6, June 1991, p. 4, "A Conversation with Fr. George Calciu-Dumitreasa."

** Altogether, there were four "miners' invasions" during the period from February 1990 to September 1991, the most violent being that of June 13-15, 1990. These invasions were used to end the long anti-communist demonstration in University Square, Bucharest. Fr. Calciu adds: "In 1990 the students began a strike in University Square, protesting that the revolution of the youth against the Ceausescu regime was 'stolen' by the second generation of communists—the regime of Iliescu. The students asked for freedom, democracy and free elections; and the majority of the intellectuals joined them. The university dean allowed the students and other speakers to speak from the second-floor balcony of the University, and they asked Iliescu to resign and allow free elections. Iliescu could not force the army to make the students leave the square because they were on the side of the students. He could not have the police torture the students because he was afraid the Western countries would accuse him of violating human rights. So he sent his messengers to the miners, telling them that the youth were under the influence of the capitalist powers in the West and that they

Now, when I look retrospectively at the events, I realize that it was a prelude of the miners' invasion of June '90 and that the tactics of the neo-communist power were clear and united from the beginning. I heard that there were some comments made about my humble person, accusations being brought to light in front of the whole country that were as dangerous as they were unfounded. I had just arrived in the country and, being barraged by relatives and friends, I did not watch the news on television. I knew of the incident mainly from the narration of others. I did not blame the miners either then or later. The guilt belongs to those who used them unscrupulously, consciously compromising for a long time the image of the Romanian people in the eyes of the whole civilized world.

From that time on an extremely dangerous tension was produced in the country, which seems unable to be released even to this day. Do you know what the first question was that I was asked by a journalist when I had just arrived at the airport? "Coming back into the country, don't you feel in any way ... manipulated?" I was startled by this question even more than by all that happened afterwards! This was the reflex of a general psychosis. I answered obviously that I, as a priest, am "manipulated" permanently by Jesus Christ....

The spreading of rumors and suspicions, some actually absurd, is part of the traditional tactics of communism. I know

wanted to bring American capitalism into Romania to make Romanians the slaves of Americans. The miners, who still had a Stalinist understanding of a movement such as this, came and cruelly beat the students, killing some and arresting others. It was strange to see that civilians had the right to arrest people and bring them to the police. The prisons were full. Finally, under the pressure of the Western government and human rights' groups, the young men were freed, but no one could bring back to life those who had been killed. Iliescu stated that it was merely a conflict between the intellectuals and the workers, and no one was accused of violating the law or killing innocent people in University Square."—Ed.

these tactics from a long experience of life, paid for with hard years in prison. Of course the visit to Romania, which I had dreamed of and waited for for years, under these circumstances left me with a bitter taste. On the other hand, however, the warmth with which I was received by many known and unknown people sweetened this bitterness. No matter how badly I have been received by some, I would gladly come back into the country, as long as the circumstances allowed.

*Overlooking your personal trouble, what is your opinion about the general development of Romanian society after the events of December 1989?**

I don't know if you did it intentionally, but I am glad that you avoided the improper term of "revolution." I don't want to start a caustic discussion about the "behind the scene" events. The truth is that, no matter how things were actually happening, the big popular movement represents the decisive factor from both a historic and a mystical point of view. It meant, I think, something more than a revolution because our "revolutionaries," the young people who came forth on the streets, did not premeditate actions and did not use violence. What was important was the spirit of sacrifice, and not of strife. It was like obtaining resurrection through death. The young—even the children—went like lambs to the slaughter. They should not be named "heroes" but *martyrs*, so that the mystical dimension of things might not be lost. In this sense one can say it was a "miracle." But only initially. What happened after that—and is still happening today—is another story. You see, throughout history miracles have taken place without taking root. I mean that what is accomplished in a moment of individual or collective enlightenment can be lost

* In December 1989, the dictator Ceausescu was overthrown in Romania. There was an overwhelming uprising of the youth, who made a stand against the communist regime.—Ed.

the next moment by ignorance or negligence. God asks more of the one who has received more from Him. In vain have you achieved something if you are not able to keep and consolidate what you have achieved—that is, to wisely manage the gift you have received. The danger in which I think we are now, as a nation, is of ignoring that we were the beneficiary of a “miracle,” and to lose the mystical dimension of reality; to go back, as St. Apostle Peter says, as ... *the dog is turned to his own vomit again* (II Peter 2:22). If we forget God, as we did before, then it might be that the later wrongdoing becomes greater than the first....

