

New spiritual fathers urged by Patriarch Daniel not to give advice based on their own opinion: Say what is written in the Gospel



On Wednesday, Patriarch Daniel invested fourteen priests as confessors (spiritual fathers) in the Archdiocese of Bucharest, offering them several recommendations for their new spiritual role, including avoiding personal opinions. The event took place in the “St. George the Great Martyr” Chapel at the Patriarchal Residence.

His Beatitude emphasized that confessors should enlighten the faithful with the saving truths of the Gospel and the teachings of the Holy Fathers rather than rely on personal ideas. “You must say what is written in the Gospel, not your own personal views when offering advice,” the Patriarch instructed.

Additionally, Patriarch Daniel explained to the confessors that withholding or retaining sins, as St. Cyril of Alexandria noted, signifies delaying absolution until the penitent demonstrates more profound repentance. “It is not about refusing to forgive sins indefinitely but a postponement for better preparation,” he clarified.

His Beatitude highlighted that this ministry is apostolic and spiritual, requiring preparation to help believers grow spiritually. “This is not just about mechanical forgiveness; it requires discernment and spiritual maturity. The goal is not only to forgive sins but to help the penitent grow spiritually, become sanctified, and not only abandon sin but cultivate virtues.”

The Confessor as a Spiritual Healer

The Patriarch pointed out that in the early Church, great emphasis was placed on the confessor’s role in absolving sins and allowing the faithful to partake in Holy Communion. He recalled the definition of a true confessor as formulated by the Sixth Ecumenical Council: “The confessor is like a doctor, not merely a judge who absolves or condemns, forgives or does not forgive, binds or loosens.”

“This marks a transition from the confessor as a judge to the confessor as a healer who cures the selfish passions of the soul and helps penitents grow in virtues. Therefore, the confessor must act as a doctor who uses strictness and leniency,

depending on the person.”

He further explained that lenient individuals should be encouraged toward diligence, while those overly conscientious, prone to despair over their sins, should be given reassurance. He stated this is why the confessor must exercise great discernment, as their work carries immense responsibility.

“With more spiritual children under your guidance, your responsibility increases. You must carry them in your prayers; giving them advice is not enough. You must pray that God helps them apply the counsel you provided,” His Beatitude emphasized.

He also reminded the faithful that they have a duty to pray for their confessors, asking God to inspire and guide them so that their advice may be spiritually beneficial and lead to good deeds.



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