

# **The Engagement into the Public Sphere of the Romanian Orthodox Church: Religious Assistance in the Army, Hospitals and Prisons. A Legal and Theological Approach**

**Emilian-Iustinian ROMAN**

*Rev. Lect. PhD.  
Faculty of Orthodox Theology,  
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, ROMANIA*

---

## **Abstract:**

*The Orthodox Church has always placed special emphasis on the spiritual and bodily health of the faithful, placing the human person at the centre of the divine public worship. In this context, our study aims at analysing the ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church has sought to make its voice heard in the public sphere by providing religious assistance in the army, penitentiaries and hospitals. A short overview of the legislative framework of religious assistance that regulates the partnership between the state and the denominations reveals the fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church has always considered that religious assistance is a pastoral imperative in a secularized society and has been continuously preoccupied with the well-being of those facing vulnerable conditions. The very Statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church thus stipulates that parish priests, deacons and church singers have the duty to provide religious assistance to all categories of faithful in military units, prisons, medical units, social assistance and educational establishments whenever requested, in adverse circumstances. On the other hand, we also sought to highlight that faith and religious practices have been considered constructive ways of dealing with bodily and mental distress. Consequently, through the activities proposed by the clergy in the army, hospitals and penitentiaries, the Church partakes in the state of well-being through interaction and communion.*

***Keywords:** Orthodox Church, Religious and Civil Legislation, Religious Assistance, Well-being*

---

## **Introduction**

The Church is a space and a body of divine-human constitution in which the union between men and God – the Holy Trinity is accomplished through Christ in the Holy Spirit, union through which we participate in the communion life of the Holy Trinity, its entire ministry

being an integral part of the process of salvation. The human person is at the center of divine public worship, therefore the Orthodox Church has always been concerned with the spiritual and bodily health of its faithful. St. John Chrysostom calls the Church a “spiritual hospital” (*PSB* 21: 1987), where people are summoned to receive appropriate cure for their wounds and then return home. The specific means of the Orthodox Church are numerous and available to all the faithful who wish to regain their bodily and spiritual health, among which we mention: faith, participation in the Divine Liturgy, reception of the Holy Sacraments (especially the Confession, the Communion, the Holy Mass), prayer, fasting, practicing virtues, reading the holy books etc.

The first article of *The Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church* defines the Church from the perspective of canon law as the community of the Orthodox Christians, clergy, monks and lay, canonically constituted in parishes and monasteries in the eparchies of the Romanian Patriarchy, inside and outside the Romanian frontiers, which witness God in the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, based on the Holy Scripture, liturgical services and canonical order (*The Statute ...* 2008). In this article from *The Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, the teaching of the Orthodox faith is synthetically emphasized, along with aspects connected to organization: the dogma of the Holy Trinity, the ways of transmitting the supernatural Revelation, the Holy Scripture and The Holy Tradition, the teaching on the Church, the Sacraments and hierurgies, the divine Liturgy and the holy canons. The Romanian Orthodox Church is organized as Patriarchy, with the title of “Romanian Patriarchy”, comprising eparchies (Archdioceses and Dioceses) grouped in Metropolitan Sees, as well as some other units inside and outside the Romanian frontiers. Furthermore, the Romanian Orthodox Church is one of the 14 local autocephalous Churches, having synodal hierarchic leadership and being administrated autonomously by its own representative bodies, made up of clergy and lay, according to the Holy Canons, the provisions of its *Statute* and other provisions of competent church authority (*The Statute ...* 2008).

In spite of its institutional organization and its purpose of salvation of the faithful, the Romanian Orthodox Church does not remain

indifferent to social issues, especially to those that directly affect people's existence. This fact is confirmed by Church history despite the periods during which the Romanian Orthodox Church could not overpass the limits of the church walls because of the leaders of the state and political maneuvers. However, in the context of the fall of communism in Romania in 1989 and of the integration of the academic theological education within the public system of education, Theology recovered those 50 years of scientific marginalization and thus regained the opportunity to engage into dialogue with other sciences. Consequently, on the one hand, Theology has recovered its place among the other sciences and, on the other hand, set up a dialogue with other areas of knowledge with common frontiers, without overlapping or replacing them. Thus, within the faculties of Orthodox Theology, areas of study other than Pastoral specialization that are meant to help the Church accomplish its mission were set up: Social Assistance, Teaching (which prepares primary and secondary school teachers of Orthodox Religion), and Sacred Art. Such a vision in terms of religious education organization responds to the various ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church has got involved in matters of public concern, approaching fields such as social and medical assistance, philanthropy or education.