We should admit that, in principle, any new order implies a previous chaos, and it is not easy to enter a viable formula of normality after forty-five years of organized disaster. Only now, in the new context, can one see clearly how much evil communism has done, not only at the social and material level but also at the individual and spiritual level. The communists physically exterminated hundreds of thousands of people, but spiritually several millions....

Yes, we live in a moral and a mental crisis....

Exactly. And to overcome this, we should appeal to the Christian foundation of our nation, so that it [the Christian foundation] might be brought up to date and enhanced in value as such. The resurrection from death of the Romanian spirit, under the sign of faith and Christian love, represents the great urge of this epoch. If this “reform” is accomplished, the rest will follow.

We should no longer put the cart before the horse, as communism did and seems to be willing to do again. We should no longer consider the idea of creating a new world from which a new man emerges, but, on the contrary, we should shape a truly new man able to naturally create a new world afterwards.

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I understand that this "new man" should be the Christian man. Some could consider that a paradox: how can something be "new" that is 2,000 years old ?!

There is no paradox. New, in the Christian sense, means alive and present.

There is no new thing under the sun, the Bible teaches us (Eccles. 1:9). The only true newness was the Incarnation of Christ. Otherwise "the newness" in history is nothing other than an endless updating and enrichment of the old eternal values. That is, if you wish, the ability to live in a new way on the grounds of an ancient experience. In the absence of such grounds, "the newness" is a mere adventure, an illusion indeed.

We are in a position to create the "new man" not out of nothing, but rather out of the ancient Tradition. The Romanian nation is called to rediscover itself as a Christian nation. Christian *in essence*, it should be born as Christian *in fact*, and should consciously live a Christian life. We have to re-link a chain broken half a century ago. To be able to renew ourselves we must first return to our inner self. That is the urgency of this very hour, and not the common "labor"—as the slogan goes. This is labor, too, but a subtler and more difficult one. It is a work within ourselves, in the "mine" of our souls. Let us do the latter and not forget the other too!

And to whom do you think belongs the mission of this necessary moral-spiritual reform?

Obviously, in the first place to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Only, unfortunately, our Church has undergone in the last decades a serious decline, losing its old and natural prestige. Some, for lack of discernment, have even fallen to accounting this weakness of the Church to Orthodoxy itself or even to the Church as a mystical reality.... The truth is that our Church, as a historical institution, is confronted with an internal crisis; that is why we should not expect everything

from the clergy (from the priests and the monastic synaxis) alone. *All* Christians of Romania are called, more than ever, to the “good fight,” each according to his strength and means, so that no talent should remain buried. The parties, unions, foundations, all Christian organizations should play an important part, as long as they prove to be up to the mark of the Christian position they chose. There is need of a vivid missionary conscience and a sustained campaign for Christian education of young people, especially through the press and schools. It is regrettable that the authorities, which, I heard, are occasionally doing a shallow Christianization, do not facilitate this process of moral cleansing. For example, the reinstatement of religion in schools is still disputed.* As long as people are either abandoned—under the pretext of a misunderstood freedom—to the danger of modern secular information and education, or tempted to join again a narrow-minded “official direction,” they won’t come out of the unseen prisons of the old mentality and therefore they won’t be truly free.

Do you trust the ability of Romanian people to overcome this historic impasse?

