

EDITORIAL

Patriarch Justinian Marina (1901-1977) – A Providential Personality of the Romanian Orthodoxy

The year 2017 was consecrated throughout its course as dedicated to the Third Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Justinian Marina, who shepherded our Church as its forerunner between years 1948-1977. The year 2017 is also dedicated to the confessors of faith during the years of communism. His entire pastoral life coincided with the establishment and the rule in Romania of the atheist communist regime, with the whole corollary of injustice and violence against the members of the Church, as well as with a continuous intention to marginalize, humiliate and discredit the Church. The demolition of everything that was good in Romania began with the establishment of this political regime, in order to create the “new man” of communism and the “multilaterally developed socialist society”. To achieve this goal, the new political regime put into action the whole arsenal of ideological but also physical fight to silence those who were considered undesirable for the new regime, or at least to marginalize those who did not want to enrol the dynamics of demolition of the regime.

Having reached the dignity of Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (the third Patriarch after the first two: Miron Cristea 1925-1939 and Nicodim Munteanu 1939-1948), he quickly realized the new socio-political context where he had to work, and, above all, that he had to put the Church in its right place in the society, but also realizing that this will not be easy to do. He managed to arrive at some basic conclusions through his intuition, the flair which he was endowed with, and a profound knowledge of the social and political realities of Romania.

First, in those years after the Second World War (1939-1945), he quickly understood that the communist system would not be a short-lived presence on the territory of Romania, but on the contrary, it will

be established here for at least a few decades, and that this ideological opponent will be strong and will not give way to its ideology of intolerance and hostility towards religion, faith and Church.

Secondly, he realized that for him, as Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of the Church as a whole, there can be only two alternatives in the relation with the new communist political power: on the one hand, the *confrontation* with the Communist Party and its institutions, as others did - for example in Russia, with disastrous consequences for the physical existence of the Church, its servants and its faithful: their physical elimination by shooting, imprisonment, closure of churches, and the banning of any articulate church activity, etc..; the second alternative: *the adaptation, and the dialogue* with the representatives of the communist power, to whom he offered the satisfaction of their acknowledgment, and whom he asked advices from; and even to praise them - which was not particularly pleasant - since they had a special sensitivity for, in return for granting the freedom of the Church to function, even if more limited to the place of worship but with the possibility of performing the sacraments and the sacramental activities, which was not self-evident in those times.

Patriarch Justinian Marina chose the second alternative to save what could be saved at that time, with fewer costs for the Church; nevertheless there were also some costs related to the internal and especially external image of the Church, which was accused of pact with the communist power not for a few times. Of course, the resistance of the Church has not been so much linked to the external resistance in spectacular external forms, but to the internal resistance through prayer, faith and hope.

This pastoral vision of Patriarch Justinian finally proved to be wise and realistic, and had actual results. A part of the strategic vision of this Patriarch is embodied in the work of the "Social Apostolate", which he used to find a concrete and useful place for the Church in the Romanian society. In the following, we wish to reveal some of the major achievements of Patriarch Justinian, seen within the limits imposed by the past communist regime:

1. His first achievement was to keep alive the pastoral-missionary work of the Church in those troubled, dark and hostile times for the Church. The places of worship remained open, the holy services were done, especially

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the Divine Liturgy, which the faithful received increased powers through, in order to withstand the trials of those times. This explains why the overwhelming majority of our country's population was Christian, baptized, and religiously married when the changes occurred in 1989; they were somehow connected with the Church, and able to lead the loved ones on their last road in a spirit of faith and prayer, through Church ministers.

The parochial system was coherent and well-structured, and the life of the parishes experienced important and even surprising developments for those times.

2. Patriarch Justinian took care that the preparation of the clerical staff could be carried out in good conditions at the Theological Seminaries (6) existing before 1989 at București, Mănăstirea Neamț, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Buzău and Caransebeș, as well as at the special and temporary one from Curtea de Arges, but also at the two University Theological Institutes in Bucharest and Sibiu. He was aware of how important is the formation of the future servants of the Church, who would constitute the “spiritual army” of the Church. Therefore, he made great efforts to provide these theological schools with well-trained teachers with vocation.

3. The monastic life also experienced a rebirth, despite the fact that by decree no 410 from 1959 it suffered a great blow under the impact of the totalitarian ideology. It is said that after this time, the reaction of Patriarch Justinian in front of the communist authorities was firm; he supported the monastic and Church life, in general, and therefore he was forced to withdraw to Dragoslavele monastery.

4. Despite the existing restrictions, Patriarch Justinian took care to print the Holy Scripture in two editions (under his guiding) for the spiritual use of believers and also some prayer books, the valuable Catechism of 1952, the Philokalia translated by Father Staniloae, other theological textbooks, and Christian teaching books for spiritual use, etc.

5. Under his pastoral care, the Romanian Orthodox Church knew a great opening to the other Orthodox Sister-Churches as well as to the other Christian Churches and Confessions. During this period, our Church entered the great international ecumenical bodies and especially the World Council of Churches at the General Assembly of this ecumenical forum in New Delhi in 1961. These relations were of great importance for those

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times so the Romanian Orthodoxy could be known abroad; but they also constituted a kind of safety valve in the restrictive context created by that oppressive regime.

Of course, there are many other valences of the tireless activity of the providential personality of Patriarch Justinian, which bear the mark of intelligence, wisdom and vision and opened new horizons of hope for the Romanian Orthodox priesthood and faithful.

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