### **The legislative framework of religious assistance in Romania**

Nowadays, the Romanian society is at the boundary of a modern and post-modern individualism, of a secularized society and of a moral and spiritual crisis, living in the absence of the connection with God the Trinity and in the absence of communion with the Christian community. The Romanian Orthodox Church provides to the modern man its doctrinal, liturgical and canonical treasure so as to restore communal and contemporary living of the faithful, based on the knowledge and living of the word of God in the spirit of Christ, all the more so in military units, prisons, medical units, social assistance and educational establishments.

In regard to the legislative framework, in some budgetary units, religious assistance is carried out on the basis of art. 29, 5 of the Romanian Constitution of 1991, which regulates the freedom of conscience, stating that "religious cults are autonomous to the state and

enjoy its support, including by facilitating religious assistance in the army, hospitals, prisons, shelters and orphanages.”

Art. 7, (1) from *Law no. 489/2006 on religious freedom and the general regime of denominations* stipulates that “the Romanian state acknowledges the spiritual, educational, social-charitable, cultural and social partnership role of the denominations as well as their status of factors of social peace” and supports the activity of the denominations acknowledged by this law and listed in its annex, in their capacity as providers of social services (art. 10, paragraph 7) as well as the fact that “the public authorities ensure that any person, upon request, has the right to be counselled according to his own religious convictions by facilitating religious assistance.” Not only can public authorities cooperate with the denominations in areas of common interest, but they also support their work (Art. 9, paragraph 3). Moreover, according to art. 9, (5),

central public authorities may set up partnerships with acknowledged denominations, in areas of common interest as well as agreements to regulate specific aspects of the tradition of the denominations, subject to statutory approval.

*The Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church* of 2008 includes a section called *Religious Assistance in the Romanian Orthodox Church*, which stipulates that the general norms regarding religious assistance are approved by the Holy Synod, are unitary in the entire Romanian Orthodox Church in reference to the election, appointment, transfer and revocation of clerical staff, stipulating in art. 136, (2) that

parish priests, deacons and church singers have the duty to grant religious assistance to all categories of faithful in military units, prisons, medical units, social assistance and educational establishments within their parishes, whenever requested.

For the Romanian Orthodox Church, religious assistance is a pastoral imperative; according to art. 135 (1) from the ROC Statute, through its dioceses, the church has the responsibility to ensure religious assistance and church personnel for its deployment in the army, penitentiary system, medical units, social assistance institutions and educational establishments under the conditions stipulated by law,

protocols or agreements established with public authorities or other legal entities”.

### **Religious assistance in the army**

Without aiming at an exhaustive historical presentation of the legislation regarding the religious assistance in the army, we would like to mention a series of historical moments / events in which the Orthodox priests proved their Christian love for their neighbour, nation and country by providing religious assistance. They were in consonance with the sorrows and anxieties of the soldiers, comfort the soldiers on the battlefield, helping the wounded and remembering those who passed away in the line of duty.

The presence of the clergy in the army dates back to the time of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, who founded the office of “priest in the military unit”, but the regulation of religious assistance in the Romanian Army was undertaken by King Carol the 1<sup>st</sup>, on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1870 by the High Decree no. 603, which approves “The Regulation for the Clergy in the Permanent Army”, stipulating that each independent regiment or battalion may have a priest of the main denomination of Romania. The priest had military rank and accompanied the army all the time (Stavarache and Dobre 1995). In 1921, the first Episcopate of the Army was set up in Alba Iulia, led by Bishop General Dr. Iustinian Teculescu (1922-1924), Bishop Dr. Ioan Stoia (1925-1937) and Bishop General Dr. Partenie Ciopron (1937-1948).