I trust God and our national tradition and the young people of this country. I do not expect the impasse to be overcome overnight. We need to make efforts, to keep vigil and to pray, guarding our hope even in times of confusion and suffering, since it is from the One who has *overcome the world* (John 16:33). It is not easy to advance through all the obstacles and traps laid by the more or less occult powers of this century. The battle is fought on a much larger plane, and at a much higher level, than we usually imagine. The whole world is nowadays haunted by the forces of darkness, even if not every-

* Since this interview, religion was reintroduced in the schools, but with a status more inferior than anticipated. Orthodox Christians in Romania are laboring to improve this situation.

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where in the same way. The faces of evil are multiple and deceptive. You know, the Romanian has a saying: "Do not make the Sign of the Cross until you know who the saint is!"* We should preserve this wisdom more than ever. And we should be united in the spirit of endurance. The world began from God and it will end in God.

What would the Romania you are dreaming of and hoping for look like?

I will express myself completely, not in political but spiritual terms. The Romania I am dreaming of is one which would gather together in her bosom all her sons dispersed by fate throughout the world, so that we would all be one, upon the ancient land of our suffering and also of our rejoicing, under the Sign of the Cross of Christ.

May God hear you.

* I.e., do not commit yourself until you know to what you are making your commitment.—ED.

Appendix



Fr. Calciu with Mircea Eliade and his wife, in Chicago, 1988.
Mircea Eliade, a Romanian, was one of the most renowned
historians of religion in the world.

A REDEEMER OF TIME*

*The only chance of survival for Eastern Christianity
is that of a war within the Word. Our solution is
that of Calciu-Dumitreasa....*

N. Steinhardt**

FATHER GEORGE CALCIU-DUMITREASA (born in 1927) is the priest whom Nicolae Ceausescu declared as his personal enemy. In an epoch in which the Romanian Orthodox Church appeared overwhelmed by the times and ready to make any compromise with the atheistic and materialistic political regime, a teacher at the Theological Seminary, ordained not long after encountering the most radical experiments of the communist inferno, dared, in the very heart of Bucharest, to raise the Cross and defy almost alone both the destructive madness of the authority and the cowardliness of his ecclesiastical superiors.

Apart from other forms of Christian struggle or resistance, about which his students of that time will possibly more extensively confess in much more detail, Fr. George Calciu delivered during Great Lent of the year 1978 a number of sermons of great courageous confession.*** Addressed to young people eager for the truth, they were pronounced forcibly against official atheism and materialism, against the demolition of

* This is the introduction to "Seven Homilies to the Youth" published in 1996 in Romania.—ED.

** *Journal of Blessedness* (Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1991), p. 417 (quoted in the Virgil Ciomos postface).

*** One could even talk about "the suicidal measure of the incendiary sermons uttered by Fr. Calciu-Dumitreasa" (Sorin Dumitrescu, in *Transylvania* 1-2/1992, p. 17).

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churches and consciences, as well as against those who were (often despite their intimate beliefs) in an old and implicit conspiracy with the communist power. The sermons were delivered either inside the Radu Voda Church or on its outside staircase (when his superiors locked the church and confined the seminarians to their dormitories to prevent him from preaching anymore).^{*} In spite of all the harassment by the civil and religious authorities the audience became more and more numerous. In addition to the high school students, seminarians and theology students, every week more and more youth from the general lay community came, mainly students of other institutes and faculties from the capital city [Bucharest]. Many of the “calcistii”^{**} themselves had to face the pressure of the Securitate; some of them were even expelled from their universities. Fr. Calciu was first subjected to the usual criticisms, persecutions, threatening and slanders. Finally he was arrested on May 10, 1979, tried and condemned to ten years in prison for several ridiculous and fictitious counts of indictment, his “guilt” being in fact that he spoke the whole truth straightforwardly and bluntly. The Church itself, panicked by the reaction of the authorities and trying to accede to their request, expelled him—[the very one] who defended its foundation and whose sermons, translated into many languages, gave the world the true measure of our Christianity.

