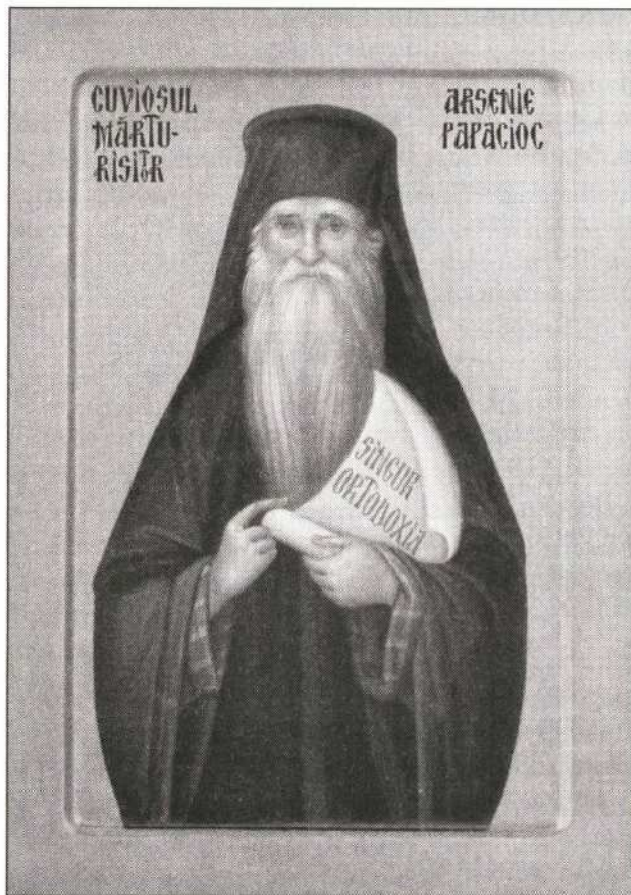


# JANUARY



ARCHIMANDRITE ARSENIE PAPACIOC  
August 2/15, 1914–July 6/19, 2011

*Fr. Arsenie's entire life was a continuous struggle—against the evil from within, from others, from the entire world. A Macedonian by birth, Anghel (his baptismal name) was steadfast and faithful like his ancestors, and loved justice from an early age. Therefore he chose—together with thousands of young people of his generation—to suffer for the good of his nation.*

*Arrested for the first time in 1938, under the reign of King Carol II, he was sent to a labor camp, along with the elite of the Romanian intelligentsia. Released two years later, he worked at a lawyer's office in Zarnesti for a while and was then elected mayor of the town. In 1941, he was arrested once again, this time by the Antonescu regime, and was sentenced to six years in Aiud prison.*

*Although he suffered from cold, hunger, and all sorts of deprivations and misery, it was here that Anghel discovered "God's Kingdom that lies within ourselves," engaging in the practice of spiritual watchfulness and ceaseless prayer together with a group of mystically inclined prisoners in Aiud, including Valeriu Gafencu, Ioan Ianolide, Virgil Maxim, and Marin Naidim.*

*Released in 1946, he became a novice at Cozia*

*Monastery, whence he was sent as a teacher to Turnu Monastery, and then to a branch of the Comanca Monastery, where he oversaw the monastery's land. Summoned to Tismana Monastery by Abbot Gerasim Iscu, he received the obedience of working at the Cioclovina Skete's apiary, up in the mountains, where the wolves and bears kept the "visitors" from the Securitate away for a while.*

*In 1949 he went to Sihastria Monastery, where he befriended Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie, with whom he developed a close spiritual bond. However, he was soon summoned to the Patriarchal Biblical Institute in Bucharest, where he worked as an artist. He was tonsured a monk at Antim Monastery in Bucharest by Archimandrite Benedict Ghius, and his monastic sponsor was Fr. Petroniu Tanase, the future abbot of the Romanian Skete on Mt. Athos. While at Antim, Fr. Arsenie participated in the meetings of the Burning Bush movement, thus again becoming a target for the Securitate.*

*Fr. Arsenie went back to Sihastria, where he was ordained a priest, and in 1950 he went with Fr. Cleopa and a group of brothers to form a new monastic community at the Slatina Monastery, where he was appointed abbot. Slatina soon became a real spiritual academy, with fathers who were both scholars and ardent practitioners of prayer.*

*Arrested a third time, for participation in the Burning Bush movement, Fr. Arsenie was sentenced to forty years of forced labor and imprisoned in Aiud. Held captive under extreme conditions, he did not cease to carry on the work which Christ had assigned him: he confessed the prisoners by using Morse Code, wearing a rope around his neck as an epitachelion, and celebrated the Divine Liturgy using water and his daily portion of 300 grams of bread.*

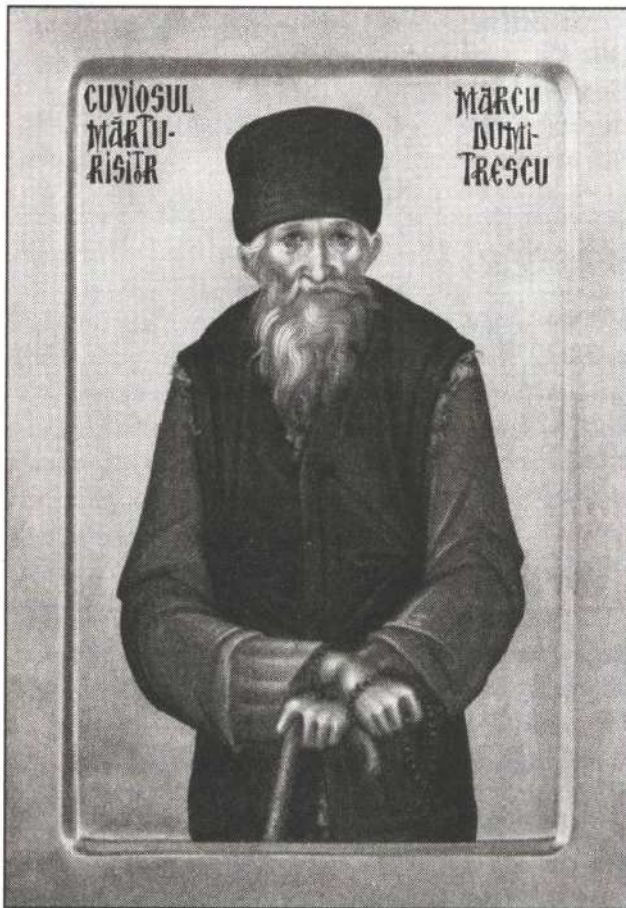
*Released by the general amnesty of 1964, he was watched on a permanent basis by the Securitate and sent from one monastery to another. In 1976 he was appointed father confessor at the St. Mary Skete for nuns of Techirghiol.*

*Here, for 35 years, Fr. Arsenie lovingly imparted wise guidance to thousands of people of all ages and from all walks of life, helping them with advice and prayers, and especially through the active grace of the Divine Liturgy, which he piously served until the end of his life.*

*He used to say, "A nation lives on through those who fight, through those who bear their cross without ever giving in!" Thus, one can rightly say that the Romanian nation lived on through Fr. Arsenie.*



# FEBRUARY



## MONK MARCU DUMITRESCU

August 30/September 12, 1910–February 15/28, 1999

He was first arrested in 1939 and mercilessly tortured in the dungeons of the Securitate: the soles of his feet were struck with iron bars, his hands and legs were tightly bound for days on end, and his body was stabbed all over with knives. However, Constantine (his name in Baptism), endured everything without a sound and without denouncing anyone, astonishing his persecutors, who named him “the fakir.” Years later, Fr. Marcu would reveal a mystery from those days of torture:

“There [in the dungeons] I had a vision. It was as if my hands were holding onto a fence of barbed wire, so dense and sharp that I was about to lose my grip. The moment came when I was just about to fall on the other side, into the tangible darkness. And I was overcome by such a horrible fear that I didn’t know what to do. It was then that Someone grabbed my hand and pulled me out towards the light. His arm was clad in a black

robe like the ones worn by monks. I further saw that it was the hand of a real monk, and that monk was Christ Himself.”

Like thousands of other young men of his generation, Constantine was convicted for the “crime” of loving his nation and his Faith, and he was imprisoned in Aiud, where he joined the group of mystically oriented prisoners—Valeriu Gafencu, Ioan Ianolide, Virgil Maxim, Anghel Papacioc, Fr. Vasile Serghie, and others—spending his time in hesychastic prayer and practicing the virtues set forth in the Gospel.

In 1951 he was put under house arrest at a construction site in Bicz. It was there that he was nicknamed “Costica, the man of God,” because, although purposefully sent to load trucks at explosion sites, he was never harmed, not even by a stray pebble.

