

Six Decades since a Blessed Event in the History of the Relics of Venerable Saint Parascheva – the Generalization of Her Veneration (October 1955-October 2015)

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Abstract:

Although the Romanian nation produced, throughout its history, numerous saints, canonization took place during the noteworthy rule of Patriarch Justinian Marina (1948-1977), in 1950. Together with the introduction into the calendar of Romanian saints, the generalization of venerating the saints whose relics are in our country was decided. Among the saints whose veneration was extended at the time, was Venerable St Parascheva “the housewife-like enlightener of Moldavia”, whose holy relics were brought to Iași in 1641, during the reign of the pious Prince Vasile Lupu and the holy Bishop and scholar Varlaam.

The proclamation of the generalization of St Parascheva’s veneration was held on October 14th, 1955, six decades ago, during the noteworthy rule of Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan (1950-1956). The dedication day was a day of liturgical and spiritual significance. Both Romanian Hierarchs and those of other Jurisdictions, along with many priests, monks, nuns and many of the faithful attended the event.

Keywords: *Romanian saints, generalization of veneration, St Parascheva, Moldavia*

Venerable St Parascheva of Iași, *Saint Parascheva the New* or *Saint Friday* was born and lived in the first decades of the eleventh century. Because she is a saint who lived almost a millennium ago, the exact date the Ecumenical Patriarchate received her among the saints is not known. Her first *Life* was written during the time of Ecumenical Patriarch Nicholas IV (1145-1151), by deacon Basiliskos (Păcurariu 1994: 165). Her holy relics, having remained for almost 200 years in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Epivat, were first moved to Tarnovo, then Vidin, Belgrade, Constantinople and, since 1641, they have protected the city of Iași, the land of Moldavia, St Parascheva being called in the Akathist “the

housewife-like enlightener of Moldavia” among other names given her (Vicovan and Adumitroaie 2011: 20-40).

The relics of Venerable Parascheva and other saints, that are not Romanian but that have been in our country for centuries, protect our „country and people”. That is why when the issue of Romanian saints’ canonization first came forth, during the noteworthy rule of Patriarch Justinian Marina (1948-1977), the generalization of the veneration of non-Romanian saints whose relics are on Romanian territory was also discussed.

Thus, among the outstanding achievements of the above-mentioned Patriarch, there is the canonization of some Romanian saints (the first canonization of the Romanian saints in the history of our Church) and the generalization of the veneration of saints whose relics are in our country. Among the saints of foreign origin whose relics are in our country, we mention, in chronological order of the introduction of their relics into our country: Holy Martyr Filofteia (feast day: the 7th of December), Venerable Nicodim of Tismana (the 26th of December), Holy Martyr John the New of Suceava (the 2nd/24th of June), Venerable Gregory Dekapolites (the 20th of November), Venerable Parascheva the New (the 14th of October) and Venerable Dimitrie the New of Basarabi (the 27th of October) (Braniște 1993: 230-241). Both events took place in 1950 (i.e. canonization and generalization), 1955 (the special service of proclamation) and 1956 (in the particular case of St Joseph the New of Partoș).

The two decisions were taken by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the initiative of Patriarch Justinian in response to the address submitted by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania (1920-1955), chairman of the Synodal Canonization Commission. The address contained:

1) the generalization of the veneration of saints whose relics are in our country and the communication of this decision to the other sister Churches;

2) the acknowledgement of and the entry into our calendar of Saint John of Oltenia, known as St John of Wallachia, canonized by the Greek Orthodox Church;

3) the proposal of introducing into the worship and calendar of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Romanian saints by an official decision of the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church (the holy martyrs confessors Nicolae Oprea, Sofronie from Cioara, Ilie Iorest, Sava Brancovici and Visarion Sarai; the venerable bishops Iosif of Partoș, Calinic of Cernica and Ioan of Râșca) (Vicovan 2008: 214-215) [1].

Analyzing the proposals to the Synodal Canonization Commission, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided, in its meeting on the 28th of February, the generalization of the veneration of the saints whose holy relics were in our country and who enjoyed lasting local honor from the faithful and the introduction into the worship and calendar of the Romanian Orthodox Church of St John of Wallachia, whose commemoration day is on the 12th of May.