Before becoming a priest, this man experienced the depths of hell. In all he spent twenty-one years in prison under the communists (1948-1964; 1979-1984), even going through the wave of terrors in Pitesti (1949-1951). It is to Dumitru Bacu that we owe the first substantial disclosure of the monstrous experiment named “reeducation,” unique in its degree of terror and perversity in the whole communist universe of detention.

* As it was, for example, on April 12th, 1978.

** From the name of Fr. Calciu, meaning Fr. Calciu’s followers.—ED.

A REDEEMER OF TIME

For a subsequent edition of D. Bacu's book, prepared in 1988 and published in 1989 (at Hamilton, Canada),* Fr. Calciu agreed to write the foreword. "Now I am reading the books about Pitesti and making a draft for a preface**—anything one would write about these things is insipid for us who were there—trying to explain what is inexplicable.... I wrote a long and incomprehensible introduction," he was declaring with too much modesty. And, toward the end: "Perhaps, from the whole story about Pitesti only this should remain: *And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*"***

* With Bacu's book, *Pitesti* (published in the West in 1963) the bibliography of the "Pitesti phenomenon" was substantially enriched. Besides D. Bacu (whose book was translated in English in 1971), others presented the facts without knowing them directly. Paul Goma (*Les chiens des morts/The passions after Pitesti*, 1981, in French; 1990, in Romanian); Virgil Ierunca (*Pitesti Phenomenon*, 1990); Marcel Petrisor (*Fort 13: Talks from Detention*, 1991, and *The Secret of Fort 13*, 1994, where Fr. Calciu appears under the name "Gore Bolovan"), etc. Among those who wrote about Pitesti from their own experience, it is worth mentioning especially Grigore Dumitrescu (*The Unmaskings*, 1978); Viorel Gheorghita (*Et ego. Sarata-Pitesti-Gherla-Aiud*, 1994); Dumitru Gheorghe Bordeianu (*Confessions from the Mire of Desperation*, 2 volumes, 1995); Octavian Voinea (*The Massacre of Romanian Students in the Prisons of Pitesti, Gherla and Aiud*, 1996). The volume *Memorial of Horror: Documents of the Reeducation Process from the Prisons of Pitesti and Gherla* (issued in 1995 by Vremea Publishing House) contains declarations extorted under terror (taken from the Securitate Archives), which are far from the truth. (See also the speech of D. Bacu: "The Reeducation Process, Why and What Were the Unmaskings in Pitesti and Gherla," recently published in the magazine, *Cardinal Points*, the issues from April, May and June, 1996.)

** This text is also reproduced in this present volume. It appeared in the only edition of D. Bacu's book in Romania (published by the no-longer-existing publishing house, Atlantida, Bucharest, 1991; pp. 9-15).

*** D. Bacu wrote in the preface of the second edition of his book: "I gave Fr. Calciu the difficult task of writing a new introduction. The presence of his holiness at the head of these declarations is not at all fortuitous.... In his

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The whole life of this man after the Pitesti episode was a life of *confession* and *sacrifice*. He crossed, in both soul and flesh, the distance between hell and heaven. Perhaps there is no one else who succeeded *after Pitesti* in a moral victory so exemplary and steadfast. Because there is the case of "George Calciu," one can say that the "Pitesti experiment" failed. It crushed men, but it could not completely destroy man.*

Fr. Calciu did not save himself alone: he redeemed, in the long run, *human dignity* in the face of what Mircea Eliade named "the terror of history."

After the Pitesti episode, the medical student George Calciu lay in communist prisons twelve more years, being known as one of the most "stubborn" prisoners and as a dreaded "hunger striker." Set free as a result of the general amnesty of 1964, he had the strength and grace to rebuild his life, devoting it to Christ. He attended classes in Philology and Theology, becoming a priest and one of the most beloved teachers of the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Bucharest (where he taught French and the New Testament). He married Adriana Dumitreasa, the sister of another political prisoner, and had a son, Andrei. But having a "wife and child" did not

sufferings is projected the suffering of the whole nation. His passing through that inferno is our passing, all of us. His resurrection from the tomb of Pitesti strengthens our faith that no matter how heavy is the stone of our sins, the resurrection of the whole nation is possible."