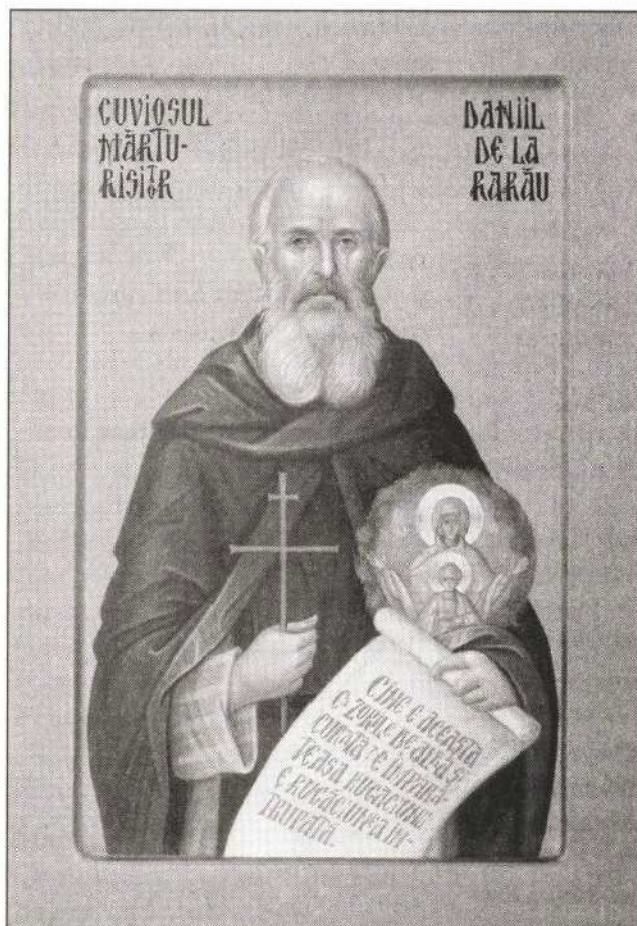
Upon his release in 1956, he decided to become a monk. He spent a year at the Cernica Monastery, humbly fulfilling his duties at the stables, and then left for the Slatina Monastery, known at the time as a real “spiritual academy” under the guidance of Frs. Cleopa Ilie and Arsenie Papacioc. There, he was arrested for a second time, in 1960, and imprisoned once more in Aiud, until the amnesty of 1964.

Constantine then joined the Sihastria Monastery, and he received the monastic tonsure in 1972, being given the name Marcu. Although few, the testimonies about those last years of his life are enough to attest to his reaching the spiritual level of hesychast elders. This is also confirmed by Fr. Cleopa’s words about Fr. Marcu: “Whenever something miraculous occurred, it was probably the result of his prayers!”

Towards the sunset of his life, when tempted by his disciples with worldly praise, Fr. Marcu would humbly reply to them: “Some have said that I can be strong when faced with temptations, but I’m telling you that I could not have made it through all those tortures for over twenty years had it not been for God’s grace helping me. It was only God’s mercy that kept me alive, and I’m not sure that I’ll continue to be this strong. I don’t fear anyone but myself. Only the power of grace and our faith kept us going. Still, no one can be sure of having either of the two...”



# MARCH



## HIEROSCHEMAMONK DANIIL (SANDU TUDOR)

December 12/24), 1896–November 3/16, 1962

*The founder of the Burning Bush movement of Antim Monastery, Fr. Daniil Tudor (Sandu [Alexandru] Teodorescu in the world) is remembered as one of the most important individuals linked to this unique spiritual movement.*

*Since he had a strong personality, an impetuous character, and a brilliant mind, Fr. Daniil's path from darkness to the light was not a smooth one. A naval officer who had fought in World War I on the Eastern front, a high school teacher, and a poet, he became, during the 1930s, the founder of two magazines—The Fiery Flower and Faith—in which he mercilessly criticized the political extremes of the time; this was later used against him as "evidence" of his "plotting" against the Communist regime.*

*There were two major experiences that irrevocably converted him to Orthodoxy: a trip to Mt. Athos (where he went as a skeptical tourist and whence he returned as a devout believer, dedicated to the Jesus Prayer), and his*

*miraculous survival from the crash of his private plane from an altitude of over three thousand feet.*

*His conversion, much akin to his temperament, was sudden and extreme: he gave away his fortune and in 1946 joined the monastic community of Antim Monastery, where he became a monk and received the name Agaton. The years that followed were the most fruitful for his spiritual work, consisting of the practice of hesychastic prayer, study of the Patristic teachings about it, and the presentation of those experiences at the weekly meetings of the Burning Bush in the monastery's library. During this time he was instrumental in the translation and distribution of the "Sbornik," or diary on prayer, compiled by Abbot Chariton of Valaam (available in English as The Art of Prayer).*

*Already a "subject of interest" for the Securitate, he moved to Crasna Monastery in 1949. He was arrested a year later and was sent to Jilava prison. Released two years later, he entered Neamts Monastery, where he received the Great Schema with the name Daniil. He then moved to Rarau Skete, where he unofficially initiated a spiritual "school" for the youth in order to train them as the elite of the country's spiritual resistance.*

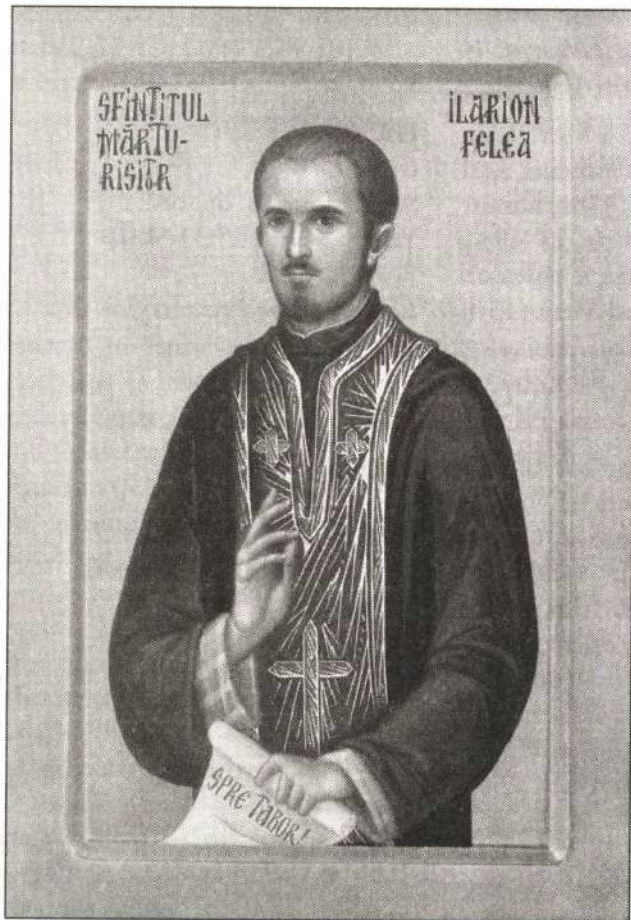
*In 1958 he was arrested again, along with the entire group from the Burning Bush movement, and was sentenced to twenty-five years' imprisonment for "plotting against the social order," plus an additional fifteen years for "intense activity against the working class." Imprisoned in Aiud, he refused any compromise with Communist ideology.*

*For his "obstinacy" he was placed in solitary confinement. According to a former political prisoner, it was there that he was given ink and paper to write his "self-unmasking." Instead, Fr. Daniil wrote an entire indictment of the principles of Communist rule. For one month he kept writing, waiting to be summoned for an investigation. But, one morning, the whole prison learned that he had been found dead in his cell. The official cause of death on his death certificate was "brain hemorrhage." His body was thrown into the Rapa Robilor (slaves' ravine), the common "grave" of the new Romanian martyrs.*

*Although departed from us through his repose, Fr. Daniil's soul is alive in heaven, and the purity of his profound spirit lives on with us through the Akathist hymns of unworldly beauty that he created out of grace and prayer.*



# APRIL



## PRIEST ILARION FELEA

March 8/21, 1903–September 5/18, 1961)

*The son of a priest from Hunedoara, Fr. Ilarion Felea was a profound theologian and a practitioner of ceaseless prayer. Through his life of hardship, he climbed the road to Tabor, where he found the bright and uncreated light of Christ.*

*With undergraduate degrees in theology from Sibiu and in literature and philosophy from Cluj, and with a Ph.D. in theology from Bucharest, Fr. Ilarion used his talents as a teacher of dogmatics and apologetics, as rector of the Theological Academy, and as father confessor at the cathedral in Arad, which he turned into a genuine center of religious culture and practice. He authored hundreds of articles, theological studies, homilies, and*

*hagiographic writings, as well as a series of philokalic volumes entitled Toward Tabor.*