The Orthodox clergy is also present in the army during the First (see Iordăchescu 1937) and Second World War, providing religious assistance to the Romanian army (see Gh. Nicolescu, Dobrescu, A. Nicolescu 1998), carrying out religious and pastoral tasks, which highlights the importance of the religious education in the army. After the Communists took over the power, in the autumn of 1948, the Army’s Episcopate was abolished and the military clergy was retired. It is the period of atheist education, therefore the Army was deprived of the teaching of the traditional faith.

Immediately after the fall of communism in 1989, the Romanian Orthodox Church wanted to restore the institution of the military priest in the Romanian army, on the basis of the state legislation and the traditions of the Romanian people. Thus, by Decision no. 1696/1991, the Holy

Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church takes note of the works of the Synodal Special Commission, which proposed two normative acts concerning “The Law of the Military Clergy and Religious Assistance in the Romanian Army” and “The Regulation for the Organization and Functioning of the Military Clergy” (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ...* 2003). According to the aforementioned decision, the Holy Synod urges its members to submit to the Chancellery amendments regarding these bills and proposes a committee of hierarchs to analyze the amendments and to finalize these normative acts, which were to be sent then to the Ministry of National Defence. The first step is taken by the Romanian Patriarchate, which proposes the two above-mentioned documents to the Ministry of National Defence that, in its turn, analyses them, making proposals following the collaboration and dialogue of the most trusted institutions in the Romanian society. Despite years of discussions and debates, the Army and the Church would conclude a Protocol on the organization and deployment of religious assistance in the Romanian Army between the Ministry of National Defence (A. 486811.10.1995) and the Romanian Patriarchy (Decision no 7242 / 11.10.1995), which stipulates, at Art. 1, that

In the Romanian Armed Forces the activity of religious assistance is resumed, on permanent basis, being meant to meet the religious, moral and spiritual demands of the military and to contribute to their religious, patriotic, civic and ethical education (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ...* 2003).

The decision of the Holy Synod no. 7242/1995 states that, according to the provisions of the annex to the Protocol, the positions of permanent priests in the army are in line only with the immediate needs of the Ministry of National Defence and not in all the military units in the dioceses of the Romanian Patriarchate, mentioning that in the other military units, religious assistance will be granted on demand (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ...* 2003). The numerous decisions of the Holy Synod regarding religious assistance in the army highlight the importance given by the Romanian Orthodox Church to this pastoral work as well as the fact that its ministers devote their lives to the service of God and to the service of the homeland.

Five years after the protocol between the Church and the Army, “Law no. 195 of 6<sup>th</sup> November 2000 on the Establishment and

Organization of the Military Clergy”, published in the Official Journal no. 561 of November 13 / 2000, regulates the organization of the military clergy, the duties and rights of the military priests and the cessation of military priesthood. According to this law,

the military priest is the servant of a church or denomination acknowledged by the law, hired in the armed forces, invested with the right to perform acts of worship and to deliver the inherited teaching to the faithful whom he shepherds (art. 2).

The Ministry of National Defence drafted *The Regulation on Religious Assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces* of 13.01.2014, published in the *Official Journal* no. 43 on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014, which

establishes the organization and functioning of the religious assistance structures, the participation in missions and army operations outside the territory of the Romanian state, as well as the rules regarding the appreciation of the performance, recruitment, selection, registration, promotion, rewards and sanctions of the military priests in the Ministry of National Defence (art. 1).

Thus, art. 11, paragraph 1, stipulates the competences of the military priest: to provide religious assistance to military personnel, to civilian personnel and their families through the celebration of the Holy Mass, the administration of the Holy Sacraments and of other religious offices, to provide religious assistance to the military and civilian personnel in the hospital or at home, at their or their family’s request, to perform individual and group pastoral activities in military units, in times of peace or during military campaign, to deliver to the military the teaching of the Church / acknowledged denomination, to cultivate in their souls the traditional spiritual values and the practice of virtues, to tend to the psycho-moral and disciplinary state of the military, to work together with those in charge in the military units (art. 11, paragraph 1). From the point of view of education, the military priest carries out moral-religious, ethical and civic educational activities of the army personnel through sermons, catechesis, conferences, lectures, articles, focuses on education regarding the family, works with all those in charge so as to prevent and combat, by specific pastoral means, anti-social manifestations as well as deeds against the constitutional order or fighting capacities, with other educational factors in military units, commandments and garrisons for the organization of religious services on important recollection events in the

history and spirituality of the Romanian people such as the Romanian National Day, religious holidays, anniversaries, commemorations and evocations.