Another decision was taken in regard to the martyrs and confessors of Orthodoxy and the venerable Romanians so as to be revered and introduced into the local calendar. The dioceses where these saints were revered had the responsibility to submit to the Holy Synod the synaxaria, chants and services in their honor for the preparation of the documents of solemn canonization.

The preparation of this special event, of particular importance for the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church, began after a letter asking for information regarding the criteria for the canonization of Saints from the Ecumenical Patriarchate was sent.

The Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios II (1929-1935), responded to the letter sent by our Church, on the 24th of March, 1931:

Observing our tradition, on recognizing and ordering among the saints of the Church the people that are dear to God, the following general rules apply: 1. Checking the sanctity elements must be done by the Synod of all Metropolitans, Archbishops, Bishops and Church officials. 2. Checking is superfluous for those saints that general religious conscience of pastors and parishioners had generally acknowledged as such, whom they had honored and venerated for a long time. The formal acknowledgement by the Church of these holy people, previously honored tacitly as holy and honored by God, is done as above-mentioned. 3. On proclamation, a document for which the accompanying document, the copy of the canonization of Saint Gerasimos the New during Patriarch Cyril Lucaris at the beginning of the eighteenth century, may serve as a model, shall be drawn up. 4. The document of proclamation is signed solemnly by the Church, together with the due liturgy as follows: the whole Synod enters the church and with the Gospel

in the middle, the troparia are sung: “Blessed are You, O Christ, our God”, “When you descended ...” and others. Then, the document is read and signed by all present synod members and afterwards troparia are sung: “Holy Martyrs, in need”, “For the pain of the Saints who have suffered for you”, “Clothed as in purple and fine linen with the blood of your Martyrs throughout the world...” 5. For the most outstanding among those to be declared saints, special service is justly created in advance, proper for use in the Church within the ceremony and hymnology of the Orthodox Church. 6. It is also necessary to bring the relics, if they are found, and anoint them with the Holy Chrism, while on bringing the relics, panhidas and solemn services are done (“The Answer of Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios II on the 24th March 1931” 1950).

These criteria and other information were sent by the Patriarchal Administration, The Studies and Education Office (no. 3622), on the 4th of April 1950 to the Metropolitan See of Moldavia and Suceava.

From the report, we find that

the Holy Synod, in its meeting on February 28, taking into deliberation the issue of canonization of Saints in the Romanian Orthodox Church, decided: I. The following saints who have until now enjoyed local honour shall be venerated throughout the whole Romanian Orthodox Church: 1. Holy Venerable our Mother Parascheva, whose relics are in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iași, and whose feast day is on the 14th of October (...) the names of these Saints shall be introduced into the calendar on the specific days for each, with proper services (...) the Diocesan centers in whose areas they will be worshipped shall introduce them into the local calendar and the Holy Synod will submit synaxaria, troparia and services in their honor, in preparation of the documents of solemn canonization. IV. We also send two reports on canonization, with the plea to closely scrutinize and gather – according to the indications they include – all data on honoring various people across those Dioceses and to communicate them to us and bring them before the Holy Synod for the same purpose of preparing the documents for canonization (“The Answer of Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios II on the 24th March 1931” 1950).

The document, registered at the M.M.S. Registry with no. 9995 of September 30 1950 is signed by Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan (1950-1956): “April 8, 1950, Fr. Nonea shall study and address to us the proposal” (“The Answer of Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios II on the 24th of March 1931” 1950).

We also mention that the proclamation of the canonization of Romanian Saints organized on the occasion of the celebration of 70 years of autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church, was held on October 10-23, 1955, in Alba Iulia, Iași and Cernica. On this occasion, delegates

of sister Orthodox Churches of Constantinople, Greece, Bulgaria, and Russia were invited to participate in the celebrations (Păcurariu 2008, 3rd vol.: 456; Vicovan 2002: 257).