*Hundreds of the faithful, especially young people with a hunger for the treasures of Orthodoxy, were drawn by Fr. Ilarion's love for others, his living example of faith and sacrifice, and his eloquence. His popularity made him a target for the Securitate. He was first arrested in 1949 and imprisoned for a year in Aiud. When he was released and came back among the faithful, he resumed his missionary work with the same passion, confessing the true Faith in sermons and articles.*

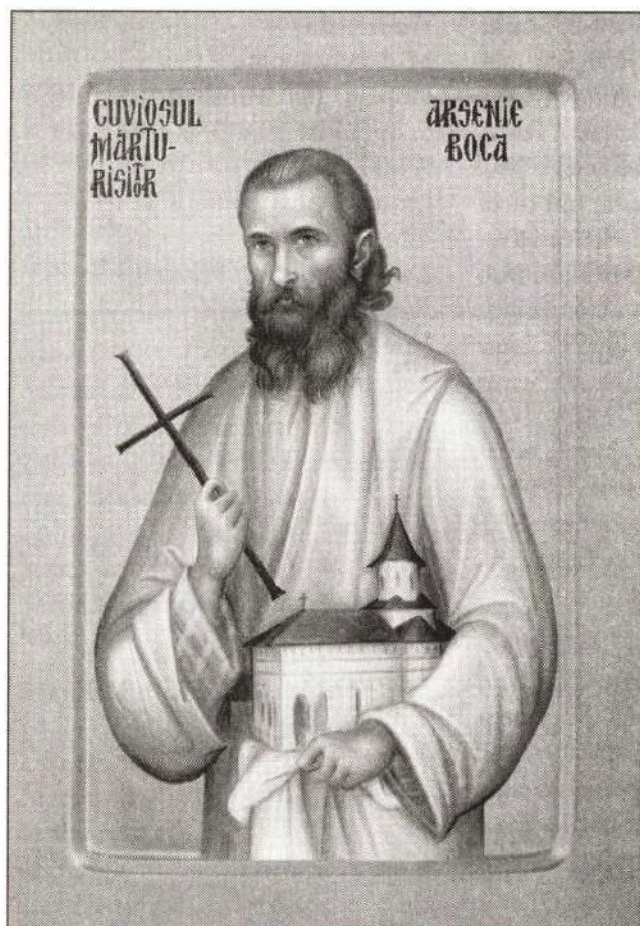
*In September 1958, he was arrested again and subjected to violent interrogations. He was sentenced to twenty years of forced labor for "activities against the working class" and was imprisoned, first in Gherla and then in Aiud. Here, together with Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, he kept the fire of prayer burning, whenever possible secretly serving the Divine Liturgy in his cell for the convicts.*

*Prayer was his greatest support throughout the trials of his life, and his only way to remain close to Christ. Fr. Ilarion wrote: "Sin is what separates us from God and stains our souls; prayer is what cleanses us, sanctifies us, and reopens the way to God's love and light. Whoever progresses in prayer draws closer to God. A man who sits among flowers for a long while will bear their fragrance. The same thing happens with a man who spends much time praying: his soul will bear the fragrance of the divine life."*

*As happens with all who follow Christ, Fr. Ilarion Felea did not fear those who kill the body, but he strove to keep the hands of the unbelievers away from his blameless soul. Refusing any sort of compromise with the atheists, he bore his cross with dignity, remaining an apostle of Christ behind prison bars to the end.*

*The cold, hunger, and tortures to which he was subjected hastened his death, a death that shone with the halo of martyrdom. His body was thrown into the "slaves' ravine" at Aiud, the resting place of the spiritual elite of Romania.*





## ABBOT ARSENIE BOCA

September 16/29, 1910–November 15/28, 1989

*Fr. Arsenie, the great contemporary confessor and ascetic of Sambata de Sus Monastery, was born Zian Boca to a modest family at Vatsa de Sus, Transylvania.*

*Gifted by God from an early age with intelligence and yearning for solitude, and preoccupied with discovering and nourishing the inner spiritual power of man, Zian chose the field of theology and began attending courses at the Andrei Saguna Academy in Sibiu. As he was skilled in art, after graduation he enrolled in the Art Academy in Bucharest, while taking medical courses as well.*

*In 1938, he went for a few months to the Holy Mountain of Athos, where he joined in the ascetic life of prayer of the monks. Tasting the sweetness and joy of hesychastic prayer, he brought back to Romania the Greek manuscripts of the Philokalia, which he entrusted for translation to his professor from the Academy in Sibiu, Fr. Dumitru Staniloae. Fr. Arsenie was instrumental in supporting Fr. Dumitru in his work and providing the means to publish his translation.*

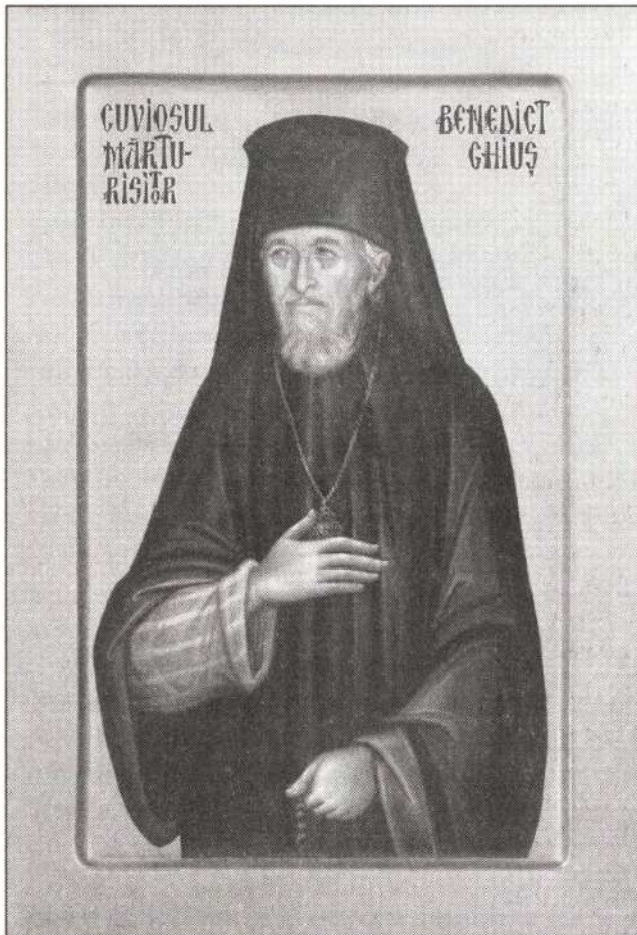
*In 1939, Zian Boca decided to enter the monastic life, considering that “the most beautiful gift we can give to God is to give ourselves to Him for life.” He became a monk and a priest at Sambata de Sus Monastery, where his obedience was to rebuild the old Brancovianu-style church. By God’s grace, which dwelt abundantly in Fr. Arsenie, Sambata soon grew to be the spiritual heart of Transylvania, and even of the entire country. Thousands of people of every age and social status went there to drink from Orthodoxy’s springs and to receive absolution of their sins, healing, and spiritual advice. Fr. Arsenie’s love shared in everyone’s pain and trouble, easing their anguish in this way, because, as he used to say, “All the gifts within our destiny are accompanied by suffering, and whatever consolation we are able to give to others is only in proportion to the amount of bitterness we are willing to drink in their stead.”*

*Fr. Arsenie’s great spiritual work and his considerable influence on people soon alarmed the Communist authorities, who investigated him several times.*

*In 1948, to put an end to the Sambata de Sus “movement,” Fr. Arsenie was sent to the Prislop Monastery, where he was arrested in 1951 and sent to labor at the Danube-Black Sea canal for a year. In 1959, after the passing of a law banishing monks from their monasteries, he was deprived of his monastic habit and sent to work as a layman at the Patriarchal painting shop. Between 1968 and 1983, he painted the church in Draganescu, where, even under constant surveillance of the police, he continued to help people with advice and prayer. No one and nothing could separate him from Christ’s love. “In difficult situations,” he would say, “you must have a house of your own, reinforced by a strong foundation; you must have something durable, a fire, some lighted embers in your heart to guide you during trying times towards Christ and not towards yourself. There is no other way but falling in love with Jesus, Who once lived [on earth] as a human. He continues to be with us until the end of time, and if our hearts were pure, we would see Him even now.”*

*In the last years of his life, Fr. Arsenie retired to Sinaia, together with the nuns who had been banished from Prislop Monastery. Weakened and suffering from partial paralysis, he fell asleep in the Lord in 1989, and was buried at Prislop Monastery, where the faithful perpetually cover his resting place with flowers, a witness to his sanctified soul.*





## HIEROMONK BENEDICT GHIUS

October 8/21, 1904–May 30/June 12, 1990

*Born in Vrancea to a pious family, and wishing to serve God from an early age, Vasile Ghius was a brilliant student at the theological schools in Chisinau, Bucharest, and later Strasbourg, graduating with a doctorate in theology.*