From an administrative point of view, the military priest must submit an activity report to the Religious Assistance Section, either twice a year or hierarchically, through organizational entities of the army general staff and support commandments, must draw up and submit to the approval of the commander / chief of the military unit work programs for defined time periods, monthly, quarterly or every semester and to monitor their achievement (cf. art. 11, paragraph 1).

### **Religious assistance in hospitals**

The religious assistance in hospitals is provided by the charity priest, in the case of the Romanian Orthodox Church, by the Orthodox priest who is ordained to the altar within the hospital in which he carries out his pastoral-missionary ministry, under the obligation to spiritually support the sick who are hospitalized for treatment or for surgery in order to provide both relief of suffering and healing of the soul and of the body. Furthermore, the charity priest comes into contact with the family of the sick, who calls him to support “the weakling”. However, religious assistance is not limited to the sick and his family, being available to all hospital workers, namely: hospital managers, medical staff, nurses, administrative and auxiliary staff of the hospital.

Between 1989 and 1994, when steps towards setting up priestly positions for hospitals were taken, religious assistance in hospitals was supported by parish priests under whose jurisdiction the hospitals were, especially for the reception of the Holy Sacraments. Thus, by decision no. 4951/1994, the Holy Synod “notes the steps taken by the Romanian Patriarchate for setting up priestly positions for hospitals”, the Ministry of Health proposing 30 such positions. To this avail, the next year, on the basis of the Protocol between the Romanian Patriarchy (No. 1968/15 March 1995) and the Ministry of Health (No. 13702/23 March 1995), the Ministry of Health gives away over 50 positions with budget allocations (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ...* 2003). Decision no. 3998/1999 “approves the norms regarding the activity of religious assistance in the hospital and social protection units”, while decision no. 3999/1999



approves the means of collaboration between the hospital priest, the parish priest and the social assistance offices in the eparchial centers in order to carry out programs to support disadvantaged persons during hospitalization and after discharge (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ... 2003*).

Beside religious assistance, the charity priest is also involved in carrying out social programmes to help the sick with no material means, by identifying them and providing information about them to the eparchial centres that, through their social assistance units, gather the data and announce the parish priests under whose jurisdiction the hospital is and the priests of their origin parishes so as to determine concrete ways of supporting the needy, both during hospitalization and after discharge.

From the educational and cultural point of view, the hospital priest organizes symposia, conferences, lectures, etc., is in charge with the organization of catechesis and regularly attends the priestly conferences organized by deaneries.

From an administrative point of view, according to Decision no. 3998/1999 of the Holy Synod, the hospital priest must carry out his activity on the basis of a programme approved by the eparchial center and the management of the military unit, programme that must be displayed in the unit and that must specify the time of the daily visits of the sick, the time of the Divine Liturgy, Prayers and other religious services, the time of confession and various ministers as well as the time of spiritual conversations (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ... 2003*).

### **Religious assistance in penitentiaries**

The penitentiary priest celebrates the Holy Mass, administers the Holy Sacraments and other religious services specific to the Orthodox for the persons deprived of liberty, carries out catechization activities for persons deprived of liberty and provides spiritual counselling upon request for the staff of the units subordinated to the National Administration of Penitentiaries. The Orthodox priests from prisons are canonically subordinate to the diocesan bishop of their jurisdiction and carry out their activity according to the principle of subordination by the organizational statute of each penitentiary unit, being coordinated by the chapel priest of the central administration.

The religious assistance in prisons is regulated by Decision no. 3623/1993 of the Holy Synod which

takes note and agrees with the address of the Ministry of Justice no. 1390/16<sup>th</sup> June 1993, whereby the Romanian Patriarchate regulates the appointment of priests to provide religious assistance in prisons, being paid from state funds and enrolled in their position schemes as civilian staff (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ... 2003*).

