

## **The Romanian Diaspora – A Sign of the Nation’s Suffering and a Chance to Confess Orthodoxy in the World**

The year 2021 was declared by the Romanian Patriarchate as *The homage year of the pastoral care of the Romanians from outside Romania*, i.e. of Romanians from the older or newer diaspora, closer or farther from the homeland.

In general, any diaspora testifies not only about the spread of a people in the world, but also to its dispersal, depending on the reasons that led to its establishment. Sometimes a particular diaspora can be established for both reasons, as has been the case with the Jewish diaspora in the past, for example. The Jewish diaspora was also formed by the desire of the Jews to find markets in which to enhance their trade skills, but it was also formed as a result of politico-military acts, such as the Babylonian captivity, which gave birth to the Jewish community in Babylon, made up of Jews who did not return to the country after captivity, or was scattered throughout the world by Roman rule, after the defeat of the Jewish uprisings in the first two centuries AD.

As far as the Romanian diaspora is concerned, this is a reality of our days, it is a sign of the difficulties that the Romanian people have gone through lately and still pass now, because in the last century the diaspora was formed for political reasons, those who left the country being undesirable citizens for the communist regime that was being established in Romania. They began the long road of exile, and founded the first communities outside the country’s borders, with a more significant presence than before. Many of them represented the best of the Romanian intellectuals from the interwar period. For one of its most representative members, Mircea Eliade, exile was seen as an initiation exercise, “Every exile is an Odysseus on his way

to Ithaca”, he said. Any “real existence reproduces the Odyssey. The road to Ithaca, to the Center... What I suddenly discover is that it offers the chance to become a new Odysseus to any exile...”<sup>1</sup>. The removal from the center of his people’s being causes the exile to carry his own center, to become his own center, but the road to the center is the most difficult to travel. Removal from one’s own nation is tantamount to a loss of identity, a lack of meaning, which requires urgent resignation. M. Eliade not only found his own center, but became a center of reference for Romanians in exile, being received in this way. This is how the Romanian diaspora was established in the last century, a diaspora of exile, of the suffering of those who left, without the prospect of being able to return to a country that does not accept the diversity of opinions.

In more recent times, since 1989, with the acquisition of freedom of movement, the Romanian diaspora has grown considerably with Romanians in search of a better life, the diaspora thus constituted based on economic reasons, completely different from the previous diaspora, who did not seek welfare in particular, but freedom of thought. However, this type of diaspora also has its sufferings: divided families, in which one of the parents works abroad and another in the country, children left in the country in the care of grandparents or other relatives, children suffering due to the absent parents, the able-bodied workforce transferred across borders, the demographic decline in the country doubled by the aging of the labor force, the abandonment of elderly grandparents in the country, without the support of children abroad, etc. Here are so many difficulties that arise from the establishment of this type of diaspora, which is based on economic reasons.

All these aspects presuppose the need to take some pastoral measures, both for the Romanians in the diaspora and for those who stayed at home, the care for those in the diaspora being taken into account by the Romanian Patriarchate by establishing parishes, monasteries, dioceses, so that Romanians from abroad not to be deprived of religious assistance. Therefore, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel wrote in the preface to the book *Diaspora of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, published by the Basilica Publishing House of the Romanian Patriarchate the following words: “Knowing the large number of Romanians outside Romania (...), the Romanian Patriarchate supports the efforts of temporarily or permanently

---

<sup>1</sup> Mircea ELIADE, *Journal. Volume I* (1941-1969), p. 350.

abroad, in order to preserve their religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity”.

But beyond the religious assistance offered to these compatriots of ours abroad, the Romanian diaspora, after its establishment and stabilization, will have to rise to a higher level, constituting itself as a chance to promote Orthodoxy in the world and the Romanian cultural heritage, as did the representatives of the Romanian diaspora in the past: Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionesco, George Enescu, Constantin Brâncuși, Emil Cioran and many others.

Just as the Russian diaspora at the beginning of the last century made Eastern Orthodoxy known in a West that knew very little about it, thanks to its representatives who initiated a dialogue with theologians and people of culture abroad, so should it be established the current Romanian diapora, in a confession of the Orthodox ethos in the world.

In an increasingly secularized and desecrated West, the Romanian Orthodox diaspora could represent a chance to rediscover the universal values of Orthodoxy, a chance to rediscover the Christian roots of Europe, but this requires the authenticity of a testimony and confession of Orthodox life. This is the call of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox diaspora.

**Rev. Caius CUȚARU**