*In 1934, he was tonsured into monasticism at the Neamts Monastery, receiving the name Benedict.*

*Years of academic and spiritual efforts followed for Fr. Benedict: he was an assistant professor, a professor at the Baltsi Seminary, a patriarchal vicar (for a short while), and, beginning in 1955, a priestly celebrant at the Patriarchal Cathedral and one of the most beloved*

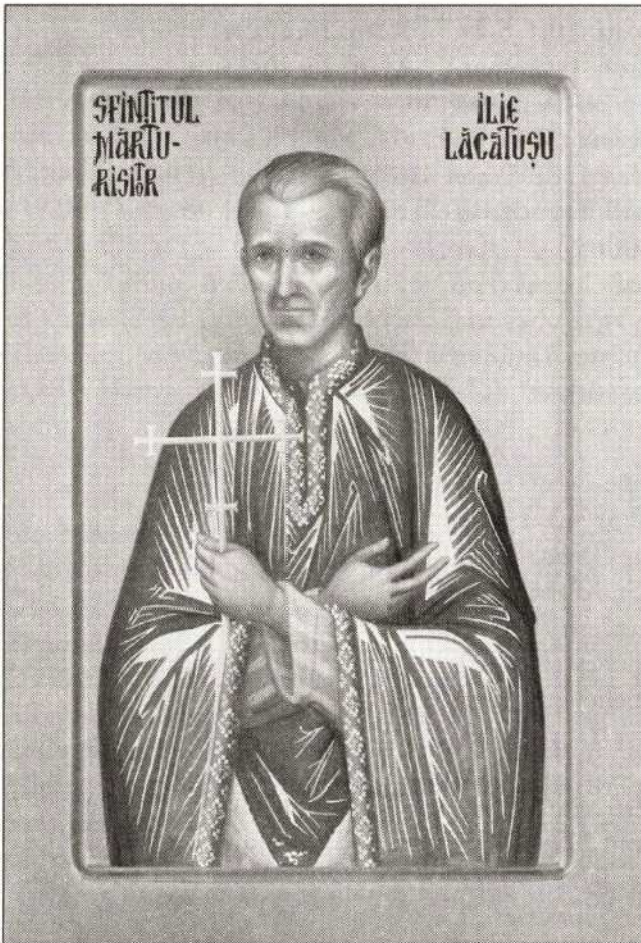
*father confessors in Bucharest.*

*Together with the spiritual elite of the capital at the time, Fr. Benedict participated in the Burning Bush meetings at Antim Monastery, where the revival of hesychastic tradition was being undertaken as a form of resistance against the cultural atheism of the state.*

*Charged with “plotting against the social order,” he was arrested in 1958, along with the entire Burning Bush group, and sentenced to eighteen years of forced labor. Imprisoned in Jilava and Aiud and then sent to the labor camp of Ostrov, he was released in the general amnesty of 1964. Unshakable in his faith and unwilling to compromise, upon release he retreated in silence to Cernica Monastery. There, in a little house neighboring that in which St. Calinicus had lived long before, Fr. Benedict spent the last and most spiritually fruitful years of his life. The erudite monk, brilliant theologian, and great spiritual father humbled himself in the mystery of his cell on the shore of Cernica Lake, literally spreading Christ’s light from his feeble body, from his gentle eyes, and from his pious soul, which now dwells with the saints.*

*A wonderful episode, recounted by Fr. George Calciu with piety and great emotion, speaks volumes about Fr. Benedict’s blessedness: “One Sunday we were celebrating the Liturgy at Cernica, together with a few monks. Fr. Ghius, well advanced in age, was there with us, sitting on a chair in one of the altar’s corners. The church was not yet sunlit, so it was quite dark. At a certain moment, a sweet light started emanating from Fr. Ghius’ corner. Without spreading out into the entire altar, this light surrounded the smiling and transformed face of Fr. Ghius. The light lasted throughout the entire Liturgy, and the moment Fr. Ghius received Holy Communion, his hands became luminous as well. Despite all this, he was not aware of what was happening. Then, each of us bowed down before him, but he became sad because he was overwhelmed by the honor, and he retreated humbly to his corner...”*





## PRIEST ILIE LACATUSU

November 23/December 6, 1909–July 9/22, 1983

*Gifted by God with the incorruption of his body after death, Fr. Ilie Lacatusu is living proof of the work of grace in this day and age. His many years of suffering in the Communist prisons purified him, as gold is refined in a furnace, bestowing on him the luminous halo of a confessor.*

*Holding a bachelor's degree in theology from Bucharest University, he served as a parish priest and, for a year, as a missionary priest across the Dniester River, in Odessa. He was arrested in 1952 and sent with a group of priests to hard labor. Since he became grievously ill, he was moved to the Targu-Ocna Sanatorium-Jail. Released after two years, he was arrested again in 1959 and sent to the Periprava labor camp in the Danube Delta.*

*It was there that something took place that is reminiscent of the wonders written about in the Lives of the Saints. On January 30, 1962, the feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs, the guards, more violent than ever and armed to the teeth, drove the detainees to a lake whose*

*middle was covered with a dense thicket of reeds. During a terrible frost, dressed only in the torn prison jackets they wore year round, the prisoners were ordered to enter the waist-deep water, cut the reeds, and bring them back to the shore. Disconcerted, they did not know what to do, since danger loomed from both sides: the ice-cold lake waiting to swallow them up, and the guards with their fingers on the trigger, ready to shoot. In that moment, with the strong faith of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Fr. Ilie urged them all to go in. With their clothes frozen by the bone-chilling cold, they cut reeds and carried them to the shore until noon. But at noon—oh, the miracle!—a July-like sun began shining from above, warming the freezing air to over 75 degrees. The inmates wrung out their clothes, dried themselves, and enjoyed ... summertime. Fr. Ilie's fervent prayer had prevailed. None of the prisoners even caught a cold. Such was Fr. Ilie Lacatusu—a humble man of few words, but always in communion with God, Who promptly heard his prayers.*

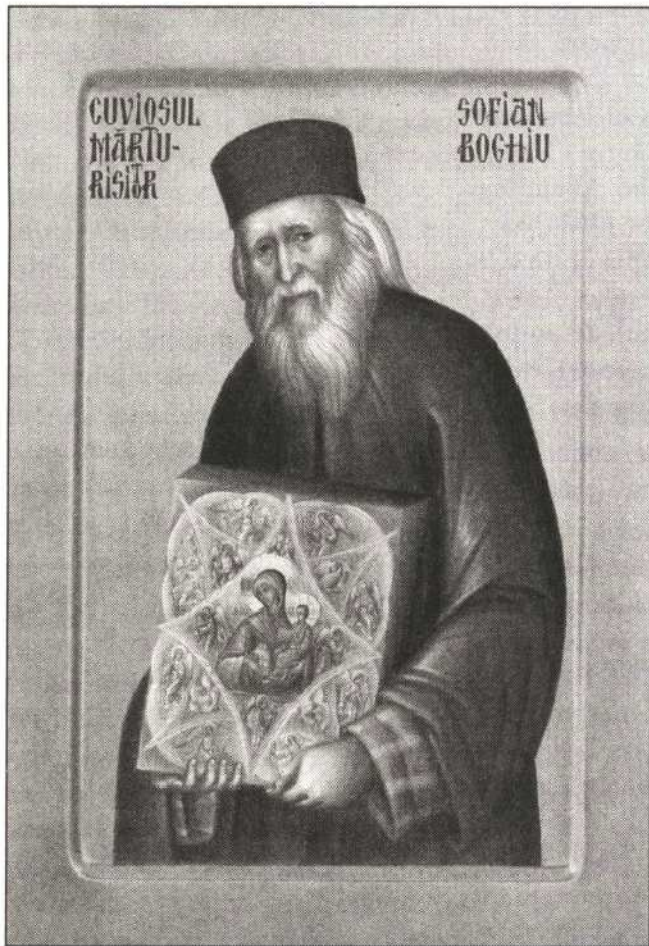
*Released in 1964, he was put under house arrest in the small village of Bolintin, where he worked as a bricklayer. Later, he humbly served as a priest in the villages of Gardesti, Teleorman, and Cucuruzu where, to this day, elderly worshippers remember with devotion his kindness, his love of prayer, and his mercy toward the poor. But sorrow was yet to befall him. God tested him again, and like another Job, he lost four of his children and was left with only one daughter. He faithfully accepted this trial as well, submitting himself fully to God's will.*

*He retired in 1978 and, worn down by the hardship of his long-suffering life, fell critically ill. On his hospital bed he uttered words which later proved prophetic, requesting that his wife be buried next to him upon her death, which would occur fifteen years later. Indeed, after fifteen years Presbytera Ecaterina fell asleep in the Lord, and at her funeral on September 29, 1998, the incorrupt, fragrant body of Fr. Ilie Lacatusu was discovered.*

