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Church Dedications (Hrams) and Pilgrimages: Liturgical and Missionary Events

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Abstract

Church Dedications and Pilgrimages represent two of the defining and determining liturgical moments for the church life in general, but also for the life of parishes, monasteries, dioceses, etc., in particular.

These events also constitute an essential component of what the liturgists call „popular piety” (one of the decision-makers, par excellence, in the evolution of worship structures, but also of the whole liturgical life), aspects which, unfortunately, were less studied and deepened, which is why we would like to underline in this study two of the fundamental characteristics of these events, namely, the liturgical dimension and their missionary impact.

Keywords

dedication, pilgrimage, feast, pilgrim, holy places, church

I. Short overview

I remember one of the most “plastic” axioms of our teaching of faith, which I heard at the time when I was a student at the Seminary, at one of our dear priest professors, and that sounded like this: *Roads that do not lead to the church are of no use to us!*

It seems that this axiom best summarizes the significance and content of the theme that I am trying to present in this study, in the sense that, indeed, our path to eternity, to perfection, to the Kingdom of God (climb that indisputably claims the two events in the church life, mentioned above, that is, the dedication [hrams¹ and pilgrimages²), passes through the Church; it is only the Church that gives guidance and fullness to the Christian life so that in this context we could speak clearly about “the road to the parish church”³ as a “continuous pilgrimage” or a “liturgical pilgrimage”⁴, which gives content and value to our daily lives⁵:

“In addition to pilgrimages closer or farther away from the place of life, there is also a purely spiritual approach to pilgrimage, especially in its results, through participation in the Holy Orthodox Liturgy, which should not be reduced to mere physical participation or an exclusively spiritual one (...) Through consecration (author’s emphasis), each church becomes an altar of the presence of Christ, through the relics of the martyr who

¹ “Hram (the old Slv. *hramu* = patron) - the hram of the church or the celebration of the patron of the church (the guardian of the church). The *hram* can be a saint, an event in Church History (for example, The Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Ascension of the Holy Cross, the Annunciation, St. Demetrius etc.)...” Fr. Prof. Ph.D. E. BRANIȘTE and Prof. Ecaterina BRANIȘTE, *Dicționar enciclopedic de cunoștințe religioase (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religious Knowledge)*, Diocesan Publishing, Caransebeș, 2001, p. 195.

² “Pilgrimage - travel to the Holy Places that pilgrims make (to Jerusalem - the Christians, Jews; to Mecca - Muhammadans)”, Fr. Prof. Ph.D. E. BRANIȘTE and Prof. Ecaterina BRANIȘTE, *Dicționar enciclopedic de cunoștințe religioase (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religious Knowledge)*, pp. 361-362.

³ “Once the holiday is over, the pilgrim does not “overflow” in the weekly and Sunday practice, so it is a deeply individual practice. Which shows that the current situation in Orthodoxy is converging, from certain points of view, to that of the Western societies, where the same type of institutional disruption is found between participation in the service and the “personalized” religious practice, outside the “walls” of the official Church, literally and figuratively (Rousselet, 2013: 13)”, Mirel BĂNICĂ, *Nevoia de miracol. Fenomenul pelerinajelor în România contemporană*, Polirom Publishing, Iași, 2014, p. 16.

⁴ See the meaning of this expression at Fr. Lect. Ph.D. Dan SANDU, “Pelerinajul - călătorie spre viața de sfințenie”, in: *Teologie și Viață*, X (2000) 7-12, p. 78.

⁵ “The life of man is a continuous journey whose purpose is the kingdom of heaven, respectively the encounter with God”, *Pilgrimage is a human response to God’s call*, cf. <https://www.centruldepelerinaj.ro/articol/pelerinajul-este-un-raspuns-al-omului-la-chemarea-lui-dumnezeu> (page accessed on October 12, 2019).

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followed Christ to the end. In conclusion, the construction of the church itself becomes a place of pilgrimage, that is, meeting with Christ, with the martyr saint and implicitly with the fellows who follow the same path (...) Therefore, in general, each Altar is transformed in place of pilgrimage because it is a place of God's presence and each Holy Liturgy an invitation addressed to the members of the Christian community to take part in this pilgrimage. In this way, for those who cannot attend pilgrimages to certain holy places, the church offers them the opportunity to understand and collect the fruits of pilgrimage⁶.

