

Alexandru LAZĂR, *Străvezimea Împărăției – de la simplitatea lucrurilor la profunzimea iubirii divine*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2025, 188 pp.

The volume *Străvezimea Împărăției – de la simplitatea lucrurilor la profunzimea iubirii divine* by the theologian Father Archdeacon Alexandru Lazăr represents a mature and well-articulated contribution to the field of contemporary spiritual theology, situated at the intersection of dogmatic reflection, pastoral sensitivity, and literary-essayistic expression. The book proposes a hermeneutics of everyday life as a theological space, in which ordinary reality becomes transparent to the work of God. In a cultural context marked by fragmentation, acceleration, and superficiality, the author's endeavor acquires particular relevance, offering an invitation to slowness, discernment, and the rediscovery of the divine presence in simple things.

The framing of the volume is skillfully accomplished through its paratextual apparatus: the preface signed by Fr. David Hudson and the afterword by Protos. Dr. Maxim (Iuliu-Marius) Morariu. The preface provides the reader with a key centered on the experiential and contemplative dimension of the texts, emphasizing their formative character, while the afterword situates the work within an explicit dialogue with contemporary theology, highlighting its pastoral and ecclesial relevance. This dual framework confirms the author's intention to avoid both devotional subjectivism and sterile academic abstraction.

From the very *Author's Word*, Alexandru Lazăr formulates the fundamental thesis of the volume: the Kingdom of God is not merely an eschatological horizon reserved for an indefinite future, but a mysterious reality present "here and now", glimpsed by those who cultivate their spiritual sight. The notion of "transparency" thus becomes a key concept, designating the capacity of creation to become transparent to grace without losing its own consistency. The world is not annulled in the encounter with God, but fulfilled and transfigured.

The first chapters of the volume have a programmatic and methodological role. They provide the dogmatic, philosophical, and historico-

religious landmarks necessary for a proper understanding of the concept of the Kingdom of God. The author discusses the relationship between faith and knowledge, between revelation and experience, as well as the specificity of the Christian vision in relation to other religious or philosophical interpretations. This section stands out for its balance and clarity, avoiding both moralizing reductionism and syncretism. The Kingdom is defined as gift, communion, and love, a personal and relational reality inseparable from the Person of Christ.

Upon this solid theological foundation unfolds the most extensive and original part of the volume, in which the author proposes a true “pedagogy of simplicity.” The central idea is that the Kingdom of God is acquired and recognized through simple things, through small gestures and seemingly insignificant experiences.

Chapters such as *Privighetoarea Împărăției, Când Împărăția are gustul unei ciocolate întregi* sau *Prânzul Împărăției*, function as contemporary parables in which the everyday becomes a place of revelation. Through these texts, Alexandru Lazăr succeeds in translating profound theological truths into accessible and poetic language without diminishing their spiritual density.

Stylistically, these chapters are characterized by a calm, meditative writing that combines subtle observation with theological reflection. Narrativity is not an end in itself, but a hermeneutical instrument meant to guide the reader toward a deeper understanding of God’s presence in daily life. One may speak here of a theology of attention and gratitude, in which purified vision becomes the condition for access to the Kingdom.

Another central axis of the volume is the reflection on love and freedom. Love is presented not merely as a moral virtue or sentiment, but as an ontological, healing, and restorative energy capable of reconstituting the unity of the human person. Freedom, in turn, is interpreted in a theological key, as the human capacity to respond to God’s calling. The author implicitly rejects the modern conception of freedom as absolute autonomy, proposing instead a relational understanding in which freedom and responsibility mutually presuppose one another. Chapters with a spiritual and critical emphasis, dedicated to silence, listening, suffering, and the confrontation

with superficiality, deepen the existential dimension of the book. Texts such as *Ascultând Împărăția Neascultatului* or *Superficialitatea și Împărăția lui Dumnezeu* articulate a discreet yet firm critique of contemporary culture, dominated by haste, noise, and exteriority. Without lapsing into moralizing tones, the author invites the recovery of interiority as the space of authentic encounter with God and oneself.

The final part of the volume is marked by a strong soteriological and pastoral dimension. The chapters dedicated to confession, forgiveness, and the “second chance” outline a theology of hope, in which the Kingdom of God appears as a space of restoration and healing. Fragility, failure, and fall are not denied, but assumed and transfigured through divine love. The concluding text, *Să biruiești cu Dragostea lui Dumnezeu tot ceea ce este de nebiruit*, synthesizes the message of the entire work: true Christian victory is not one of power or performance, but of self-giving love.

As a whole, *Străvezimea Împărăției* stands out through its internal coherence, theological depth, and stylistic refinement. Alexandru Lazăr succeeds in constructing a discourse that avoids both excessive abstraction and facile devotionism, proposing a living theology, grounded in experience and pastorally oriented. The volume addresses theologians, clergy, and lay readers alike who are interested in a mature reflection on Christian life, offering not only answers but, above all, a method: that of learning to perceive the Kingdom of God in the transparency of the everyday world.

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