The same decision also underlines the availability of the General Directorate of Penitentiaries to conclude a protocol with the Romanian Patriarchate on the conditions of employment, of conducting the activity and other matters that will specify the status of the penitentiary priests, including the provision that, after the issuing of the law of the military clergy, the priests who work in penitentiaries may be ranked as military clergy.

By Decision no. 6330/1993, the Holy Synod approves the Draft Protocol on providing religious assistance to the units of the Penitentiary Directorate and the Status of the penitentiary priest to be concluded between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ministry of Justice (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ... 2003*). This protocol was updated in 1997 while through Decision no. 5528/1998, the Holy Synod approves *The Programme for the Intensification of Religious Activity* in penitentiaries and requests its enforcement in all the dioceses in whose jurisdiction there are penitentiaries (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ... 2003*). A new *Protocol on the Provision of Orthodox Religious Assistance in the System of the National Administration of Penitentiaries* was concluded in 2013, emphasizing that

the Orthodox religious assistance constitutes, together with education, school and vocational training, one of the coordinates of the individualized project of psychosocial recovery, which contributes both to the individual development of persons under a custodial sentence and to social reintegration.

In the same vein, by *Order No. 1072 / C of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2013 for the Approval of the Regulation on Religious Assistance of Persons Deprived of Liberty under the Custody of the National Administration of Penitentiaries*, published in the Official Journey, Part I no. 187, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013, art. 1, the Ministry of Justice rules that:

The religious assistance of the persons deprived of liberty under the custody of the National Penitentiary Administration is ensured with respect of the freedom of conscience and religion, as well as of religious pluralism, under non-discriminatory conditions.

In other words, religious assistance is permanently provided by the chaplain priests, employees of the National Penitentiary Administration or by the representatives appointed by religious denominations or religious associations acknowledged by the state, on the basis of a written access approval granted by the head of the respective unit.

From the educational and cultural point of view, the penitentiary priest carries out religious activities with persons deprived of their liberty, offers them worship books and objects, works together with the staff specialized in education and psychosocial assistance, as well as with the representatives of the probation divisions, in order to carry out the programmes of preparation for being released. He also contributes to or organizes trips with the persons deprived of liberty, enhances, at the request of the detainees, connections with those who provide support for the prisoners, especially with their family, etc. There is greater focus on the vulnerable categories of those deprived of their liberty (minors, young people, women) and those with special needs (who do not have people visiting them or those that represent a risk for penitentiary safety, people with heavy or life sentences) who agree to participate in moral-religious, ethical and civic education activities, counselling or activities involving artistic skills, vocationally stimulating activities such as church painting, religious choir, moral-religious magazine etc. (*cf.* art. 7).

From the administrative point of view, the penitentiary priest is evaluated annually by assigned evaluators, the assessment being approved by a priest coordinator at the level of central administration.

We should also mention that Decision No. 3347/2000 of the Holy Synod stipulates that the churches and chapels from the military units, hospitals, penitentiaries, hostels, schools, orphanages and other social institutions have the status of social-philanthropic worship subunits, their jurisdiction being restricted only to the premises of these budgetary institutions and that, from the church administrative point of view, they depend on the deanery under whose jurisdiction these budgetary institutions function (*Decisions of the Holy Synod ... 2003*).

### **The interdependence between religious-spiritual involvement and well-being**

World-wide research studies have already revealed a direct and tangible connection between religious faith and well-being, underlining that “religious people are happier than non-religious ones”, while taking part in various religious activities can be correlated to well-being. Thus, according to Graham and Crown, religion “plays an important role in providing psychological insurance for individuals coping with health shocks, aging, and adverse and difficult circumstances” (Graham and Crown 2014).

According to the same authors, numerous other relevant studies and researches carried out across the world have highlighted the positive effects that religion may have on well-being, such as Clark and Lelkes who “find that both one’s own religious behaviour and average religiosity in the region have a positive effect on life satisfaction”, Lim and Putam or Mookerjee and Baron who “find an overall positive relationship between religion and wellbeing across countries” (Graham and Crown 2014). Furthering this conclusion, Clark and Lelkes underline that “average religious activity” is to be correlated to the religious and non-religious alike. Thus the researchers find that “a higher regional share of ‘atheists’ (...) has *negative* spill over effects, reducing the subjective wellbeing of the religious and non-religious alike” (Graham and Crown 2014).

