

“Freedom of Expression and Faith – Dilemmas and Essences of the Rule of Law”

International Symposium, May 25/ 2021

On Tuesday, May 25, 2021, the International Symposium on “Freedom of Expression and Faith - Dilemmas and Essences of the Rule of Law” took place (online). The event was organized in the context of the campaign to promote Romania’s candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council for 2023-2025, under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and under the patronage of the Ministry of National Education, West University of Timisoara, with the support of the Archdiocese of Timisoara and FoRB Romania.

The opening speech was delivered by the representatives of the organizing institutions who stressed the importance of international and national legislation in this field.

Thus, Father Dr. Nichifor Tănase - Diocesan Counsellor within the Archdiocese of Timisoara sent the message to His Eminence Father Ioan, the Metropolitan of Banat stating that “Religious freedom is a principle that upholds the freedom of an individual, of a community, in public or in private [...]. The Christian apologist Tertullian was the first Christian writer to refer to the term *libertas religionis*. The Edict of Mediolanus (313) guaranteed freedom of religion in the Roman Empire, according to the words of the Holy Apostle Paul «where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom» (2 Cor 3, 17), and Nicolae Berdiaev shows us how Christian freedom presents an essential component of the image of God in man».

In his speech, Prof. Univ. Dr. Marilen-Gabriel Pirtea, rector of the West University of Timișoara, reported the following aspects: “The fact

that this symposium takes place today demonstrates that regardless of the context, life goes on and it is important to adapt to all the challenges that stand in our way. The energy of people and their involvement in various activities - especially in times uncertain for society - leads us to confirm that man sanctifies the place!

Even if it is in digital format, this event will be auspicious, a good opportunity for discussion and human closeness and can help find answers related to freedom of expression and faith. At the University we are aware that now, more than ever, we can contribute to the maintenance and development of a society in which we want to raise our children as mothers and fathers. How could be that? Through education!

Education is not a discreet process; it is not a process that we should start today, remember it in a month and complete it in a year. Education is now and is permanent; it is a continuous cursive process; and this is the reason why the didactic educational and research activity in as diverse fields as possible cannot and must not be interrupted even if the way of approaching is changed.

Thus, I congratulate the organizers for the courage not to give up this carefully planned event and for the decision to capitalize on the technology which make people possible to come close one another through hearts, ideas, even in these times”.

Lect. Univ. Dr. Gabriel Bărdășan, vice dean of the Faculty of Letters, History, Theology sent the message to Prof. Univ. Dr. Loredana Pungă - the dean of this faculty: “This initiative of our colleagues in theology team is the prompt response they gave at the beginning of this calendar year to this initiative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Education to organize various events within the Western University that can support this candidacy. The response of our fellow theologians was a quick one, and it is materialized here, and today, through this event that I propose and at which, from the prepared program, fundamental issues for human rights, freedom of expression and freedom of faith in general will be debated”.

The symposium was attended by specialist guests (in the field of civil law, canon law and even Church history): Cătălin Raiu, Constantin Rus, Patriciu Vlaicu, Irimie Marga, Radu Zidaru, Mihai Constantinescu, Emanuel Tăvală, Rareș Ionescu, Marius Balan, Răzvan Perșa, Coriolan Dura, Emilian Roman, Tudor Budeanu, Traian Nojea, Ioan Cozma, Mircea

Măran, Daniel Alic, Marius Andreescu, Florin Dobrei, Maximilian Pal and Cosmin Panțuru, who carry out their professional activity either in the country or abroad (United States of America, Italy, Belgium and Serbia).

Although the topic announced was a general one with reference to freedom of expression and belief, it was treated differently by the papers presented. They clarified issues related to religious freedom manifested by the provisions of comparative law regarding the relationship between state and religion, respectively between state and cults in different countries of the European Union, the United States of America, Muslim and even African countries; with a retrospective in time of the manifestation of this freedom in the Romanians from Banat, Serbia and Transylvania. Also, the freedom of conscience was seen as a gift of God and a constitutional right of man, the sermon itself being able to take on a legal aspect as a consequence of the public or private space in which it is expressed.

Some of the papers presented will be published in this volume offered by the Faculty of Theology “Ilarion V. Felea”, by the goodwill of the Dean, Father Professor Dr. Cristinel Ioja.

We would also like to thank all those mentioned above who made it possible, even in the online environment, to carry out the event already consumed, but immortalized for the future in the pages of the prestigious magazine “Teologia”, thus constituting a special issue.

Editor Rev. dr. Cosmin PANȚURU