*Since then, many miracles have been performed through his holy relics, at the Dormition of the Theotokos-Giulesti Cemetery in Bucharest: illnesses are healed, problems are solved, and conversions to Orthodoxy take place. Peace and joy fill the hearts of those who visit his relics, bearing witness that "the righteous live for evermore ... and the care of them is with the most High" (Wis. 5:15).*



# AUGUST



## HIEROMONK SOFIAN BOGHIU

September 24/October 7, 1912–September 1/14, 2002

*Fr. Sofian Boghiu was chosen by God from an early age to serve His Church, with three gifts bestowed abundantly upon him: the gift of singing, the gift of icon painting, and the gift of speaking. Using his talents with meekness during his luminous ninety-year sojourn on earth, he fulfilled the words of the divine services: "Let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God."*

*Born in Bessarabia and entering the monastic life as a child, Serghie (Fr. Sofian's baptismal name) at first eagerly studied Church singing at the Dobrusa Monastery's school, then biblical studies at the Cernica Seminary, painting at the Art Academy in Bucharest, and finally theological studies at the Theological Academy in Bucharest.*

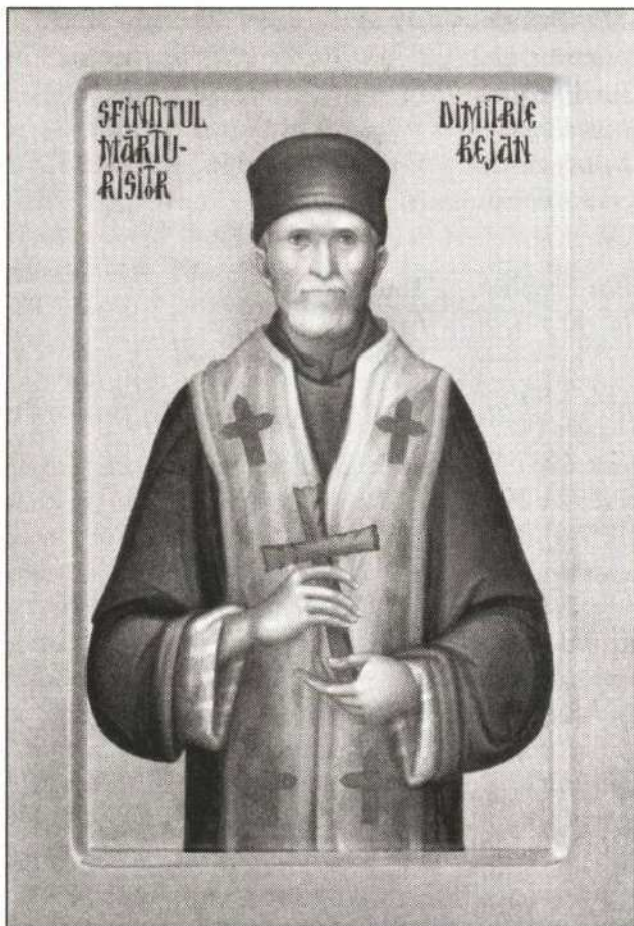
*Tonsured a monk at the Dobrusa Monastery in Bessarabia, he had to take refuge in the Antim Monastery in Bucharest in 1940 when the Russians took from Romania the land between the Dniester and Prut Rivers. Here, he enthusiastically took part in the Burning Bush movement—the spark meant to rekindle the spirit of hesychasm in Romania. His spiritual experiences at that time forever sealed the love for this hesychastic work in Fr. Sofian's heart. He would later recommend this work to his spiritual children, saying, "The Jesus Prayer is perfectly suited to today's modern life. No matter how rushed we are, we can say from time to time for as long as we can, 'Jesus, have mercy on me!' This way, despite the hustle and bustle of our lives, despite all our unrest, we can gain a most satisfactory nourishment from this prayer."*

*Fr. Sofian's participation to the Burning Bush meetings was the main reason for his 1958 arrest and his sixteen-year sentence to forced labor for "hostile mystical activities." The years spent in prison—in Aiud, Jilava, and the Salcia Labor Camp, until his release in 1964—consisted, as he himself confessed, of days "happier than those on the outside, because happiness comes from inside, not from outside." He further recalled: "In the labor camp, just as it had been in our prison cells, besides the unforgiving eyes of the guards spying on us with hatred, the Heavenly Father's all-seeing eye and goodness-filled heart guarded us day and night. It was from Him that we received the patience and peace we felt throughout our imprisonment."*

*Three years after his release, Fr. Sofian returned to Antim Monastery, and the light of his spiritual wisdom and experience emerged from "under the bushel" to guide the Romanian people through the atheist darkness. For over thirty years, with kindness, patience, and endless love, Fr. Sofian completed the last and most meticulous work that God had reserved for him: the erstwhile skillful painter was now imprinting Christ's image on people's hearts with the pen of grace and the colors of the divine teachings. He carried out his bloodless martyrdom in the confession chair until his repose in the year 2002.*



# SEPTEMBER



## PRIEST DIMITRIE BEJAN

October 13/26, 1909–September 8/21, 1995

One of the Romanian hieromartyrs of the twentieth century, Fr. Dimitrie Bejan could righteously say the words of the Holy Apostle Paul: “In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.... In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (II Cor. 11:23, 26–27).

Having obtained bachelor’s degrees in both theology and history from Bucharest, and a position teaching history at the Carmen Silva gymnasium in the capital, Dimitrie Bejan seemed to have all the makings of a successful intellectual career ahead of him. However, God had better things in store for him, things that would bring about a crown of glory.

Ordained to the priesthood in 1940, at the beginning of World War II he was sent to the Eastern front as a chaplain. Taken prisoner by the Russians—together

with an important part of the Romanian army—he was deported to Siberia, where, for six years, he suffered in the death camps of Astrakhan, Oranki, Karaganda, Archangelsk, and Sverdlovsk.

In 1947, a Military Court in Moscow sentenced him to death for having said that Bessarabia was Romanian territory. Demanding to be tried in Romania, he was repatriated in 1948 and received a life sentence of forced labor from the Military Court in Bucharest. He spent the following sixteen years in the Romanian Gulag: Jilava, Aiud, the Danube-Black Sea canal, the Cavnice mines, and Baragan. In all those places, Fr. Dimitrie entrusted himself totally to the mercy of God, Who protected him and saved him from certain death many a time.

After the general amnesty of 1964, the Communist authorities tried to bribe him by offering him a parish in Ghindaoani, Iasi. Failing to break him, they unsuccessfully tried to poison him a few times. Later on he was put under house arrest in his parental home in Harlau, which became his secret place of ascetic struggle and communion with Christ.

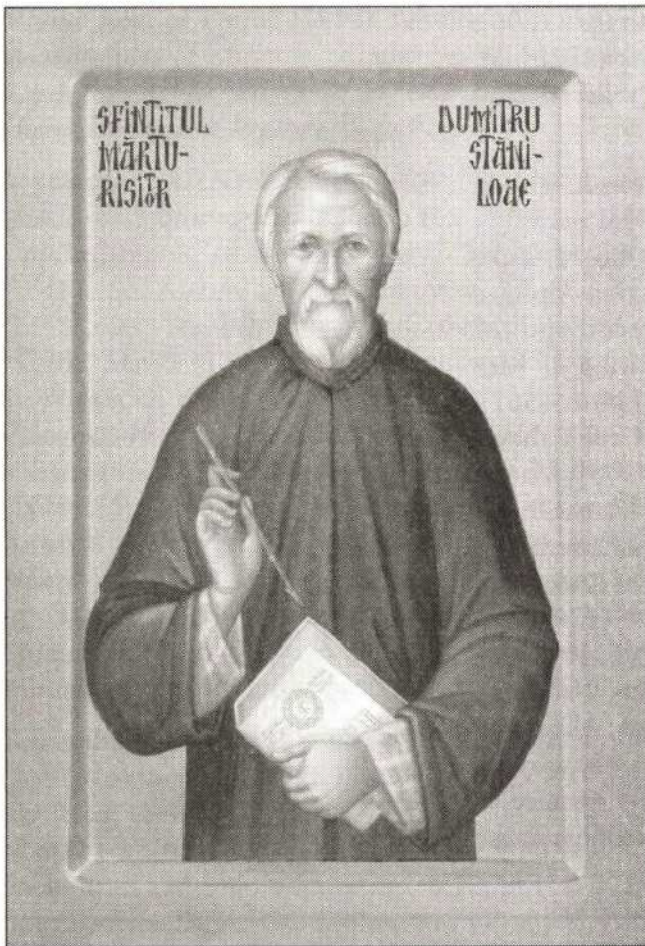
Fr. Dimitrie himself used to recount warily to the monks of Sihastria Monastery who often visited him, “May these words be nothing but praise to our Lord’s Cross!—At times it happens that I speak to God and receive an answer. But afterwards I feel such fear! A fear so great that I kneel down with my face to the ground and ask forgiveness for having dared to address Him so directly. Yet, after I pour out all my sorrow, a vast inner joy fills me! I know not where this joy comes from, nor how long it will last. And, oh, the many times I’ve seen such light!”