At the same time, faith and religious practices have been revealed as constructive ways of dealing with or responding to bodily as well as mental distress. Thus, a research study concludes that “religious coping is the most common reaction to health problems and disorders” (Tabei, Zarei and Joulaei 2016).

Thus, if we were to capitalize on the connection between religion and health, we shall find it revealing to note that

physicians emphasized three basic ways that religion influences health. First, they noted that religion forms the paradigm from which many patients understand, cope with, and respond to illness. Second, they noted that many patients are members of, and are therefore shaped by, religious communities. Finally, they described ways that religious paradigms and religious communities at times lead patients to make decisions that conflict with medical recommendations (Curlin, Roach, Gorawara-Bhat, Lantos and Chin 2005).

The religious and spiritual involvement has a twofold purpose, acting both inwardly and outwardly. They both lead to well-being. Thus, through the activities proposed by the clergy in the army, hospital and penitentiaries, a state of well-being is instilled both in the souls of those whom they are addressed to directly, but also socially, through interaction and communion with other members of the community and society. Beside religious services, the priests in these budget units organize, for example, cultural events, winter holidays (they bring Christmas carols, etc.) to alleviate homesickness or longing for family, friends etc. which may support a state of the well-being to those in prison and their families.

In Romania, a sociological research on the quality of life of persons diagnosed with rare diseases was carried out in 2010, on the basis of a questionnaire with 42 items, using the snowball technique, on 645 subjects from all counties of the country, by the social assistance organizations in each county (Olah, I. Popoviciu, S. Popoviciu and Bîrle 2012). What is relevant to our study is the spiritual dimension of the quality of life in the case of persons diagnosed with rare diseases, namely the membership of a spiritual-religious community and the self-perception of one's religiousness, having as item of measuring the spiritual well-being the following question: "To what extent do you think spirituality or faith gives you the strength to cope with your illness?" (Olah, I. Popoviciu, S. Popoviciu and Bîrle 2012). The result of the research is relevant for our subject because of the total of 599 respondents, 97% stated their faith in God; 53.1% considered that the Church is very important, and only 11.2% considered the Church to be of little or no importance in their lives (Olah, I. Popoviciu, S. Popoviciu and Bîrle 2012). Moreover,

69.9% said that their life has a meaning, 24% believed that religion or belief in God helps them understand the meaning of life to a very great extent, 35.7% to a great extent, 30.6% to moderate extent and only 6.6% to little or no extent at all, and about 60% noted that religion or belief in God helps them better understand suffering (Olah, I. Popoviciu, S. Popoviciu and Bîrle 2012).

The respondents also considered that

spirituality or faith gives them the strength to cope with the disease to a very great extent (24.2%), to a great extent (38.4%) or moderate extent (27.2%) and only 6, 7% reported that spirituality or belief helps them little or not at all to cope with the disease (Olah, I. Popoviciu, S. Popoviciu and Bîrle 2012).

Therefore, as this and other studies have revealed, there is a tangible, definite connection between religiosity and well-being in all fields of life.

### **Discussions and conclusions**

The study of the quality of life implies an interdisciplinary approach, which is the reason why, beside specialized literature (medical, psychological, etc.) the topic has been increasingly approached from a spiritual theological perspective, which outlines the Christian attitude and the proper behaviour towards the sick, the military and those in prison. Thus the perspectives of the conscious and factual assumption of the dimension of faith as a religious act defining the human being, a member of the ecclesial body of Christ, are opened.

In the case of the sick, in general, and of the oncological patients, in particular, who go through certain stages of psychological suffering, namely denial and isolation, annoyance, negotiation, depression, acceptance or worse, the emergence of the idea of death, religious assistance plays an overwhelming role that is manifested through a Christian attitude whose main feature must be compassion whereas, in reference to the idea of death, this attitude differs fundamentally from that of the man who has lost faith and hope in the help of God. Sociological research only reinforces the idea that religious assistance adds value to the quality of life, demonstrating that those who believe in divinity cope with illnesses or adverse situations more easily, having the spiritual resources to carry such burdens and why not, in a miraculous way, being cured.