The proclamation of generalization of St Parascheva's veneration

After the 1950 decision of the canonization of the first Romanian saints, in 1955, their veneration was both proclaimed and generalized, with the above-mentioned exception. The generalization of St Parascheva's veneration by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church took place on the 10th of October 1955, in a solemn session, attended by representatives of sister Orthodox Churches.

The Archive of the Diocesan Centre of Iași stores much information on the generalization of the proclamation of Saint Parascheva's veneration. Among other things, in the above-mentioned archive, there is an invitation, signed by Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan (1950-1956), addressed to the members of the Romanian saints canonization commission. The invitation is dated "Bucharest, December 6, 1954" and was sent in order to propose, analyze and settle the schedule of events celebrating the solemn proclamation of the canonization / generalization of the veneration of saints. The invitation reads:

Honored Members designated by the Holy Synod for the canonization of Romanian Saints, you are invited to attend a meeting in the palace of the Holy Patriarchy on Thursday, December 9th, 1954, 17 hours after a meal. Presence is mandatory.

So as not to affect this important task with which we have been entrusted, in our absence, His Eminence Antim Târgovișteanu will chair any meetings to come. 1. His Eminence Antim; 2. Fr. Prof. Liviu Stan; Fr. Prof. Ene Braniște] ("The personal file of His Eminence Metropolitan" 1955).

A notice addressed to the Holy Synod (no. 8900/1955 of October 5th) was sent to the Archdiocese of Iași (no. 13873 of October 11, 1955) reporting that "Most Venerable Vicar of the Holy Metropolitan See of Moldavia and Suceava", Constantin Nonea, will coordinate the exact application of the program prepared for the festivities in Iași, in October. The program was presented on the 4th of October to the Central Committee of Organization, created for this purpose ("To the Holy Diocese of Iași" 1955).

A notice sent by the Patriarchal Administration, no. 8850/1955 (the Metropolitan See of Moldavia and Suceava, Iași, entry no. 13656/6 Oct. 1955), to father Constantin Nonea informs us that, for the report on the festivities taking place in Iași to be published in B.O.R. (i.e. R.O.C.) journal, father Scarlat Porcescu was delegated. He was to send, within three days after the festivities, a comprehensive report of what happened to the journal editors. On the day of the ceremony, until to 4 pm, the same representative had a duty to inform via telephone the Cabinet of Patriarch Justinian concerning the festivities (“To His Eminence, Fr. C. Nonea, Vicar of the Metropolitan See of Moldavia and Suceava” 1955).

The calendar of the events to take place on the 12th of October, set up in advance, shows the importance of the proclamation of the generalization of venerating the Saints whose holy relics were in our country in general and St Parascheva, in particular.

Thus ensued the departure to Iași of the delegation of the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Moscow, accompanied by Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan, with I. Moisescu and father S. Neaga as interpreters. The guests were to be greeted by Bishops Theofil of Roman, vicar of the Metropolitan See of Moldavia, Chesarie of Dunărea de Jos, Antim of Buzău and Valerian of Oradea. The departure was set for the afternoon of the 12th of October, by train or plane.

For the second day, the 13th of October, visits to churches, historical monuments and cultural institutions in Iași were scheduled, while on the 14th of October, the Holy Mass and the festivity of the generalization of Venerable Parascheva’s veneration afterwards were set up.

For the 15th of October, the program included a visit to Neamț Monastery where, the next day the delegation was to take part in the Divine Liturgy. For Monday, the program included a visit to the interior of this ancient monastery and of the Theological Seminary. On the 18th of October, the official delegation would pay a visit to Văratec Monastery and the next day, in the afternoon, to Agapia Monastery. On the 20th of October a visit of the interior of this monastery and of the Seminary there was scheduled. The 21st of October was dedicated to travel to Roman, the Diocesan Center. The official delegation would leave for Bucharest by train, on the evening of the same day, so as to arrive on the next morning

in the capital of the country (“To the Holy Diocese of Iași” 1955; “The Schedule of welcoming the delegates of the Patriarchy of Alexandria and of the Russian Orthodox, the solemnities of the generalization of Venerable Mother Parascheva of Iași and visiting Monasteries of the Diocese of Iași (the 12th October – 21st October 1955)” 1955).