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania would complete this image, saying that the Church itself is a pilgrim⁷:

“The mystery of Emmaus shows that the pilgrimage has been transformed into the Eucharist and living temple, within the Church, and the Church is a pilgrim, traveling to the Resurrection and pre-tasting the eternal life of the Kingdom of heaven (cf. Hebrews 12, 22-23; 13, 14). Thus, **man, as being created in the image of the holy God, finds in holiness the ultimate and full meaning of his existence**”⁸.

⁶ Fr. Lect. Ph.D. Dan SANDU, *Pelerinajul - călătorie spre viața de sfințenie (Pilgrimage - A Journey to the Life of Holiness)*, p. 78.

⁷ “The pilgrimage itself reflects not only the fundamental reality of the Church, God's people making the pilgrimage of life, but still more the reality of humanity itself, the whole of the people on the way to the mystery beyond the world. This mystery from beyond humanity can be seen and lived somewhat in pilgrimage”, Virgil ELIZONDO and Christian DUQUOC, in the journal *Concilium*, no. 266, Paris, 1996, p. 8 (thematic edition dedicated to pilgrimage), cf. † DANIEL, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Deputy of Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, “Călătorie sfântă pentru comori sfinte - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului (Holy Journey for Holy Treasures - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage)”, Chapter VIII, in: *Comori ale Ortodoxiei. Explorări teologice în spiritualitatea liturgică și filocalică (Treasures of Orthodoxy. Theological Explorations in Liturgical and Philocalic Spirituality)*, Trinitas Publishing, Iași, 2007, pp. 147-148 and p. 148, note 4.

⁸ † DANIEL, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Deputy of Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, “Călătorie sfântă pentru comori sfinte - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului (Holy Journey for Holy Treasures - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage)”, pp. 146-147.

Therefore, this journey to eternity will be accomplished through a sustained effort to reach, as far as we can, the churches in our parishes, the monasteries in our country, the metropolitan cathedrals that house holy relics, and last but not least, to holy places like Jerusalem, Athos, Egypt, and Mount Sinai, Cappadocia, etc., thus outlining our spiritual pilgrimage of perfect Christians⁹: “I have fought a good fight, **I have finished my course**, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4,7).

The deeply spiritual character of the Christian life, animated by the eschatological tension between that “already, but not yet”, shows us that man is in a continuous spiritual dynamic, in an uninterrupted ascent to heaven, to the eternal city of which Blessed Augustine speaks († 430), the path of each of us to eternity, representing at the same time the proximity to our brother, the distances being finally canceled in the meeting with him; thus, “pilgrimage” tends to become a path to God, which we follow along with others¹⁰:

“We do not have a fortress here, but we walk to the next one without reaching it before death. This journey together of the believers takes its power and is shown especially by the Eucharistic synaxis. The divine Eucharist is for the Holy Fathers a holy «syn-odos», - a journey together of those on earth to heaven, or of people to angels, of the world seen to the unseen¹¹. But at the same time, there is a certain meeting between those on earth and those in heaven, which must increase constantly”¹².

⁹ “The pilgrimage is part of the Christian’s life regardless of destination”, Deacon Ph.D. Andrei-Mihai ZAIET, “Argument”, in: *Ghidul pelerinilor în Țara Sfântă, Peninsula Sinai și Iordania (Guide for Pilgrims to the Holy Land, Sinai Peninsula and Jordan)*, Basilica Publishing House of the Romanian Patriarchate, Bucharest, 2016, p. 5.

¹⁰ “**The experience of the sacred is an eminently personal one**, and the path taken can be the pretext or catalyst for a transformation of the individual or even a mystical ecstasy, as happened with Saul on the road to Damascus”, Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern: o monografie sociologică a pelerinajului (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man: A Sociological Monograph of the Pilgrimage)*, Christiana Publishing, Bucharest, 2015², p. 38.

¹¹ Hieromonk GRIGORIU, Ἡ θεία λειτουργία τῆς Εὐχαριστίας τοῦ Θεοῦ, Atena, 1971, p. 85, cf. Fr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Spiritualitate și Comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2004², p. 68.

¹² Fr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Spiritualitate și Comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*, p. 68.

