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DOCTORAL THESIS

*Religious Assistance in the Romanian Armed
Forces: The Profile of a New Pastoral Care*

-SUMMARY-

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Introduction

The thesis entitled „*Religious Assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces: The Profile of a New Pastoral Care*” examines the intersection of military life and spirituality. It provides a scientific analysis of the link between military chaplaincy and the armed forces, focusing on the dynamics through which it transfigures the human, moral, and spiritual profile of the Romanian soldier. This study highlights the synergy between the rigorous discipline of military life and Christian values, underscoring the role of religious education in fostering moral traits and the significance of institutional religious support.

1. Rationale for Selecting the Topic

This research is motivated by the necessity of the moral and spiritual support within the Romanian Armed Forces and the imperative to adapt the Church’s mission and ministry to the pastoral challenges of the military environment and the spiritual needs and challenges of military personnel. From a missiological perspective, pastoral care within the military domain extends beyond the mere performance of rituals detached from the soldier’s daily reality.

A military chaplain must transcend the role of a liturgical functionary; he is called to become “all things to all people” (1 Corinthians 9:22), serving as a pastoral counselor, spiritual father, comrade, friend, and mentor. He must offer steadfast support during crises, remaining prepared at all times and in all places to provide spiritual guidance through the ethical and existential dilemmas inherent to the profession of arms.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, this study addresses a significant gap in the specialized literature on military chaplaincy, offering practical missiological and pastoral benchmarks for the execution of the chaplain’s mission.

2. Relevance and Significance of the Research

Within a complex and shifting geopolitical context, evaluating the Christian values that underpin the moral, spiritual, and psychological resilience of military personnel constitutes a strategic priority, both from a military and a theological standpoint.

This doctoral dissertation, “*Religious Assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces: The Profile of a New Pastoral Ministry*,” analyzes the relationship between religious and military phenomena as a symbiosis that transcends formal tradition. Historically, the Army has demanded “spirit and inner life” while the Church has actively supported the military institution to minister, Christianize warfare, and bless the life of the Romanian soldier.

The relevance of this topic is intrinsically linked to the necessity of integrating and aligning pastoral practices with Euro-Atlantic standards regarding freedom of conscience, specifically focusing on how the military chaplain navigates unique pastoral situations involving denominational diversity within the armed forces.

3. Originality of the Research

From a scientific perspective, the originality of this pastoral topic lies in transcending the current approaches that have dominated research to date. Most studies on the military priesthood have been confined either to evoking the historical past regarding the role of priests during the two World Wars, or to analyzing the regulations arising from the Protocol concluded between the Church and the Army. This study integrates Pastoral Theology with elements of military psychology, examining from a theological viewpoint faith as a moral support for the soldier's psychological resilience, and religion as centered on the meaning of the soldier's life an element capable of restoring the human being.

Defining the Concept of the "New Pastoral Ministry"

It proposes a transition from a passive pastoral care, wherein the priest awaits the faithful in church, to an active and dynamic pastoral presence in the midst of military personnel. This ministry is specific to the military environment and differs from the work of a parish priest, as the military chaplain adapts to the challenges and rigors of military life.

4. Research Purpose and Objectives

The general purpose of this thesis is to outline an effective pastoral model adapted to the pastoral challenges and spiritual needs faced by military chaplains in the Romanian Armed Forces throughout their entire pastoral activity carried out among those who have answered the military calling.

To achieve this purpose, the following specific objectives have been established:

- **Objective 1:** To identify the historical foundations of Romanian Christianity, highlighting the apostolic antiquity of the Christian faith of the Romanian people and shedding light on early Christian origins as an identity base for the military institution.
- **Objective 2:** To define the moral and religious profile of the faithful soldier through the prism of the "knight of faith" concept, emphasizing the essential role of soldiers in the early spread of Christianity, as they became a nucleus for the local preaching of the Christian faith.
- **Objective 3:** To analyze the evolution of the Romanian military clergy from its origins to its current configuration, examining the historical events and the legal framework that regulate the pastoral activity of the military clergy and ensure religious assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces.
- **Objective 4:** To evaluate the legislative and institutional framework that guarantees religious freedom within the army and the symbiosis of the Church-Army-State triad.
- **Objective 5:** To delineate the transformations of religious assistance during times of peace and warfare.
- **Objective 6:** To foreshadow the specific missiological coordinates of military chaplaincy.
- **Objective 7:** To identify the primary spiritual issues faced by military personnel in order to strengthen troop morale.
- **Objective 8:** To propose concrete missiological and pastoral strategies tailored to the current military environment.