A list set up by the Organization Committee included the names of the special guests expected to arrive in Iași: Metropolitan Gregory of Leningrad, Metropolitan Pallady of Volhynia, Metropolitan Sophrony of Tarnova, Archimandrite Dicov, father C. Neciaev, Archbishop Teofil of Roman, Bishop Antim, Bishop Chesarie, Bishop Valerian, Father Simion Neaga, Ioan Onțanu – Headmaster in the Ministry of Culture, Deacon Uncu from The Patriarchate of Bucharest, Father Ghervasie Crețu-București (“Picture of guests from abroad and from the country on the 14th of October 1955” 1955).

A considerable number of invitations were also sent to prominent personalities of the city and of the county, respectively (The County Council, universities, the court of law, the garrison, the Ministry of Culture, etc.). Of the prominent Clergy, we mention: Vicar Constantin Nonea, Councilor Priests Dumitru Hadîrcă, Scarlat Porcescu, Constantin Andoni, Father Teodor Bodnari, church inspector, the Great Ecclesiarch – Archimandrite Ioanichie Grădinaru, President of the Diocesan Consistory (“Table of the invitations for the 14th October 1955” 1955).

On the 14th of October, the service of the dedication of the Metropolitan Cathedral was officiated by Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan, together with Metropolitans Gregory of Leningrad, Pallady of Volhynia, and Sophrony of Tarnova, joined by Romanian Bishops Antim, Chesarie, Teofil, and Valerian. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the encyclical of the Holy Synod of R.O.C. regarding the veneration of the saints, whose relics are in Romania, was read (Gaspar 1981: 560-561).

A file from the Archive of the Diocesan Center is called “the Canonization of the Venerable Saint Parascheva. The festivities on the 14th of Oct. 1955” include the issuing of several documents regarding the proclamation of the generalization of her veneration and the minute preparations preceding it. Thus, we find out that on the 13th of October, the members of the Holy Synod and Hierarchs attending the event participated in the ceremony of taking out the relics of St Parascheva from

the Metropolitan Church to a special place in front of the Church. The mass was officiated by Bishop Teofil of Roman. The Vigil service was officiated in the evening.

The Holy Mass was officiated the next day by Metropolitan Gregory of Leningrad and the Hierarchs attending the mass, being followed by a sermon on St Parascheva's life. Afterwards, the participants witnessed the ceremony of the official proclamation of the generalization of St Parascheva's veneration in the (entire) Romanian Orthodox Church according to a carefully devised schedule.

While the troparion of the Saint was sung, the Council of Priests came out in front of the Cathedral, near the shrine of the Holy Parascheva. This synodal encyclical was read by Bishop Teofil of Roman ("The program of the festivities for the Canonization of Venerable Parascheva (the Metropolitan Church, the 14th of October 1955)" 1955).

Then the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia uttered, in front of the Saint's reliquary, the occasional prayer to the Saint, written by the Archdiocese of Iași:

humbly and reverently we bend today our knees to the glory of the Great God, Who has raised you, our Holy Venerable Mother Parascheva; an humble offering of praise and thanksgiving we bring, because He has given you to us to fervently pray for and protect us in Heaven. For you, in your youth, for the love of Christ left your parents and wealth, and the fleeting sweets of the world; and with great fasting, ceaseless vigil, tears and solitary needs weakening your frail body, you strengthened your soul; and so, taking up your Cross, you followed Christ, by the example of your life teaching us to beware of the fleeting body, and to nourish the immortal soul. Like the wise virgins, with oil of good deeds you filled the candle of your soul abundantly and greeted the heavenly Groom for resurrection. Therefore, His wedding room you stately entered, sweetening yourself incessantly by closely seeing His face; and on earth you deigned to discover us in a dream and send to us as a heavenly gift your holy relics, which brought to our land, by the zeal of pious Prince Vasile, became a covering for this land, and an inexhaustible wellspring of healing for all those who run to you with faith and hope. And spreading the news of your wonders all over our land, with love and joy the Romanian faithful everywhere honor you. Wherefore, we now gratefully offer praise unto Thee, Venerable Mother Parascheva, the praise of Epivat and the best protector of Moldavia. And piously kissing your venerable relics, please intercede for us before the face of the Creator of all, to protect henceforth this citadel, Moldavia and the whole Romanian country, delivering it from all evil. To all those who faithfully and lovingly run to your help, guard them in peace, grant them health of body and soul, and in all things good, enrichment. To strengthen