After 1989, Fr. Dimitrie offered a personal testimony (in his dialogues with the monks from Sihastria, published in the book *The Joys of Suffering*) about the martyrdom of his generation and the “humanism” of atheist Communism. After his passing, he left as a testament several excellent books describing his sufferings: *Oranki: Memories from Captivity*, *The Great Blizzard*, *The Damned Village*, and *Mere Stories*.

In one of his books, Fr. Dimitrie wrote these profound lines: “There are too many people who live just a bodily existence and are not shaken by any ordeal around them, as if swimming easily with the flow of the river. But there are some individuals—the bold ones—who swim upstream. And these are the ones who open new paths to heaven. Not the crowd, but the few!”



# OCTOBER



## PRIEST DUMITRU STANILOAE

November 3/16, 1903–September 21/October 4, 1993

*A theologian, priest, professor, scholar, and spiritual father, Dumitru Staniloae augmented his talents with the gift of confessing and preaching Christ—by means of mouth and pen—during the difficult years of Communist persecution.*

*Wishing to become a priest from a young age, he enrolled in the Cernauti Seminary, but finding the instruction unsatisfying, he left to study literature in Bucharest. After a providential meeting with Metropolitan Nicolae (Balan) of Sibiu, he returned and finished his licentiate, and then was sent abroad for studies, completing a doctorate in theology. Having discovered the writings of St. Gregory Palamas in Athens, he traveled through Europe, collecting the saint's unpublished writings, and eventually translating them. Returning to Romania, he was appointed professor and then rector of the Theological Academy in Sibiu, as well as the editor of a major newspaper. During the Second World War, he began his lifelong project of translating the*

*Philokalia, producing a greatly expanded and annotated twelve-volume Romanian edition.*

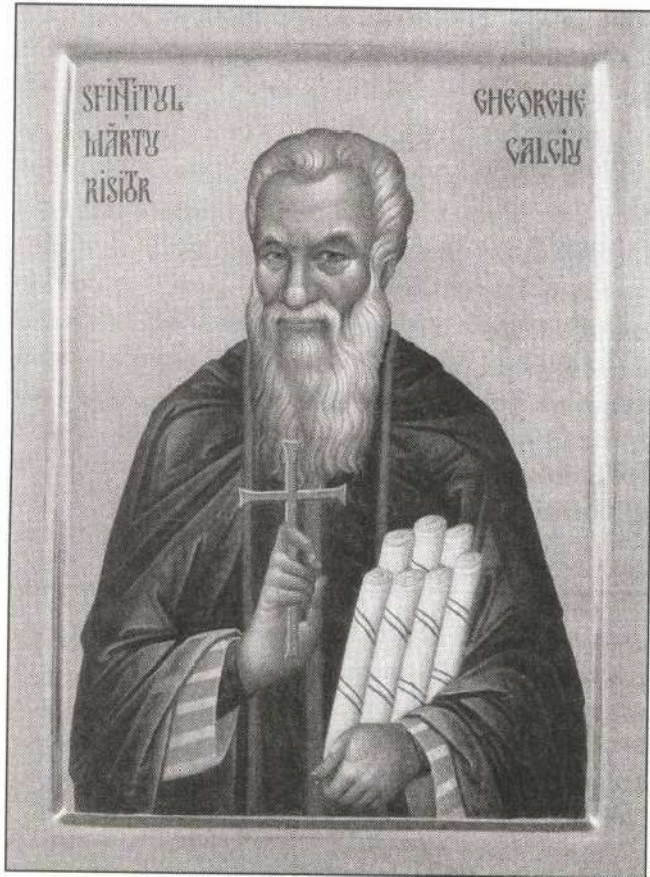
*Being forcibly removed from Sibiu by the Communist authorities, he taught for a time at the Theological Academy in Bucharest, until his arrest in 1959 for participating in the Burning Bush meetings at Antim Monastery. For this he was sentenced to five years of prison in Aiud, where his spiritual gifts brought consolation to the detainees. Those who passed through Aiud remember his kind face framed by a halo of holiness and grace. As Ilie Tudor recounted about this: "The cold was grim. They put us in a room and locked us in. Near us there happened to be a thin old man, particularly shy. The little old man—who, I have recently learned, was Fr. Staniloae, the great theologian—would speak to us every evening. He was weak, and his frail voice was hard to hear, so a deep silence would befall us. Who could even mention anything about hunger and cold? Or about suffering or lack of belief in the power of faith? Everything melted under the gentle voice of this brilliant representative of Orthodoxy, who was now bearing his cross for Christ's glory as well. He seemed like a Byzantine saint lost among the damned, who were also protectors of their nation and her Church. In those conditions, his words were like a balm, an unexpected gift from heaven for the many martyrs who would later fill the crossless cemetery at Aiud. He was a fountain of wisdom. He was a light in the darkness that surrounded us, our spiritual nourishment, the support of the grace that poured over us through him, [Christ's] servant—the priest and confessor, Dumitru Staniloae."*

*Released in 1963, he resumed his academic work with the same dedication as before, and published several books and dozens of important articles on Orthodox dogmatic theology, ecclesiology, and Patristic studies, as well as over thirty volumes of translations of the works of the Holy Fathers. Despite his academic accomplishments, his soul remained as humble and as warm as ever.*

*Having almost single-handedly led a Patristic revival in the Romanian Church, Fr. Dumitru remained active until the end of his life. He was beloved of both monastics and the laity, and the entire Synod attended his funeral. He was laid to rest in the cemetery of the Cernica Monastery, outside of Bucharest—to the end, a witness to humility, peace, long-suffering, and endless love in Christ.*



# NOVEMBER



## PRIEST GEORGE CALCIU

November 10/23, 1925–November 8/21, 2006

*Fr. George Calciu was born in the village of Mahmudia, on the Danube Delta, where the richness of land and sea blends with the sky's beauty and is reflected in the pious hearts of the countrymen. That blessed place, which he loved dearly to the end of his life, fostered in his soul the love for God and nation—a love which he would later confess to others and for which he would endure great sufferings.*

*From his earliest school days and while a student at the Spiru Haret gymnasium in Tulcea, Fr. George chose to serve the unfortunate. He was exceptionally gifted in literature, and his colleagues and teachers predicted a brilliant career for him, but he decided, to everyone's amazement, to go to medical school in order to help those in pain. Yet his path was to be a different one: he was to become a doctor of souls after a spiritual "internship" of*

*twenty-one years in the Communist prisons.*

*Arrested in 1948, when he was a third-year student at Bucharest University's School of Medicine, he was interrogated in the basements of the Securitate and then sent to the Pitesti Prison, where Christian youth were forced to undergo the dehumanizing experiment of "re-education." Under a devastating regimen of torture and fear, his soul was broken, but not for long. At the so-called "re-education trial" of 1956, with a martyr's courage George Calciu rejected the accusations with which he was framed and instead pointed at the real authors of that barbarous system. His punishment was detention in the "casimca," a sort of an underground solitary confinement meant to result in extermination. But God saved him, and after his release in 1964 he attended the literature and theological academies in Bucharest, becoming a priest and a professor at the Theological Seminary.*

*In 1978, when the atheist authorities ordered the demolition of the ancient Enei Church in Bucharest, Fr. George's voice rose with the strength of the prophets of old, reproaching this criminal act and calling the people to faith. His "Seven Words for the Youth," preached on the porch of the Radu-Voda Monastery church, became the grounds for a new arrest and conviction. Pulled from the midst of his students and family, he was again sent down into the hell of the Communist prisons with a ten-year sentence.*

*Due to pressure from the Romanian diaspora, he was released in 1984 and sent into exile to America. After a few years of difficulty and deprivation, Fr. George managed to set up an Orthodox community near Washington D.C., akin to those in which the first Christians lived, when "those who believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4: 32).*

*Fr. Calciu's attempt to return to Romania for good after 1989 did not succeed, perhaps because "no prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24). But his last wish, to be buried in his native land, was fulfilled. His much-tried body rests now in the cemetery of Petru-Voda Monastery, and his soul rejoices with the Romanian martyrs in the ineffable light of Christ's Kingdom.*



# DECEMBER



## ARCHIMANDRITE GERASIM ISCU

January 8/21, 1912—December 13/26, 1951

Having entered the monastic life at a very young age, Fr. Gerasim lived first at Bogdana Monastery in Bacau County and afterwards at Tismana Monastery in Gorj County. He graduated from the theological seminary as valedictorian, and then attended the Theological Academy in Bucharest. He was appointed abbot of Arnota Monastery in Valcea, then librarian at Cernica, and afterwards, for a year, as a missionary priest in Transnistria, where he wholeheartedly served the persecuted Romanians.