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There is a close connection between church service (hram) and religious pilgrimages, in the sense that both the former and the latter are in line with the tradition of our Church, defined as “a dynamic principle of life and not an inert treasure”¹³, thus dismantling the assumptions that such events would be mere “inventions” or a “fashion” of the twentieth century¹⁴, as some try to prove¹⁵, ¹⁶.

Moreover, the resemblance between these two events with a profound spiritual charge *par excellence* is so clear that they are regarded and lived “in essence” as a unique solemn liturgical moment: “The hram is celebrated with special solemnity on the day commemorating the event or the saint, in the presence of hundreds and thousands of believers who come on pilgrimage from great distances”¹⁷.

Being a specificity of Orthodox spirituality, in general, the hrams and pilgrimages represent for our people (for the Orthodox communities), for the Romanian village, in particular, an occasion of great spiritual joy, of great celebration, true “liturgical and missionary events”, as we shall see: “The celebration of the hram or spiritual protector of a church represents

¹³ Robert F. TAFT, *Oltre l'oriente e l'occidente. Per una tradizione liturgica viva*, Edizioni Lipa, Roma, 1999, p. 318.

¹⁴ “In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, paradoxically, despite the reduction of the social role of the Church, the phenomenon of pilgrimage is amplified, either because of the cultural and historical value of the places of worship, or due to the individual search for special experiences or a miracle. William H. Swatos jr. notices this amplification of the phenomenon and anticipates a cultural change: «*The dramatic increase in the interest towards the religious pilgrimages as well as participation in pilgrimages in the last quarter of a century reflects a major change in communities*», Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man)*, p. 36; see also Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man)*, p. 36, note 61.

¹⁵ See Fr. Lect. Ph.D. Dan SANDU, *Pelerinajul - călătorie spre viața de sfințenie (Pilgrimage - A Journey to the Life of Holiness)*, p. 73; “Pilgrimage is one of the forms of response of the Romanian society to the great shock of the collapse of the communist system in 1989, more thirsty than ever for the need for miracle and supernatural...”, Mirel BĂNICĂ, *Nevoia de miracol... (The Need for a Miracle...)*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁶ “A favorite subject in the field of literary, cultural studies, mentalities, imagery from different eras, religious pilgrimage and journeys undertaken for various purposes have recently re-entered the sphere of interest of philologists, historians, scholars, in the context of the social-political changes of the last three decades and some searches of history...”, Ass. Prof. Ph.D. Mariana VRACIU, “Postfață. Călătorie și mărturisire”, in: *Pelerinajul egumenului Daniil în Țara Sfântă (1106-1108)*. Introductory study and translation from Russian - Anca-Elena Văraru, Doxologia Publishing, Iași, 2018, p. 125.

¹⁷ Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, XXVII (1977) 10-12, p. 719.

in Romania and, in particular, in Moldavia, a great event in the community life and an opportunity for pilgrimage”¹⁸.

In the past of our Church, but even today, these two events have succeeded, in a remarkable way, in highlighting each other, in the sense that the meaning of the hram is emphasized especially with the occasion of the pilgrimages, and the hrams, in particular, from the Romanian lands, are the ones that attract “hundreds of thousands of pilgrims”:

“The practical aspect of the meaning of the hram has been specially enhanced with the occasion of the pilgrimages “to hram”, which took place in the past in monasteries founded by the great voivodes of Transylvania”¹⁹;

“In all the Romanian lands some hrams attract hundreds of thousands of pilgrims: Putna of the Saint Righteous Voivode Stephen the Great, Horezu of the Brâncoveanus, Nicula, the Transylvanian monastery in which the Orthodoxy has borne in popular worship a rich cult for the Mother of God, the Patriarchal Cathedral of Bucharest, where the relics of the New Saint Demetrius of Basarabi are located”²⁰.

I do not think we should question the spiritual value of hrams and pilgrimages (an essential component of the “popular piety”^{21, 22})²³ and

¹⁸ Fr. Nicolae DASCĂLU, “Itinerarii spirituale în Moldova (Spiritual Itineraries in Moldavia)”, in: *Teologie și Viață*, X (2000) 7-12, p. 66.

¹⁹ Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, p. 721.

²⁰ Fr. Nicolae DASCĂLU, “Itinerarii spirituale în Moldova (Spiritual Itineraries in Moldavia)”, p. 66.