the right faith, break the turmoil of heresy and strife between brothers by the power of His Most Holy Spirit, ward off wars and perfectly bring peace to everyone. And so, following the example of your living, Most Venerable Mother, and having you as ceaseless comfort in troubles and strength in hope, let us all get to the most desirable harbour of salvation and let us praise to our last breath, your forever virtuous remembrance, crying to God: “Glory to Thee, Lord, the great and wonderful among thy Saints, forever. Amen” (Nonea and Porcesu 1955: 594-597).

The prayer was followed by a word from Metropolitan Gregory of Leningrad and Novgorod who, among other things, said:

May God grant, as we gathered today in the spirit of peace and love around the relics of Saint Parascheva, that those who are leaders of people gather in honest love and full understanding, so as to remove all causes of discord. With the prayers of the Most Venerable Mother Parascheva, may the Good God protect and help us all (Desartovici 2008: 90).

On behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, a fine speech was delivered by Metropolitan Sophrony of Tarnovo:

... the life of the Most Venerable Parascheva like the angels’, in the wilderness of Jordan, her prayers, her fasting, and her tears as well as the innumerable miracles that God performed through her holy relics are living parables, which she leaves to us to strengthen our Christian life and for the salvation of our souls. Through her asceticism in the wilderness and her holy relics, O God let this saint be for Christians a spiritual connection too so as to strengthen the Christian faith between two Orthodox peoples, Romanians and Bulgarians and among the nations of the Christian world ... (Nonea and Porcesu 1955: 608).

At the end of his speech, Metropolitan Sophrony uttered a prayer to Saint Parascheva:

O of Our Most Venerable Mother Parascheva! Receive through me, the humble Metropolitan Sophrony of Tarnovo, by the mercy of God successor of the Holy Patriarch Eftimie of Tarnovo who, by insufflation from God, wrote and left to the Orthodox world the book of your life and wonders that glorified our Lord Jesus Christ, your heavenly Groom, receive through me our Venerable Mother Parascheva the mighty faith, the prayers stemming from the soul, warm tears and the honest plea of your fellow citizens of the ancient citadel of the Asănești-Tarnovo, and of all your Orthodox Christian Bulgarian sons!

Receive their prayers and mine stemming from thirsty souls and take them, Most Pure Mother, before the chair of our King and God Jesus Christ, your heavenly Groom, so that He may grant us all as well as to all nations around the world, the gracious fruits of peace and love, of brotherhood and liberty; strengthen the

Romanian and Bulgarian peoples, in peace, in brotherly friendship and mutual beneficial cooperation, and enlighten them in the evangelical truths of the Holy Orthodox Christian faith, which is the true victory that has overcome the world (1Jn. 5: 4).

O Holy and Venerable Mother Parascheva! Receive these drops of roses, which I bring here, given to me by the right holy hand of His Beatitude Kirill, Patriarch of Bulgaria, the successor of your holy hagiographer Patriarch Eftimie of Tarnovo, as myrrh of wonderful fragrance for your holy and glorified relics, as an humble gift from the country of roses, from our fields and mountains, from the strain of loving hands of the Orthodox Christians, from your homeland, and eternal heavenly country, and remember them, Most Pure Mother, before God, in your eternal heavenly country, all of them, as the off-spring of the Romanian Orthodox Church on whose land your holy relics have forever found earthly haven. Amen (Nonea and Porcesu 1955: 609-610).

Then the hierarchs bent and kissed the coffin with the relics, while singing the Divine Hymn “The Most Holy Mother Parascheva, pray to God for us” (voice III). The audience then listened to Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan’s speech about expanding the veneration of St Parascheva. Then the representatives of foreign delegations on this solemn moment held speeches. Finally the polychronion was sung in the Metropolitan Palace.