In 1943 he became abbot of the Tismana Monastery, which he ran skillfully with zeal and wisdom. In the

dark years that followed World War II, when Romanians hid in the mountains, trying to resist the atheist regime that was violently taking over the country, Fr. Gerasim supported General Carlaont's anti-Communist movement, providing the fighters from the mountains of Oltenia with food and shelter.

Arrested in 1948 and subjected to a dreadful interrogation, he endured the torture without denouncing anyone involved. He was sentenced to ten years of prison and sent to Aiud, then Pitesti and Poarta Alba.

Afflicted with pulmonary and intestinal tuberculosis, he was transferred to the sanatorium-jail at Targu-Ocna, where the atmosphere of love and prayer surrounding the "saint of the prisons," Valeriu Gafencu, brought comfort to the souls of the sick prisoners, bringing them closer to heaven.

In his memoirs, fellow prisoner Ioan Ianolide recalled: "Fr. Gerasim was as thin as a ghost. He had been at the Danube-Black Sea canal working sixteen hours a day. He had been part of a 'special' group of priests placed under a quick extermination regime. At the canal, Fr. Gerasim always encouraged his friends, helped many of them with their work, practiced the Prayer of the Heart, and used the great spiritual resources within himself to stay strong and above all misery. Informers soon denounced him for confessing and giving the Holy Eucharist to the prisoners, so he was beaten, isolated, starved, and tortured even more than before. Man is made of flesh and bones, and the spirit cannot escape the laws of life, so the ascetic, greatly advanced in holiness, fell ill with tuberculosis and, half-dead, was brought to Targu-Ocna to die a 'decent' death."

Fr. Gerasim fell asleep in the Lord in 1951. Feeling that his end was near, he went to the bed of his torturer from the canal—who was also dying in the same room—and said serenely, "I forgive you from the bottom of my heart. And since I forgive you, undoubtedly Christ, Who is infinitely kinder than I am, will also forgive you. There is a place in heaven for you as well."



# SAINT HERMAN CALENDAR 2014

THE YEAR 7522 FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

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## NOTES ON THE CALENDAR

The date according to the Church (Julian) Calendar always precedes that of the civil calendar. Scriptural references are according to the King James Version whenever possible. The Calendar follows the Typicon of St. Sabbas' (Savva's) Monastery as used in the Russian Orthodox Church. To the list of Universal Orthodox Saints are added locally venerated Saints of national

Churches. A number of Saints are commemorated on different days in the Greek Calendar; these are indicated at the end of the daily list of Saints in parentheses (Gr. Cal.). At the end of the daily list of Saints there are often commemorations in italics; these are more recent ascetics, hierarchs and martyrs, of holy life, but not yet canonized, for whom it is appropriate to celebrate requiem or memorial services.

## New Confessors of Romania

### INTRODUCTION

JUNE 2013 marked the end of an era for the Orthodox faithful in Romania, with the repose of Archimandrite Justin (Parvu) of Petru Voda Monastery, the last of the prominent elders living in Romania who had suffered in the Communist prisons of their country. These confessors of the faith kept the flame of Orthodoxy alive during the darkest times for the Romanian Church, reminding the people that they were called to a spiritual dignity that would eclipse every promise of a materialist utopia. After the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu's dictatorship in 1989, the many spiritual fathers who had survived incarceration, labor camps, and torture were able to begin the work of reviving the Orthodox soul of Romania. Their experience of years and decades endured in suffering allowed them to take on the burdens of all who came to them for a word of consolation. They labored unceasingly, confessing and counseling multitudes of people each day. They rebuilt monasteries, raised up a new generation of faithful, and unceasingly called the nation to repentance and God's forgiveness.

The mid-twentieth-century persecution unleashed by the Communist authorities was conceived as a

means of creating a "new man"—one devoted only to the government, with his fidelity to God, family, and tradition cast away. People of every strata of society, from shepherds to intellectuals, were imprisoned by the *Securitate*, the state's secret police, which especially focused on the most influential personalities who would not submit to the new ideology. Such were many of the confessors whose lives are presented in this year's *St. Herman Calendar*. Fr. Daniil (Sandu Tudor) was a renowned writer, who had founded two journals. Fr. Dumitru Staniloae was both the editor of a major newspaper and the rector of the Theological Academy in Sibiu. Fr. George Calciu was among a group of exceptional and promising university students. The Communist authorities attempted to convince the nation that only an ignorant person or a rustic would believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. But this was not the case. During the twentieth century, when much of the European (and Romanian) intelligentsia was turning away from Christianity, other Romanian intellectuals were investigating the deep roots of Orthodox Christianity and the hesychast tradition (a life of communion with God, founded on the Jesus Prayer), as a solution to the existential problems posed by modern society.



FROM THE APOSTLE ANDREW TO  
ST. PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY

Christianity in the Romanian lands can be traced back to the first century when, according to tradition, the Apostle Andrew arrived in Dobrogea, the region adjacent to the Black Sea. As early as the fourth century there were already dozens of episcopal sees in the area, and their bishops were present at the first four Ecumenical Councils.

Although monasteries existed in the Romanian lands from the fourth century, there is little information recorded about them until the fourteenth century. At that time Moldavia and Wallachia became independent states with their own metropolitanates. This led to greater contact with the Byzantine Empire, including the monks of Mount Athos. Around 1365 St. Nicodemus of Tismana (†1406, commemorated December 26) arrived in the Romanian lands. Born in Serbia in 1320, he became a monk—and later abbot—at Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos. He was renowned as a skilled practitioner of the Jesus Prayer with an experiential knowledge of the hesychast way of life, having known St. Gregory the Sinaite in his youth. Upon arriving in Romania he founded a series of coenobitic monasteries, among which was the great Tismana Monastery. His influence was so great that he is considered the reorganizer of monastic life in Romania. Around the same time monks from other Balkan countries, fleeing the Ottoman yoke, arrived in Romania, bringing with them the spiritual treasures they had cultivated.

Over the next few centuries a healthy monastic life flourished. Hundreds of monasteries were built, including Neamts, Agapia, and Bistritsa. But by the eighteenth century, finding an elder experienced in interior prayer that leads to union with God became an exception rather than the rule.—One such exception was St. Basil of Poiana Marului (†1767, commemorated April 25), who wrote several highly regarded introductions in the *Philokalia*. One of his disciples, St. Paisius Velichkovsky (†1794, commemorated November 15), became the catalyst for a hesychast revival that not only swept through the Romanian lands, but even spread into Russia, culminating in the great spiritual flowering of Optina Monastery. Born in the Ukraine in 1722, St. Paisius was sent as a youth to the Ecclesiastical Academy in Kiev. Disappointed by the dry, formulaic teaching there, and by the corruption he



Archimandrite Justin (Parvu).

witnessed in Kiev, he traveled to Wallachia in search of a spiritual father. He labored for several years in the small sketes of the region, under the capable guidance of Elder Basil. But when it was suggested that Paisius be ordained to the priesthood before the canonical age, he fled to Mount Athos. Once there he searched out Patristic writings on the spiritual life, specifically on the art of interior prayer. He would spend the rest of his life translating these texts into Slavonic, transmitting the teachings to his many disciples, and reestablishing coenobitic life at the monasteries of Dragomirna, Secu, and Neamts in Moldavia. For a hundred years, monasticism and the Christian life in general would thrive in the region.

COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL

In the 1860s, following the Crimean War and the union of Moldavia and Wallachia, a government-supported anti-monastic movement sprang up. Influenced by the positivist currents coming from the West, the state seized the vast monastery properties, turning the monasteries into old-age homes, prisons, and parish churches, in the name of social progress.



Men under sixty and women under fifty were forbidden the monastic tonsure. By the end of the nineteenth century there were fewer than 250 monasteries and sketes, with only 400 monks and nuns. The theological schools, which had imported Latin Scholasticism from the Ukraine centuries earlier, persisted in their decline. St. Paisius' spiritual legacy continued to bear fruit in such Orthodox citadels as Cernica Monastery, but interest in Patristic literature declined, accompanied by a waning of hesychastic practice.

However, following the First World War, another Christian spiritual renewal took place in Romania. At that time, the great elders of the early twentieth century, such as Fr. Ioanichie (Moroi), Vincent (Malau), and Nicodemus (Manditsa) instilled a love for prayer and the guarding of the heart, under the sobering influence of obedience and toil. They formed the souls of some of the great spiritual fathers of the twentieth century, including Elders Paisius (Olaru) and Cleopa (Ilie).