* Those who went through the hell of Pitesti cannot be judged by current criteria. Those who did not undergo the experience of communist prisons have by no means the moral right to pass judgment on them. Even among former political prisoners, who went through other penitentiaries and camps, I often heard them saying, "We do not have the moral right to judge those from Pitesti. No matter how long and hard we suffered, we were not destined to undergo even a little of what those from Pitesti did. Judgment should search out the initial assassins, the diabolic minds who plotted the 'experiment,' not the subsequent victims."

present to the struggler and confessor George Calciu a justified reason to obey [the communist authorities]. No risk was too big for him in his service for Christ.* While the Enea Church was being demolished in the heart of Bucharest (1st of May 1977),** in place of which a tavern was to be built,*** Fr. Calciu commenced an outspoken fight against the wicked political regime and its accomplices within the bosom of the Church. In 1978 he became more and more troublesome, particularly because he gathered around him groups of young people full of Christian and national zeal. His sermons held at Radu Voda Church were equivalent to a spiritual earthquake against the gray and fearful background of the epoch. They bear witness up to today that under the red dictatorship more could be done for Christ and His Church than we usually dared to do.... The unjust sentence of 1979 roused a wave of reactions abroad; the prominent representatives of Romanians in exile (Mircea Eliade, Eugene Ionescu, Virgil Ierunca, Monica Lovinescu, Paul Goma, etc.) came forth to his aid, making the international forums and organizations sensitive to it. As a consequence, he served only five out of ten years of imprisonment. The international pressure (his name was mentioned even in the negotiation for the Status for Most Favored Nation) made it possible for him to be set free in 1984 (April 20).

* "He who guides his conscience with the statement, 'I have children to bring up,' or justifies his action by saying that, 'the Dean forced me to take declarations,' has a remote-control machine rather than a soul.... Be most diligent harvesters yourselves! Forget your instincts, which are overloaded by your teachers whose principles are: 'I have a mother, father, sons and daughters, too large a salary to accept the sacrifice and suffering of Christ and His Church,'" he said to the young theologians in the "Additional Homily."

** See the collective volume: *The Churches Doomed by Ceausescu*, Bucharest: 1977-1989 (Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995), pp. 13-21.

*** See especially the "Fifth Homily to the Youth," p. 42 above.

Perhaps if there had not been such commotion surrounding his case from so much international notoriety, Ceausescu would have resorted to murder. (Ceausescu was gripped by a blind rage by the mere mention of the name in question.) An army of Securitate men followed every step of Fr. George and of his family members, devising a concerted psychological terror. After less than a year they imposed on him the "solution" of leaving the country. He settled with his family in the United States where he had already been granted "honorary citizenship" and where he lives up to today. In these more than ten years of exile, he returned to his homeland, Romania, only once, at the time of the first miner's rebellion.* Fr. Calciu strove, as much as was in his power, to continue the fight for God and the Romanian people. Besides the usual preaching (in Washington), he defended the interests of the oppressed Romanians at many international forums. He was received among others by Presidents Francois Mitterand and George Bush, as well as King Michael of Romania. He was a central presence at almost all the important meetings of the Romanian "diaspora." He is to this day the honorary president of Romfest.** He facilitated numerous contacts and much humanitarian aid (especially immediately after the events of December 1989); he wrote constantly in the *Exile's Press*, but also in some of the post-December publications in his country, always with the same missionary and confessional pathos, which recommends him as the most significant figure of the Christian and national resistance in Romania of the last decades.