In the evening the service of Vespers was celebrated, after which, about 6 pm, a group of priests headed by the Metropolitan and two Bishops went round the Metropolitan Cathedral with the holy relics, with stops in four stations. Saint Parascheva’s coffin was then carried into the church and put in the usual place where the Hierarchs and priests venerated the holy relics again, while the chanters sang the Saint’s Troparion. Afterwards, near the coffin an Hierarch remained, along with the common priests, to read the Akathist of the Saint (“The program of the festivities for the extension of the veneration of Venerable Parascheva (the Metropolitan Church, the 14th October 1955)” 1955).

In the *Encyclical* sent to the clergy and faithful of Romania, the members of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church highlight a deep reverence that is for all the Saints, irrespective of nation, but particularly to those whose relics are found in the Cathedrals and Monasteries across the country. This constancy of the clergy and faithful to the piety of the saints is strengthened by their inclusion in Synaxaria, by the existence of the service in service books, by celebrating them as

ordered and by building places of worship which bear their names, where their beautiful icons were painted.

One of the saints exemplifying this kind of reverence and veneration is the Venerable Parascheva, as she enjoyed in the beginning local honor in the area where Her holy relics were and then in other parts of the country. The encyclical asserts concerning her:

ornament of Iași and glory of Moldavia is she, after her birth in Epivat, near Constantinople. Longing for pure life, she left the world with its unrest and fled into the wilderness in her youth. Here, in silence and in solitude, she clothed herself with prayer, put on the belt of fasting and covered herself in wake. She enslaved her body with fasting, setting her soul free from the chains of vain thoughts. The bare earth was her bed and the leaves of the trees, her cover. Her only concern in the wilderness was how to beautify the candle of her soul, so as to meet the Lord and to hear His sweet voice. By prayer, acquiring manly understanding and strength, she utterly defeated the enemy of the soul, as David overcame Goliath. And she progressed so far that she became God's dwelling.

Her holy relics, discovered through vision, brought faith healing to many people. This is why they were carried into many countries and cities, and Vasile Lupu, prince and ruler of Moldavia procured them for his country. And with religious and princely procession he placed them in Iași, on the 14th of October, in the year of salvation 1641.

Then they were moved in 1888 in the bigger Holy Metropolitan Church of Iași. So, for 314 years Christ the Redeemer has listened and accomplished the fervent prayers of His Romanian faithful, directed to Him through our Venerable Mother Parascheva ("The *Encyclical* of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Church to clergy and faithful for revering of the saints whose relics are in our country" 1955).

Address no. 13288 of the 30th of September 1955 sent to the Deaneries of the Archdiocese of Iași informed them concerning the presence in the Moldavian capital of an important delegation from sister Orthodox Churches. Therefore the Archpriest of Iași is urged:

You shall require the priests in your deanery, to speak to the faithful about this important event in the life of the Church of Moldavia, advising and urging them to come to Iași to take part in the religious services of the 14th of October. It would be desirable to old-calendarists to come to Iași too. To this purpose, the priests in whose parishes there are such faithful, they will insist that they come to Iași, on St Parascheva's day. The priests who come to Iași on the 14th of October will wear ceremony vestments (skufia and epitrachelion) ("Address no. 13288/ 30 sept. 1955" 1955).

A similar address was sent to the Abbots of the Monasteries of Moldavia, stipulating: “you shall talk to the faithful who come to the Monastery about this important event in the life of the Moldavian Church and you shall advise and urge them to come to Iași to take part in the religious services on the 14th of October.”

After the events in Iasi on the 14th of October, the Archdiocese of Iași, through Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan, sent an official telegram to Patriarch Justinian to assure him of the proper running of all celebrations:

The celebration of the feast of the Venerable Mother Parascheva at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iași and the festivity of the generalization of her veneration throughout the whole Orthodox Church was held with great solemnity in the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory of Leningrad and Novgorod, Metropolitan Bishop Sophronius of Tarnovo and their companions, the representatives of authorities, of the Most Venerable Archpriests and Abbots of the Diocese and thousands of the faithful.