- **Objective 9:** To investigate the history of the Battalion and the Military Chapel to substantiate the evolution of new missiological and pastoral practices within the military domain.

5. Research Hypotheses

The research is grounded on the following assumptions:

- **Primary Hypothesis:** This hypothesis addresses the two dimensions or requirements of the Christian mission. If military chaplaincy is limited solely to its *ad intra* dimension, it becomes insufficient for the current issues and challenges within the military environment; conversely, an *ad extra* dimension, achieved through the integration of pastoral counseling and spiritual psychotherapy, significantly enhances the moral equilibrium of military personnel facing crises and traumas.

- **Secondary Hypotheses:**

Through close collaboration with the unit psychologist, the military chaplain can prevent existential crises faced by military personnel, a process that can ultimately increase their commitment to the profession of arms.

The active presence of the military chaplain in the midst of military personnel, including during training periods, can assist them in maintaining their psychological and moral balance. This is based on the premise that the dynamics of the military environment necessitate a transition from the traditional model of religious assistance to a missionary-oriented pastoral care, centered on spiritual fortitude, the cultivation of moral and martial virtues, and the spiritual support of military personnel.

6. Research Methods

This thesis utilizes an interdisciplinary methodology situated at the confluence of Pastoral Theology, the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Holy Scripture, Constitutional Law, Military Psychology, the History of the Universal Church, Dogmatic Theology, Moral Theology, Military Sciences, Military History, Missiology, Patristic Theology, along with various pastoral and missiological works by clergymen, and religious-military writings authored by military officers.

To demonstrate the formulated hypotheses, the study employs several complementary methods from a scientific research perspective:

- **The Historical Method:** Investigating biblical and historical sources, as well as documents pertaining to religious assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces. It examines how the role of the military chaplain has evolved throughout history, tracing the development of the military clergy from its earliest forms to its contemporary reorganization.

- **The Comparative Method:** Analyzing how religious assistance adapts during times of peace versus times of warfare.

- **The Legal Analysis Method:** Interpreting legislation regarding religious freedom within the military.

- **The Documentary Method:** Studying domain-specific literature, legislation on religious assistance, military regulations, and the decrees of the Holy Synod.

7. Research Limitations

This study acknowledges certain objective constraints:

- **Information Confidentiality:** Strict military secrecy regulations restricted access to confidential data regarding troop morale; consequently, the research relies primarily on historical information.

8. Practical Relevance of the Research

This research possesses significant practical relevance and can be utilized:

- As a practical guide for young priests beginning their pastoral ministry within the armed forces.
- As educational material within religious education programs with a military profile.
- As a source of recommendations to improve collaboration among other structures of the military unit, such as the unit psychologist and the military physician.

The Spiritual Dimension of the Army: History, Legislation, and the Dynamics of Religious Assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces

a) Historical Foundations

The thesis analyzes the symbiotic cooperation between the spiritual phenomenon and the military domain within the Romanian space. The underlying premise is the origin of Christianity, marked by the apostolic antiquity of the Christian faith in the Romanian territory. Our nation has inherently been a Christian people since its ethnogenesis, possessing a Christian military.

This spiritual root nurtured the seed of faith within the souls of soldiers and within the very hearth from which the Christian faith spread through military personnel. This phenomenon ensured that defending the faith was perceived not merely as a duty, but as a sacred mission to preserve both national and religious identity.

b) The Moral-Spiritual Profile of the Soldier

This dimension transforms rigid military discipline into an interior spiritual experience governed by honor, faith, hope, sacrificial love, and Christian morals. The analysis highlights that religious life within the military is not a secondary process, but rather a moral and psychological foundation a cornerstone of integrity wherein faith and the Christian religion provide the soldier with spiritual benchmarks during critical moments, elevating the military profession into a calling of faith.

c) The Institutional Framework, Freedom of Belief, and Liberty of Conscience within the Military Domain

This section addresses the legislative component of freedom of conscience through the lens of religious freedom within the armed forces. The State serves as the guarantor of religious liberty, facilitating religious assistance within public institutions and guaranteeing the right of every service member to actively manifest their faith.