²¹ “The pilgrimages, from many points of view, show all the power of creativity and spontaneity of the popular religion, difficult for the Church to keep in check. Popular religion conceals deep desires and needs of the sacred, which “official” religion cannot satisfy, because popular religion owes more to people and less to books. (Isambert, 1982: 12)”, Mirel BĂNICĂ, *Nevoia de miracol... (The Need for a Miracle...)*, p. 33.

²² “Nous nous trouvons obligé en particulier de laisser de côté la question, peut-être la plus importante dans ce contexte, de savoir comment le renouvellement, surtout la simplification de la liturgie dans le sens de la *nobilis simplicitas* (SC 34) a agi sur la religiosité populaire dans son ensemble, par exemple à l’occasion de pèlerinages, de célébrations familiales, de coutumes religieuses”, Balthasar FISCHER, “Relation entre liturgie et piété populaire après Vatican II”, in: *La Maison-Dieu*, N° 170 (Liturgie et Pèlerinage), 1987, pp. 91-92.

²³ See Fr. Nicolae DASCĂLU, “Itinerarii spirituale în Moldova (Spiritual Itineraries in Moldavia)”, p. 66.

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the power that comes from these places with an immense moral, spiritual, national, liturgical and missionary load, at least when we speak of the Romanian Orthodox space:

“Ever since the pilgrimages to worship have been true spiritual homes, springs of living water, from which the believers drink as from a divine cup the unspeakable energies, for a higher religious-moral life, lived by the will of God, according to the example of His incarnate Son”²⁴.

The hrams, as well as the pilgrimages, given that they represent in themselves extraordinary events, of special importance, of special solemnity, must be prepared, on the one hand, from a spiritual point of view (in the sense that they have an eminently liturgical purpose), but also from a practical point of view²⁵, aiming first and foremost, a good organization, a good evolution, and an impeccable finality²⁶: “There are people who prepare before the pilgrimage, confess to the spiritual priest from whom they take blessing for the pilgrimage; their attitude is humble because the emotion of seeing or revisiting the pilgrimage places leads to such a state”²⁷;

“The key phrase of the text, «according to the Scriptures» (*iuxta Scripturas*), which appears from the first statement, refers, on the one hand, to the preparation for the pilgrimage through a careful study (*diligentius*),

²⁴ Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, pp. 721-722.

²⁵ “I. «Preparation (material and spiritual) - the Christian mentally visualizes the place where he wants to reach, then informs himself. In order to be of spiritual use, he makes an effort: fasting, prayer, confession, taking the blessing of the spiritual priest””, Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern... (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man...)*, p. 39; see also Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern... (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man...)*, p. 39, note 70.

²⁶ “Thus, Daniel records in his work the large number of those for whom Jerusalem was and will always be a point of attraction. But this journey cannot be done quickly and by chance, but with humble heart and love, as the abbot Daniel says”, Anca-Elena VĂRARU, “Egumenul Daniil – autor, personaj și pelerin (Abbot Daniel - Author, Character and Pilgrim)”, in: *Pelerinajul egumenului Daniil în Țara Sfântă (1106-1108) (The Pilgrimage of the Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land)*, p. 15.

²⁷ *Pilgrimage is a human response to God's call*, cf. <https://www.centruldepelerinaj.ro/articol/pelerinajul-este-un-raspuns-al-omului-la-chemarea-lui-dumnezeu> (page accessed on October 12, 2019).

of the Holy Scriptures for years, and, on the other, to the way of establishing the itinerary (*ita erat mihi iter*)²⁸.

Therefore, I consider that any kind of distortion of the essential truths related to these spiritual realities, as well as their misunderstanding (aspects already reported), beyond the inherent exaggerations that can occur in such events, could be, on the one hand, the fruit of ignorance, and on the other, it is because of the valences and deep meanings²⁹ of these two important liturgical moments in the life of the Church which have not been discussed and written down enough, even though “the bibliography dedicated to the pilgrimages is huge”³⁰.

II. The Hrams: The Liturgical Dimension

The importance of the hram for the liturgical life of a community be it a parish church, a monastery, a diocese, etc. it is overwhelming and has multiple meanings: theological, liturgical, moral and other³¹.