From 1978 until 1989, the "Seven Homilies to the Youth" had a clandestine circulation in Romania through hand-typed copies. In Romanian, or translated into other languages, they

* See pp. 200-201 above.

** Abbreviation of Romanian Festival. Romfest is the organization of the Romanians in exile.—ED.



Fr. Calciu being greeted by President Ronald Reagan.

were broadcasted by several radio stations and were partially reproduced in foreign journals. In 1979, the only edition in Romanian was issued in Munich (Ion Dumitru-Verlag), with a limited number of printed copies. In 1984 the entire text came out in German (translated by Johannes Zultner); the small volume contains also the petitions made in behalf of Fr. Calciu by Mircea Eliade (to the "Religious News Service," May 21, 1979) and Eugene Ionescu (in "Le Monde" of July 26, 1980), as well as a letter which the persecuted one (Fr. Calciu) succeeded in sending in the fall of 1978 to the CIEL (Comite des intellectuels pour l'Europe des libertes).

Beginning in 1990, some of the sermons were published also in Romanian journals (such as *Transylvania* or *Cardinal Points*). A complete edition in the Romanian language has not been published in Romania until now. The Anastasia Publishing House felt obligated to fill this gap, offering all the texts in the present edition to the larger public as part of its "Homiletics" collection. Obviously, the readers should take into account the timing and intent of these sermons; this does not mean that their message is not one of present interest. Apart from their "documentary" interest, their inner value (spiritual, moral, catechetical) remains indisputable. Their spirit and language constitute to this very day a model of the Orthodox sermon—full of life and adapted, without any essential compromises, to the receptivity of contemporary youth....

Razvan Codrescu

EPILOGUE

THE STORY that Fr. George has to tell in this book is not a rare one. Men, women and children in countries all over the world have suffered and are suffering at this very moment for the true faith in Jesus Christ. However, in a world of shopping centers, fast-food restaurants, and the constant pursuit of fun and entertainment, many might think that this story is an extreme case, a product of a far-away, backwards country. Many might think to themselves, and many might say, "This could never happen here. This could never happen to me."

Each Christian must take this story of Fr. George Calciu, who is still alive today, as a reminder and warning that we may someday have to witness Christ in the same way. Elder Ignatius of Harbin (†Aug. 3/16, 1958), who lived in Russia at a time when millions were enduring martyrdom, prophesied: "What began in Russia will end in America." But in this land of "freedom," where our Christian churches are being sold off one by one to be turned into night clubs and apartments, and "political correctness" rules the society, persecution will come in an entirely different form. Fr. Seraphim Rose once wrote in his journal: "Let us not, who would be Christians, expect anything else from it than to be crucified. For to be Christian is to be crucified, in this time and in any time since Christ came for the first time. His life is the example—and warning—to us all. We must be crucified personally, mystically; for through crucifixion is the only path to resurrection."

The world whispers to us to relax, take it easy, have fun—but as Christians we must constantly have in our remembrance

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that maybe somewhere out there, a solitary cell of confinement awaits us. We are ultimately called to a cause far beyond a complacent existence where Christ is only in church on Sundays. We are called to a path where we have to make the supreme effort, to get involved and become on fire to serve the Lord. How will we be able to withstand the hunger, the loneliness, the fear, the tortures, if we are ever to be faced with them? "He who wishes to serve God," said St. Basil the Great, "let him prepare his heart for tribulations." The time of preparation is now, and the field to prepare is our hearts. All that will save us in the end will be the interior world that we have built in our hearts. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov said, "He who has not received within himself the Kingdom of God cannot recognize the anti-Christ."*

We must choose to make every passing day one of preparation and an opportunity for martyrdom. A holy father of recent times has said that we gain a martyr's crown each day, if before going to bed we dedicate all the sufferings endured in the day to God. "Christianity is not spinelessness," said Archbishop Averky. Now is the time to gather in Christ. Now is the time to stand up for Christ, even in the smallest ways: at work, in school, among family, and among friends. Now is the time to build the foundation of unshakable trust in the living God.