Supported by the Church, this expression is reinforced through religious education, which cultivates moral values and spiritual virtues. It fosters communion with one's neighbor, respect for human dignity, and cohesion among military personnel in the spirit of camaraderie and fraternal fellowship, according to the principle: “we are brothers until death, regardless of your faith.”

This communion is encapsulated in the Church-State-Army triad fundamental institutions of continuity and unity that cooperate for the cohesion of human society. Within this triad, the soldier maintains the profound awareness that: “the body belongs to the state, the soul to God, while conscience and faith belong to me.”

d) The Evolution and Structure of Religious Assistance in the Military

Shifting toward a practical research perspective dedicated to religious assistance, the thesis highlights in depth the evolution of the military clergy. It structurally analyzes the profile of religious assistance within Holy Scripture to establish the theological legitimacy of the priest's presence among the troops. From a historical perspective, the traditions of religious assistance in the Romanian Armed Forces are brought to light from their origins to the present day. This section traces the ministry and role of the military clergy through its historical transitions from “army priests” (*preoți de oștire*) to “military confessors” (*confesori militari*), and finally to “military chaplains” (*preoți militari*) during the historical milestones that shaped both the modern Romanian state and the military clergy over time.

e) Operational Dynamics and Ecumenical Structure within the Armed Forces

This section addresses a distinct subchapter wherein religious assistance is analyzed across the two operational states of the military: peacetime and wartime. It focuses specifically on pastoral and spiritual counseling, religious ceremonies, moral support for military personnel and their families—both of the same faith and of other denominations—as well as ethical education rooted in civic and patriotic spirit.

Here, the military unit becomes a “school of faith,” where the chaplain provides emotional, psychological, and spiritual support during moments of crisis and existential anxiety. Ultimately, this highlights a modern framework aligned with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) standards. It demonstrates the military’s capacity to integrate and respect denominational diversity, ensuring specific religious support for each service member regardless of their denomination. The chaplain thus becomes a “shepherd of souls” for everyone, “becoming all things to all people” (1 Corinthians 9:22) a comrade, a spiritual father, a friend, and a partaker in suffering.

THESIS CONTENT BY CHAPTERS (SUMMARY)

CHAPTER I

The Christian Religion on Romanian Territory and the Spiritual Profile of the Military Personnel

The first part of the thesis demonstrates that the Christian religion was not artificially annexed to our being and identity as a Christian nation, but rather developed organically, possessing an apostolic antiquity proven from both historical and ecclesiastical perspectives. This reality has shaped the image of the soldier as a knight and fighter for the faith an element that transfigures professional military duty into a mission of a sacred nature, viewed through the lens of sacrifice and moral responsibility.

The research highlights how faith and religion act as potential factors in restoring the inner being of the soldier, centering on the meaning of Christian life and serving as a psychological and moral shield during crisis situations specific to the military environment. Furthermore, the study analyzes the framework that guarantees religious freedom within the armed forces, alongside the role of religious education in the spiritual formation of military personnel.

The chapter concludes with an analysis of the Church-State-Army triad, demonstrating that these earthly institutions, in communion with the theandric institution, collaborate as pillars of national stability while respecting the principles of autonomy, freedom of faith, and religious conscience.

CHAPTER II

Religious Assistance and the Mission of the Church within the Military

The second chapter addresses the transition from the theoretical and moral dimension to the legislative and practical ones. It outlines the profile of religious assistance within the Holy Scripture, providing not only the moral framework but also the dogmatic and pastoral-missionary legitimacy for the presence of the priest within the military domain.

II. 1. Traditions of Religious Assistance in the Military

Subsequently, the study addresses the chronology of religious assistance traditions within the Romanian Army. It traces these from the earliest ancient and medieval forms of organization (princely confessors) to the regulated structures of the 19th-century modern period during the reign of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, extending through the War of Independence and the two World Wars, up to the re-establishment of Religious Assistance following the atheist-communist ideological period.

II. 2. Religious Assistance in Peacetime

Particular attention is dedicated to the pastoral activity of the military chaplain in relation to the operational status of the army:

- **In peacetime:** the emphasis is placed on pastoral counseling, the pastoral care of military personnel and their families, liturgical activity in military chapels, and moral and spiritual support.

The pastoral mission focuses on three directions:

- **The liturgical dimension:** the administration of the Holy Sacraments;
- **The pastoral-counseling perspective:** providing spiritual and moral support, formative dialogue, and individual spiritual counseling for both military and civilian personnel;
- **The ethical-educational dimension:** aimed at cultivating patriotic sentiment, as well as Christian values and virtues among military personnel.