The spiritual-liturgical dimension of a church’s hram seems to be in the “familiar” and “family” orthodox space much more obvious and theologically differently nuanced, being anchored in the conception of the consecration of time and space through a divine presence; this spiritual connection is “made by the power of love” and “happily underlines the rational communion between heaven and earth”:

“The dedication of a church places a certain place under «protection», it coagulates the space by sealing it with the divine power”³²;

²⁸ Prof. Cornelia Lucia FRIȘAN, “Translator’s Notes”, in: *EGERIA - Peregrinatio ad loca sancta: (Itinerarium et Missa) = Pilgrimage to the Holy Places: (Itinerary and Liturgy)* A. D. 381-384. Second edition, coordinated and curated by Andrei Mărcuș, revised, corrected and supplemented with the Latin text by Cornelia Frișan, and with a critical study on the liturgy in Jerusalem of fr. José Raymundo de Melo S.J, Galaxia Gutenberg Publishing, Târgu Lăpuș, 2009, p. 16.

²⁹ “As A. Netedu observes, the problem of the religious practices of the Romanians in relation to the “modernism” of the society has already been the subject of study of the Romanian Sociology, but the in-depth research on the religious pilgrimage is lacking”, Mirela BĂNICĂ, *Nevoia de miracol... (The Need for a Miracle...)*, p. 11.

³⁰ Mirela BĂNICĂ, *Nevoia de miracol... (The Need for a Miracle...)*, p. 10.

³¹ Prof. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, pp. 720-721.

³² Fr. Viorel CHERCIU, “Hramul bisericii sau topografia sacrului (Church’s Hram or the

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“This spiritual familiarity makes all our places of worship under the protection of heavenly power: the churches have a name that can be found in the calendar, the sanctified place finds its projection during the sanctified time and at the same time in the Kingdom of heaven. There are churches dedicated to the Holy Trinity, to one of the three Persons of the Trinity or to an epiphany, to an event in which God reveals Himself to the people visibly. The Person of Christ the Savior and the work of salvation of the world are present in the names of many places of worship. There are also churches bearing the names of angels, apostles or saints from other cities who have been worthy of the crown of holiness. Thus, this spiritual connection happily underlines the rational communion between heaven and earth, between the triumphant Church and the Church Militant”³³;

“The unity of faith and the life in Christ, of the many who gather during «the hram», create the consciousness of family interdependence, the consciousness of Christian brotherhood, made by the power of love...”³⁴.

The hram, also known as the spiritual patron of a church, manages to gather most of the parishioners in the community, but not only, but also the faithful from the surroundings, and where the Holy relics are, it gathers the believers from all over the country, come with hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands, as to Saint Parascheva of the Balkans from Iasi, to New Saint Demetrius of Basarabi or to Nicula Monastery, etc.

The coordinates and liturgical significance of the hram in the Orthodox space, in general, are multiple:

- it plays the same role in the life of the church as the guardian angel in the personal life of the believers;
- it is the guardian of the church, it is the first to look after its fate;
- the hram - the saint protecting the church - prays to God incessantly for the preservation of a church in history;

Topography of the Sacred), in *Altarul Banatului*”, VII (1996), new series, 4-6, p. 64.

³³ Fr. Nicolae DASCĂLU, “Itinerarii spirituale în Moldova (Spiritual Itineraries in Moldavia)”, p. 66.

³⁴ Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, p. 721.

- the hram cares for the life of the church because he was once a man like us, but, through many needs, he overcome temptations and trials and lived on earth as an angel in the body;
- the hram protects³⁵ the holy place because he begs from Christ God the Almighty grace to protect it from calamities: of fire, of water, of earthquake, of wars and destruction, of desecration and oaths, of all the seen and unseen enemies of the righteous faith;
- the hram continually watches the spiritual life of the believers, who enter the holy place with the fear of God, with faith and with love;
- the hram prays to the heavenly Father to listen to our requests and to fulfill them, to save us from troubles and needs, from pain and suffering and to arrange everything according to His will, for He is the source of our good and happiness;
- in the hram of the church the believers find a living model to imitate in the Christian life;
- through hram we participate intensely and actively in the holy life of the Holy Sacraments, through which we grow in Christ; we enter the community of happy life with the Holy Trinity, we deify ourselves;
- through hram we reach angels, in the body, one in holiness with himself, who lived among men, as a man of God;
- the hram protects life and cares for the salvation of all believers; he wants to gather, unite and support the conscience of all under the redeeming sign of the Holy Cross, for the realization of the supreme ideal - the deification of all in Christ;
- the hram wants to complete the soteriological solidarity in Christ with those departed; therefore, during the hram, the remembrance of the founders and benefactors of the holy place is made, so that the Lord God may reward them for their beautiful deeds and the sacrifice brought to life, for the good and happiness of others;
- the hram facilitates the active participation in the common prayer for the imploring - under the same dome - of the heavenly grace that brings from above help, mercy and abundance for all, in all the best,