As the victors in the Church triumphant march before us, urging us on in the battle, let us recall the words of our wise Fr. Seraphim: "We must ultimately choose—our felicity lies in one world or the other, not in both. God give us the strength to pursue the path of crucifixion; there is no other way to be a Christian."

—Editors

* Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, "On the Kingdom of God," in *Epiphany Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 53.

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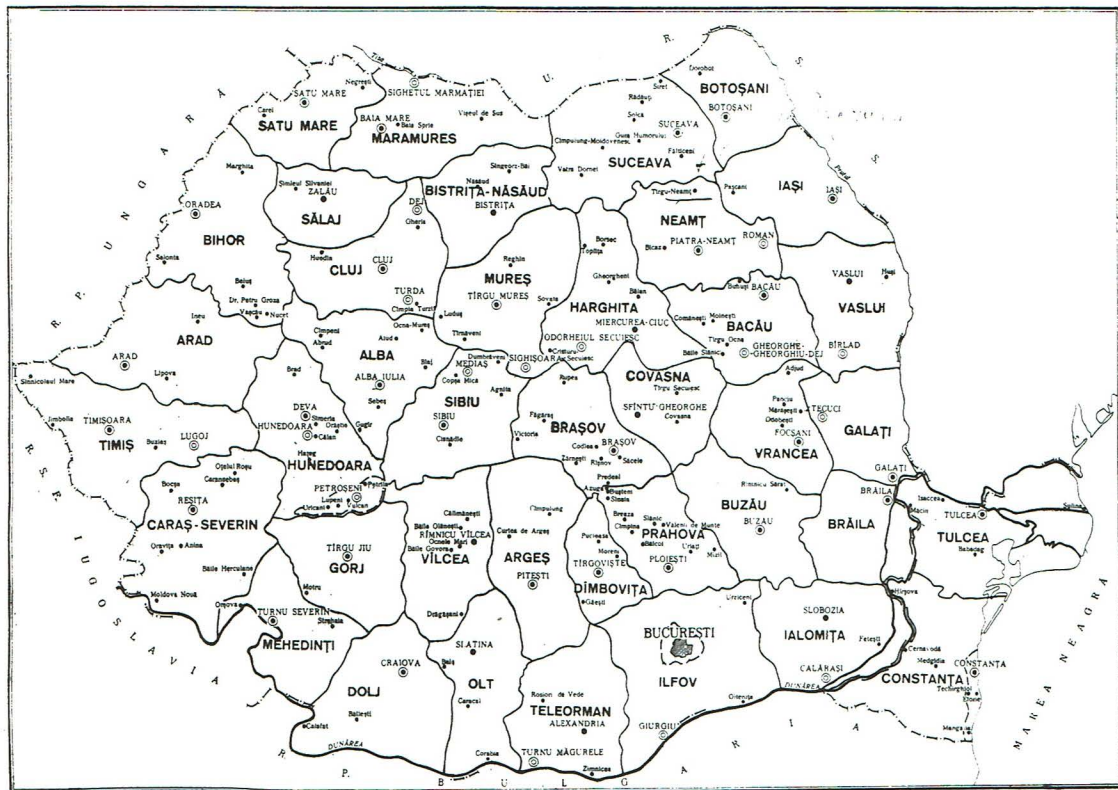
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Map of Romania.



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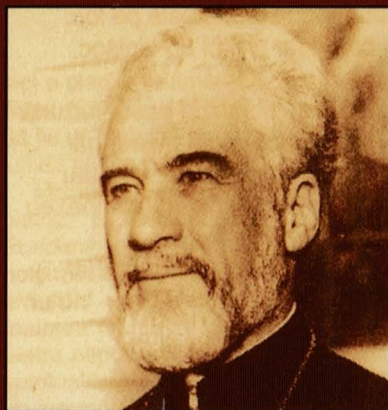
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