- **In wartime:** the military chaplain becomes a vital element of psycho-spiritual support, confronted with the reality of the battlefield—which becomes the painter of death—by offering sacramental assistance and maintaining troop morale.

• II. 3. Religious Assistance in Wartime

In this hostile environment, the military chaplain leaves the comfort of the military chapel to operate pastorally and missionarily on the front lines. The chaplain administers confession and emergency communion, performs funeral services on the battlefield, sustains troop morale, and imparts compassion and a sense of humanity amidst the atrocities of war.

• II. 4. The Profile of Religious Assistance in the Old Testament

This section provides the Old Testament theological foundation and analyzes the status of the Levitical priests who accompanied the Israelite armies during times of conflict. Warfare is analyzed from a theocentric perspective; during this period, victory in battle was attributed to divine holiness, and conflicts were designated as the "wars of the Lord." In this context, priests held the responsibility of sanctifying the camp and the army, ensuring compliance with the commandments during campaigns, and instilling courage in warriors by reminding them of their covenant with the Divinity (Deuteronomy 20).

• II. 5. The Profile of Religious Assistance in the New Testament

This subchapter shifts the emphasis toward New Testament ecclesiology, introducing a transformed perspective on military personnel and violence. It analyzes the Savior's interactions with military figures, such as Cornelius the Centurion, the Centurion of Capernaum, and the counsel given to soldiers by Saint John the Baptist. Far from condemning the military profession, the New Testament contextualizes it as a duty of service and sacrifice for one's neighbor (John 15:13).

• II. 6. The Ecumenical Structure of Religious Assistance within the Military Environment

In the final part of this section, the thesis evaluates the ecumenical structure of religious assistance, analyzing how spiritual care is provided in a spirit of unity, while respecting and facilitating the religious expression of all military personnel, regardless of their denomination. Within a modern army, religious assistance is no longer exclusively confessional but rather acquires a comprehensive character. The text details how access to specific religious assistance is facilitated for military

- personnel of other denominations, thereby ensuring an environment of mutual respect and unity in the face of common duty.

CHAPTER III

Pastoral Care within the Military

This chapter opens the applied perspective of the research, transitioning from general organizational forms to specific pastoral methodology. It analyzes and highlights pastoral methods tailored to unit ministry, as well as the role of the priest as a mediator and spiritual father within military communities.

III.1 - III.2. The Status and Duties of the Military Chaplain

- **The Military Apostolate:** The military chaplain is defined as an apostle of faith within a specialized environment, entrusted with the duty of sanctifying the life of the comrades-in-arms community and adapting Evangelical values and principles to the military framework, which imposes a rigorous discipline specific to garrison life.

- **Dual Mission:** The pastoral duties exercised by the military chaplain combine the sacramental component with the pastoral one, providing moral and spiritual support adapted to the rigors of military discipline. His physical presence in the trenches and within military units is the sole factor that confers ecclesiological validity upon his pastoral mission.

III.3 - III.5. Military Pastoral Care in Peacetime and the Spiritual Life of the Military Personnel

- **Pastoral Care in Peacetime:** This focuses on the spiritual, moral, and religious formation of military personnel through catechesis, preaching, homiletics, the administration of confession and Holy Communion, spiritual counseling, and pastoral psychotherapy, thereby contributing to the cultivation of Christian virtues and patriotic sentiment.

- **The Concept of "Ecclesiola":** Within pastoral care, the military unit and the military family are viewed as a "little church" (*ecclesiola*), wherein the community becomes a living organism in the spirit of prayer and religious practice, both within the unit and in daily life. Through its dynamics, this concept is transposed into military life via religious assistance that superimposes Christian values onto moral life.

III.6 - III.10. Pastoral Care for Special Categories: Reservists and Veterans

- **Military Personnel in the Reserve:** Pastoral care for this group addresses the transition from active military service to civilian life. The spiritual dimension provides support against feelings of isolation, lack of purpose in the world, and social alienation.

- **The Pastoral Care of Veterans:** Religious assistance is transformed into a living ministry, becoming a source of spiritual renewal focused on healing inner trauma through confession and prayer.

- **Inter-institutional Collaboration:** The text emphasizes the necessity of close communion between the military chaplain who understands the specific nuances of military psychology and the

parish priest, who will take over the religious assistance of veterans within the local church community.