³⁵ “Let us reinvigorate our mnemonic capacity and remember that the “strengthened” church with godly hram is continually calling us for protection from the ills of the world...”, Fr. Viorel CHERCIU, “Hramul bisericii sau topografia sacralui (Church’s Hram or the Topography of the Sacred)”, p. 64.

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it protects in troubles and pains, it escapes from the dangers and trials³⁶.

- Beyond the liturgical landmarks of the dedication in the Orthodox space, we also identify some specific connotations of the Romanian space:
- In the Transylvanian monasteries, on the occasion of the hrams, in particular, the Orthodoxy of the faith has produced in the popular devotion a very rich cult to the Mother of the Lord³⁷;
- In churches and monasteries in Moldavia, the hrams have always been a “form of sharing joy in the Church”, on the one hand, and on the other, a “chance to experience how to be in this world of a loving people”³⁸;
- The hrams of the monasteries in Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, were also sources of faith and revival of the religious-moral impulse of the believers, but also of strengthening and enlightening of the national ideal, of the formation of the Orthodox consciousness and of maintaining the conscience of the nation³⁹.

In essence, participation in the church's hram produces a profound, spiritual rebirth among the believers, directed, it seems, in two directions⁴⁰: both towards God, through a “devotional self-denial”, but also towards people (peers), as well, through equally intense attention and care: “Renewed spiritually the believers return to their homes, with an unwavering passion for life, work, and devotion devoted to God and their fellowmen, knowing they are sustained in their efforts and their Christian-humanitarian ideal by the prayers of the saint protector”⁴¹.

³⁶ Cf. Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, pp. 720-721.

³⁷ Cf. Fr. Nicolae DASCĂLU, “Itinerarii spirituale în Moldova (Spiritual Itineraries in Moldavia)”, p. 66.

³⁸ “Participation in the hram day in Moldova is for any pilgrim a form of sharing the joy in the Church, and for the traveler who comes from afar it means the chance to experience how to be in this world of a loving people”, Fr. Nicolae DASCĂLU, “Itinerarii spirituale în Moldova (Spiritual Itineraries in Moldavia)”, p. 71.

³⁹ Cf. Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, p. 721.

⁴⁰ “The personalistic dimension of the church holidays is closely interwoven with the community ecclesial aspect, the hrams being the most beautiful manifestations of living the right faith together with the entire community”, Fr. Nicolae DASCĂLU, “Itinerarii spirituale în Moldova (Spiritual Itineraries in Moldavia)”, p. 71.

⁴¹ Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, p. 722.

III. Pilgrimages: Missionary Events

It was written about the missionary role of pilgrimages and about its “universal” connotations, that is in the family, in the parish, in the monastery and even in society, but the essential milestones have been masterfully and repeatedly rendered by His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania, for which we only have to signal them, something that was done, in fact, by those who studied and approached the topic of pilgrimages from a missionary point of view⁴²:

“The peace and joy, light and holiness gathered in hearts through a pilgrimage to the holy places or at the holy moments of the liturgical celebration are carried by pilgrims in their houses, in their parishes and monasteries, in society. Thus, the pilgrims, carriers and witnesses of the Spirit of Christ in the world, become missionaries without having claimed it...”⁴³.

Here are, in the opinion of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania, the elements through which the missionary impact of the pilgrimages is outlined:

- popular catecheses⁴⁴;
- veneration of saints⁴⁵, ⁴⁶;

⁴² See, for example, Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern... (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man...)*, pp. 53-54.

⁴³ † DANIEL, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Deputy of Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, “Călătorie sfântă pentru comori sfinte - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului... (Holy Journey for Holy Treasures - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage...)”, pp. 148-149; see also Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern... (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man...)*, p. 54.