At the same time, the Romanian intelligentsia was confronted with the philosophical ideas consuming Europe at the time. Foremost among them was nationalism, which led intellectuals to consider the true foundation of Romanian culture. Ultimately, the question centered on the relevancy of Orthodoxy in contemporary Romania, with certain elements of the intelligentsia seeking to replace it with pseudo-mysticism. A group of university professors, writers, philosophers, and poets contributed to the discussion through the publication of the journal *Gandireea*. Among these intellectuals was Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, who saw that the foundation of Romanian culture and identity was its Orthodox spiritual tradition. Early in his career as a theologian, Fr. Dumitru discovered the writings of St. Gregory Palamas and the *Philokalia*, which introduced him to a theology founded on experiential knowledge, instead of that found in the Scholastic-style manuals of the seminaries. Fr. Dumitru saw the *Philokalia* as a source book of authentic Christian mysticism, based on the Patristic science of the soul, tested through generations, providing practical guidance not only for monastics but for all Christians, toward a definitive goal of transforming passions into virtues, which culminates in love and union with God. The spirituality of the *Philokalia* resonated deeply in the hearts of many Romanian faithful, and this was accompanied by a renewed interest in Patristic literature. In later times of

external persecution, it allowed them to maintain an internal life of the Church through the Jesus Prayer.

In 1944 the Communists took over the seat of government, and the renewal movement was forced underground. Many of the best of the young generation—including Anghel Papacioc (the future Fr. Arsenie), Valeriu Gafencu, and Virgil Maxim—had already been arrested by the compromising governments of Carol II and Ion Antonescu, but now the persecution became more systematic. As Fr. George Calciu related, "They wanted to make a new generation—a new generation to build Communism. They didn't want opponents, so they arrested the priests and monks, the intellectuals, engineers, and scholars. They wanted to put a big gap between the old generation and the new generation that they wanted to form, so they put everyone in prison. They sentenced people to ten, twenty years, without any justice, just because they wanted to destroy a generation in order to make this gap." Among those arrested were students—including the young George Calciu—who were also seen as a threat by the new Communist government, since they did not accept the forced indoctrination of Marxist ideas at the university.

One common destination for those sentenced was Pitesti Prison, where a diabolical experiment, crafted to break down the young minds and destroy their sense of dignity, had been introduced. The torturers in the prison were no longer simply the guards, but also one's fellow inmates. There was no break from the tortures, humiliations, and forced blasphemies. Part of the prisoners' "reeducation" was known as "unmasking." Under torture they were forced to renounce everything they loved: family, friends, and especially God. When their conversion to the "new man" was complete, they were sent back to inflict the same tortures on other inmates, often their own friends. The experiment ended after a few years, when details of the process leaked to the outside world. Not all survived their years in Pitesti: some were killed, while others committed suicide. Those who lived were transferred to other prisons, and their healing began when they encountered clergy and laymen who had already passed through the purifying suffering of the prison system and had become vessels of the Holy Spirit.

#### THE BURNING BUSH MOVEMENT

Even though the possibility of imprisonment was



constantly present, the desire for a living connection to God remained strong among many intellectuals. In 1945 Antim Monastery in Bucharest became the center for an underground renewal movement known as the "Burning Bush" (*Rugul Aprins*). Based on the practice of the Jesus Prayer and the study of the *Philokalia*, it endeavored to give life to the Orthodox Faith in its hesychastic expression. Many leading intellectuals took part, striving to make scientific research and all human activity a meeting place between God and man. It was also guided by a refugee Valaam elder, Schemamonk John (Kuligin), who had brought to Bucharest the prayer journal of Abbot Chariton, which was translated and distributed amongst the group's members (it was subsequently published in English under the title *The Art of Prayer*).

During this same period, Fr. Dumitru began publishing his translation of the *Philokalia* in Romanian. Between 1947 and 1948, the first four volumes appeared. (The following six volumes would only begin to come out nearly thirty years later.) The publication had a huge impact on the spiritual life of the nation, as only small sections of the *Philokalia* had been previously translated into Romanian. The depth and profundity of the Patristic teachings on prayer were opened up to the great thinkers of the day, and Antim Monastery was at the center of the conversation about the teachings on the Prayer of the Heart and their dissemination. Amazingly, the meetings of the Burning Bush continued for almost ten years, until the authorities arrested the movement's leaders, including Fathers Daniil (Sandu Tudor), Dumitru Staniloae, Roman (Braga), Benedict (Ghius), Sofian (Boghiu), and Adrian (Fageteanu).

These confessors also endured torments in their prison experiences. Physical and psychological torture, isolation, disease-ridden cells, starvation, and forced labor were the norm. For example, in 1949 the Communist government began an immense show project: the digging of the Danube-Black Sea Canal. Prison camps were built all along the proposed canal path, and by 1950 they were filled to capacity. In that year alone 40,000 prisoners worked on the canal, digging with shovels and pickaxes. Common criminals were chosen to head the work brigades and were encouraged to use physical violence on the religious and political prisoners. Food allotments never made their way to the inmates, and they resorted to hunting mice

and eating grass to sustain themselves. It is estimated that up to 200,000 people died in the four years that work continued. In 1953 the project was called to a halt when the lack of progress came to public notice.

#### THE PRISONS BECOME SCHOOLS

However, contrary to intention, the prisons generated a blossoming of spiritual life, becoming schools in the practice of true Christianity. The philokalic wisdom that had been theory and words for many of the intellectuals involved in the Burning Bush movement, suddenly came to life in the sufferings of the prison system. In later years Fr. Dumitru would confess that his time in prison was the first time he could pray without ceasing with the mind in the heart. And Fr. George would relate in an interview: "In prison we had the most spiritual life. We reached levels that we are not able to reach in this world. Isolated, anchored in Jesus Christ, we had joys and illuminations that this world cannot offer us. There are no words to express exactly the feeling we had there. Those who have not had our spiritual experience cannot understand that we could be happy in prison." Likewise, Fr. Arsenie (Papacioc), referring to his imprisonment in the early forties during the governments of Carol II and Ion Antonescu, said, "No other preparation could offer such possibilities for growing in one's faith, for spiritual deepening, for a living relationship with God, as were offered by the tribulations of imprisonment."

Often, Morse Code was the only mode of communication for prisoners, and even Confessions would take place through tapping on the walls. In order to starve the minds of religious and political prisoners, authorities prohibited the possession of books, journals, and even writing paper. When circumstances were less severe, the inmates took advantage of the extensive pool of knowledge possessed by so many luminary minds. As Fr. Justin (Parvu) related, "There were all sorts of us there: schoolteachers, university professors, engineers, doctors, lawyers, priests. Each of us was learning from the others. It was a school, a university of life in all respects. There were shepherds learning German and Italian. There were theologians teaching dogmatics, prayers, hymns, Akathists, everything. We were all learning one from the other. That's how the flame of life was being kept; that's how we stayed alive."

(Continued on page 112)



(“*New Confessors of Romania*,” continued from page 4)

#### LIFE AFTER PRISON

In 1964 the government called a general amnesty, and most of the political and religious prisoners were freed. Nearly all of Romania’s spiritual fathers had been arrested at one time or another in the preceding twenty-five years. Some would be arrested again. Fr. George Calciu, who had spent sixteen years in the prisons, would be sent back again in 1978 for another six years. Often they were transferred from one monastery to another or put under house arrest. Even if they were prevented from addressing the people, their mere presence in society was a witness to the power of Christ’s suffering on the Cross and conquering of death.

After the fall of the Ceausescu regime in 1989, many closed monasteries were able once again to open their doors. Scattered throughout Romania, the surviving confessors took on a new ascetic endeavor: they relinquished their days and nights in order to comfort the hundreds of people who came

to see them daily. Fr. Arsenie (Papacioc) would say, “I confess people continually. It’s my most tiring obedience! But I comfort myself with the thought that God wants it like this, and I shouldn’t have cause for sadness. God forbid! Don’t be sad! We must be in a state of continuous cheerfulness that holds us upright and keeps us in motion.... Nothing is lost as long as faith is established, the soul doesn’t surrender, and you raise your head again!”

The vast majority of Romania’s confessors have now passed on to eternal life. We pray that the witness of their faith and the flaming torch of their spiritual wisdom and experience will continue to ignite new generations of the faithful. May their lives and witness nourish and water the souls of believers in Romania and throughout the world.

—Riassaphore-monk Adrian

*Biographical articles, iconographic illustrations of the New Confessors, and front cover icon courtesy of the sisters of Diaconesti Monastery.*



# SAINT HERMAN CALENDAR 2014



*New Confessors of Romania*