On this occasion, prayers of fraternity among the Orthodox Churches and for peace for everyone as well as for full health and long shepherding of Your Beatitude were uttered (“The telegram of His Beatitude Justinian the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest” 1955).

On these occasions, of particular importance for the life of the Church in Moldavia, besides the special ceremony dedicated to the generalization and veneration of St Parascheva and religious services officiated in those days, the guests of the Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava enjoyed special moments. During these events, ecclesiastical and secular personalities, from home and abroad, visited as we have seen, many historical sights of the Metropolitan See while in Iași; they attended a performance of the State Philharmonic of Moldavia (Vicovan 2009: 237-248, chapter „The Generalization of the Veneration of Venerable Parascheva”, that includes a comment on the whole file no 430/1955 from the Diocesan Center Archive of Iași, signed by Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan).

The presence of the relics of St Parascheva in Iași, in Moldavia, is a great blessing and “a great gift that God sent to this land” (Kontakion 12). They have protected us and our ancestors for nearly four centuries, pouring out blessing, joy, help and comfort.

She and her holy relics have been honoured by our people not only since they were brought to Moldavia (the 13th of June 1641), but long

before. The many churches whose patron she is, since the fifteenth century, are more than eloquent in this respect. The piety of the clergy and the faithful for St Parascheva and other saints, made the Hierarchs of our Church, members of the Holy Synod, proceed to the first canonization of Romanian Saints and to the generalization of the veneration of the saints whose relics are in our country on the 70th anniversary of autocephaly (1885).

Decisions of canonization and of generalization were taken during the note-worthy rule of Patriarch Justinian Marina, in the meeting of the Holy Synod on the 28th of February 1950 and their proclamation was accomplished in 1955, except for St Joseph the New of Partoș.

The events planned for the occasion of the solemn proclamation of the generalization of Venerable Parascheva's veneration were carried out in mid-October 1955 during the shepherding of the worthy of veneration Metropolitan Sebastian Rusan.

Thus, six decades ago, in the presence of foreign and Romanian Hierarchs, of many monks and nuns, of a great number of priests and a crowd of the faithful, in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iași, the "mother of churches in Moldavia", the historical, the spiritual and sacred act of proclaiming the generalization of the veneration of the one the Church justly calls, "most useful" and "urgently helping" took place.

Notes:

[1] Although the canonization of Ioan of Râșca was also proposed, this did not happen at the time, but only later, in 2008.

Refereneces:

- *** "Address no. 13288/ 30 sept. 1955". 1955. *File 430/1955*. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
- *** "Picture of guests from abroad and from the country on the 14th October 1955." 1955. *File 430/1955*. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
- *** "Table of the invitations for the 14th October 1955." 1955. *File 430/1955*. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
- *** "The Answer of Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios II on the 24th of March 1931." 1950. In: *The Canonization of Saints in the Romanian Orthodox Church*. File 139/1950. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
- *** "The *Encyclical* of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Church to clergy and faithful for revering of some saints whose relics are in our country." 1955. *File 430/1955*. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.

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- *** “The programme of the festivities for the Canonization of Venerable Parascheva (the Metropolitan Church, the 14th of October 1955).” 1955. In: *The Canonization of Venerable Parascheva. The feasts on the 14th October 1955*. File 430/1955. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
 - *** “The Schedule of welcoming the delegates of the Patriarchy of Alexandria and of the Russian Orthodox, the solemnities of the generalization of Venerable Mother Parascheva of Iași and visiting some monasteries of the Diocese of Iași (the 12th of October – 21st of October 1955). 1955. File 430/1955. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
 - *** “The telegram of His Beatitude Justinian the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest”. 1955. File 430/1955. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
 - *** “To His Eminence, Fr. C. Nonea, Vicar of the Metropolitan See of Moldavia and Suceava”. 1955. File 430/1955. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
 - *** “To the Holy Diocese of Iași”. 1955. In: *The Canonization of Venerable Parascheva. The festivities on the 14th October*. File 430/1955. Diocesan Center Archive of Iași.
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