⁴⁴ See also Jean VINATIER, „Pèlerinages: D. 19^e et 20^e siècles”, in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: doctrine et histoire*, Tome XII, Première partie: Pacaud-Photius, Editions Beauchesne, Paris, 1984, p. 939.

⁴⁵ “The whole Church, but especially the faithful pilgrims, honor the saints of God, because in the saints the work of the Holy Spirit is shown, as a fruit of the gifts received by them at the Holy Baptism, gifts which the saints cultivated through faith and trouble, through prayer and good deeds”, † DANIEL, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, “Lumina și ajutorul sfinților – bucuria pelerinilor (Light and Help from Saints - The Joy of Pilgrims)”, in: *Semne de speranță în vreme de suferință. Lucrarea Bisericii în societate în anul 2012 (Signs of Hope in Times of Suffering. The Work of the Church in Society in 2012)*, Basilica Publishing House of the Romanian Patriarchate, Bucharest, 2013, p. 170; “The mystery of divine love and joy shared with the saints is celebrated in pilgrimage and becomes a holy work”, † DANIEL, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, “Călătorind cu Dumnezeu - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului (Traveling with God - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage)”, in: *Teologie și Viață*, X (2000) 7-12, p. 31.

⁴⁶ “By honoring the saints in different ways, *the idea of belonging to a nation with certain well-defined values and traditions is cultivated*”, Fr. Lect. Ph.D. Dan SANDU, “Pelerinajul - călătorie spre viața de sfințenie (Pilgrimage - A Journey to the Life of Holiness)”, p. 80.

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- prayers for the sick (Holy Unction);
- consecration of water;
- confession of sins and reconciliation;
- the prayers and night vigils;
- group songs and prayers on the way to holy places and home;
- books and leaflets;
- icons;
- religious objects - souvenirs;
- outdoor processions and liturgical ceremonies⁴⁷.

The dimensions of the missionary impact of the pilgrimage as a missionary work (“mystery of love”), but also as a missionary event (“celebration of life and an icon of eternal joy”), are surprised by His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania, thus:

“... all of these make the pilgrimage a missionary work in which the truth of faith is harmonized with the beauty of celebration to express the mystery of God’s love for people and people’s love for God (...) For all this, pilgrimage as a missionary event is a celebration of life illuminated by holiness, an icon of eternal joy in the presence of God. The pilgrimage sanctifies the time of earthly life and opens it to eternity”⁴⁸.

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania also affirms that the pilgrimages:

- Over the centuries they have had a beneficial influence on the lives of people and peoples;
- They contributed to the strengthening and renewal of the religious life;
- They have strengthened the identity and spiritual unity of the human communities in a region;
- They contributed to the rapprochement between different national Churches and between different ethnic groups;

⁴⁷ † DANIEL, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Deputy of Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, “Călătorie sfântă pentru comori sfinte - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului... (Holy Journey for Holy Treasures - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage...)”, p. 149.

⁴⁸ † DANIEL, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, “Călătorind cu Dumnezeu - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului (Traveling with God - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage)”, p. 31.

- They contributed to the enrichment of the culture of the peoples and they imprinted on the universal human civilization the dynamics of spiritual progress, the search for the sacred and eternal life⁴⁹.

According to Mirela Bănică, the “missionary mission” is the exclusive work of the Church, but the latter also assumes the role of organizer of pilgrimages as religious events⁵⁰.

In other words, I would like to point out that in the Romanian space, about the missionary impact of the pilgrimages that took place during the celebrations in the monasteries in Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, there was relatively little written, if we consider that these religious events had profound implications in the process of preserving the unity of faith and of the nation:

“The considerable pilgrimages, which were made on the occasion of the hrams of the monasteries in Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldova, were sources of faith and revival of the religious-moral momentum of the believers, but also of strengthening and illumination of the national ideal, occasions for strengthening the bonds of brotherhood between all Romanians. Because on the occasion of these Christian meetings, the love of freedom and unity of all Romanians in one Greater Romania increased. On these occasions, intellectuals saw each other and - tacitly - made great decisions in the interest and national good of us⁵¹”⁵².