In regard to the soldiers who are in theatres of operations, for example, religious assistance can counter anxiety, fear through faith, through the courage that is preached by Christ himself so often when exhorting: "Don't be afraid!" (Matthew 17, 7). In penitentiaries, for example, it may constitute an inner source of resistance to depression since a lifestyle based on the principles of Christian education is promoted. Therefore, in budgetary units such as the army, hospitals or prisons, the religious assistance provided by the Romanian Orthodox Church brings added value to the quality of life of the needy.

In this context, despite the secularization of the Romanian society, the attempts to eliminate religious beliefs from the public space, to

minimize the beneficial effects of the proposed Christian values and not necessarily through excessive dogmatization, we are in line with the idea that “religious voices are far from silent, and though their cultural position may be altered and is altering, their power to shape social life is in reality far from diminished” (Parker and Reader 2016).

**References:**

- Anp.gov.ro. *The Protocol on religious assistance in the system of the national administration of the penitentiaries*. Accessed January 30 2018.  
<http://anp.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ANP-si-Patriarhie.pdf>
- Chrysostom, John. 1987. “Homilies to Genesis, Homily I.” [in Romanian.] In *PSB* (Church Fathers and ecclesiastical writers), 21: 32. Bucharest: The Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church.
- Curlin, Farr A., Chad J. Roach, Rita Gorawara-Bhat, John D. Lantos, and Marshall H. Chin. 2005. “How Are Religion and Spirituality Related to Health? A Study of Physicians’ Perspectives.” *Southern Medical Journal* 98 (8): 761-766.  
<https://pmr.uchicago.edu/.../How%20are%20religion%20and...>
- *Decisions of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church on church activity (1986-2002)*. 2003. Galați: Publishing House of the Diocese of Dunărea de Jos.
- Graham, Carol and Sarah Crown. 2014. “Religion and wellbeing around the world: Social purpose, social time, or social insurance?” *International Journal of Wellbeing* 4 (1): 1-27.  
doi:10.5502/ijw.v4i1.1, p. 1.
- Iordăchescu, Cicerone (1882-1966). 1937. *Însemnări din anii 1916-1919 din primul an al războiului de întregire 1916-1917 (Notes from 1916-1919 from the first year of the Union War 1916-1917)*. Iași: Alexandru Țerek Publishing House.
- Legex.ro. *Law 195 on 6th November 2000 regarding the formation and organization of military clergy*. Accessed January 30 2018.  
<http://www.legex.ro/Legea-195-2000-21703.aspx>
- Lege5 Online. *The Regulation on Religious Assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces*, 13.01.2014. Accessed January 30 2018.  
<https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gm4dqmrygg/regulamentul-privind-asistenta-religioasa-in-armata-romaniei-din-13012014>
- Nicolescu, Gheorghe, Gheorghe Dobrescu, and Andrei Nicolescu. 1998. *Preoți în tranșee. 1941-1944 (Priests in Trenches)*. Bucharest: General Ștefan Gușă Foundation.
- Olah, Șerban, Ioan Popoviciu, Salomea Popoviciu, and Delia Bîrle. 2012. “Quality of life of people diagnosed with rare diseases in Romania.” *Calitatea vieții - Revistă de politici sociale (Life Quality – Social Policies Journal)* 2: 95-122.
- Parker, Stephen G. and John Reader. 2016. “Editorial: Faith in the public square.” *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education* 37 (3): 245-246.  
doi:10.1080/13617672.2016.1238337

- Stavrache, D. and Florica Dobre. 1995. "125 Years since The Approval of the First Regulation regarding Military Priests in the Romanian Army." [in Romanian.] *Revista de istorie militară* 2: **26**.
- Tabei, Seyed Ziaeddin, Nooshin Zarei and Hassan Joulaei. 2016. "The Impact of Spirituality on Health." *Shiraz E-Medical Journal* 17(6): **e39053**.  
doi: [10.17795/semj39053](https://doi.org/10.17795/semj39053).
- *The Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church*. 2008. Bucharest: The Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church.