Equally important for the Romanian space and spirituality is the fact that the Orthodoxy of our people has passed as “confessing” and “universal” from all points of view: dogmatic, moral, liturgical, hymnographic, architectural, etc., for the pilgrims who have crossed the land of our country, in particular, for those who came from Russia:

⁴⁹ † DANIEL, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, “Călătorind cu Dumnezeu - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului (Traveling with God - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage)”, p. 32.

⁵⁰ Cf. Valentin-Lucian BELOIU, *Miracolul în viața omului modern... (The Miracle in the Life of the Modern Man...)*, p. 53.

⁵¹ “By honoring the saints in different ways, *the idea of belonging to a nation with certain well-defined values and traditions is cultivated*”, Pr. Lect. Ph.D. Dan SANDU, “Pelerinajul - călătorie spre viața de sfințenie (Pilgrimage - A Journey to the Life of Holiness)”, p. 80.

⁵² Prot. Ph.D. Radu SIMION, “Hramul bisericii și însemnătatea lui (The Hram of the Church and Its Significance)”, p. 721.

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“-The travel descriptions of some Russian pilgrims who passed through the Romanian Countries first highlight the fraternity and communion within the Ecumenical Orthodoxy. They ascertain and affirm in Orthodoxy the identity of faith, the structural identity of the liturgical services and ordinances, the identity of the monastic ordinances, the identity regarding the feasts and holidays during the church year, in honor of the saints and holy relics.

- The Romanian hospitality was not only limited to the free passage through these countries but, as brothers of faith, they were helped materially with all the necessary.- It follows from these reports that the Romanian Countries are being investigated by Russian pilgrims for their Orthodoxy also. Romanian services are presented as normative, for their traditional Orthodox order. The Romanian churches, impressive by their architectural harmony and by their paintings - especially the exterior ones - are compared with the places of worship of the Russian Church.

- Local traditions, ceremonies related to certain special services are not considered deviations from Orthodoxy. The unity of the Orthodox cult is strengthened by the variety of its forms of expression”⁵³.

IV. Conclusions

Hrams and pilgrimages, the two events addressed in this study, really have the ability to capture the changes that have occurred in a society, being simultaneously forms of popular manifestation; they are indissolubly linked and cannot be interpreted separately.

Moreover, the event par excellence that unites them, where the meaning of the pilgrimage totally merges with the meaning of the hram, remains the **Feast of the Resurrection that is Easter**.

⁵³ Fr. prof. Liviu STREZA, “Relatările unor pelerini ruși din secolele XVI-XVIII, în trecere prin Țările Române, despre viața liturgică ortodoxă și locașurile de cult românești (Stories of Some Russian Pilgrims from the 16th-18th Centuries, passing through the Romanian Countries, about the Orthodox Liturgical Life and the Places of Romanian Worship)”, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* CVI (1988) 3-4, p. 107.

Although not all Christians manage to participate in their church's hram, for different reasons, more or less well-founded, and although not all are able to carry out a pilgrimage during their lives, for the same reasons, it remains an imperative (a commandment) for any Christian to participate⁵⁴ in the Easter mystery, the Passion and Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Regarding the "sacred" meaning of this participation, of this journey together of man and of God, of this "last pilgrimage" or of this "passage", His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania said:

"In the last pilgrimage of Jesus to Jerusalem is discovered the most sacred meaning of the pilgrimage. His triumphal entry into the earthly Jerusalem, where He was to be crucified, becomes a foreshadowing or anticipation of His entry into the heavenly Jerusalem. In The Crucified Pilgrim in Jerusalem, **the pilgrimage turns into Easter** (John 10,17-18; I Corinthians 5,7), the earthly journey is fulfilled in heavenly passage or moving: «I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father» (John 16,28) (...) The pilgrim rejected by the people in Jerusalem through crucifixion returns to each other through the Resurrection. But the resurrected Jesus-the Pilgrim no longer goes to the temple of the earthly Jerusalem, but from the heavenly Jerusalem of the resurrection He travels as a stranger to Emmaus, **to make each pilgrim a host, a recipient of God...**"⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ The duty of a good Christian is to take the Holy Communion at least once a year, at Easter.

⁵⁵ † DANIEL, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, "Călătorind cu Dumnezeu - înțelesul și folosul pelerinajului (Traveling with God - Meaning and Benefit of Pilgrimage)", p. 29.