III.11. Pastoral Care in Wartime

During times of conflict, the military chaplain becomes a pillar of existential and spiritual steadfastness on the front lines of the battlefield.

- **Pastoral Specifics:** The priority of pastoral care shifts toward emergency religious assistance, the emotional and spiritual strengthening of the wounded, the administration of the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) to the dying, and providing the final rites of spiritual consolation to those of other denominations, thereby maintaining human dignity and hope in the face of death.

CHAPTER IV. On Peace and War: This chapter analyzes the nature of war and peace from a theological perspective, highlighting the spiritual conflict between sin and virtue through dogmatic, moral, scriptural, and patristic concepts. The chapter emphasizes Christ's sacrifice as the ultimate resolution to the act of violence, transfiguring military sacrifice into an act of self-giving through sacrificial love.

IV.1. The Metaphysical Origin and Spiritual Dimension of War

- **The Ontological Root of Conflict:** War is presented as a consequence of the Fall and the alteration of human nature, reflecting the rupture of humanity's bond with God the sole and perfect source of love and peace in the world and among people. War is characterized as a moral evil, rooted primarily in sin, selfishness, and a lack of love among mankind; therefore, it is termed the "painter of death" and a hell of hatred, stemming from the absence of love for God and one's neighbor.

- **The Spiritual Warfare:** Before becoming a physical and armed confrontation, war is an ascetic reality—an invisible warfare (*Invisible Warfare*) of the soul against the spirits of wickedness. This constitutes a genuine spiritual battle that the Christian, including the faithful soldier, must wage to attain inner peace.

IV.3 - IV.6. The Theology of Peace (Biblical and Patristic Perspectives)

The section analyzes the transition from the Old Testament concept of *Shalom* (peace) understood as social order, blessing, and harmony to Christ's peace in the New Testament, which is an ontological peace granted by Christ's sacrifice, from which flows the reconciliation of humanity with God.

- **The Patristic Tradition:** Patristic theology defines peace not only as the absence of war, but as a state of union of the mind and heart with God, peace being the fruit of virtue and the Divine presence within society and among people.

IV.7 - IV.11. The Christian Attitude Toward War and Homicide on the Battlefield

- **The Biblical Paradox:** The text contrasts the image of the "Lord of Hosts" (*Dominus Exercituum*) in the Old Testament here war carried a pedagogical or punitive character with the ethics of love promoted by New Testament teachings.

- **The Patristic and Canonical Position:** The Church has never idealized war. Although it did not fully formalize the moral problem of warfare, it only blessed defensive war, considering it an inevitable evil in a spiritually fallen world. The text analyzes the dogmatic and canonical nuances regarding killing in war as a necessity for defending the lives of fellow citizens and the homeland, yet one that still requires a period of penitence and spiritual restoration.

IV.12 - IV.14. Collective Violence, Christ's Sacrifice, and Military Sacrifice

- **Overcoming Violence Through Christ's Sacrifice:** This subchapter analyzes the phenomenon of collective violence through the lenses of Christ's unique sacrifice, which nullifies the logic of violence and pagan sacrifices, offering through His Divine sacrifice the supreme model of self-giving out of love.

- **The Sanctification of the Soldier's Sacrifice:** Death on the battlefield in defense of the faith, family, and homeland is not viewed morally as an act of aggression, but rather as the fulfillment of the commandment of Christian love (John 15:13). The soldier on the battlefield becomes a defender of peace and of the lives of the innocent, and his sacrifice acquires martyric nuances.

CHAPTER V. The Status of the Military Clergy Within the Armed Forces

- **The Profile of the Soldier-Priest:** This section defines the personality, spiritual qualities, pastoral vocation, and patriotic sentiment of the military chaplain, who must continuously balance canonical obedience with military discipline, as well as hierarchical and military subordination toward both the bishop and the commander. It analyzes military legislation and the status of the military chaplain under International Humanitarian Law as protected, non-combatant military personnel.

V.1 - V.3. The Vocation, Ministry, and Pastoral Qualities of the Military Chaplain

- **The Vocational Profile:** Within his ministry and pastoral mission, the military chaplain reunites two fundamental dimensions: serving at the altar of the Church and serving the homeland. His mission is a vocation of sacrifice dedicated to forming the moral character of the soldiers.

- **The Specifics of the Ministry:** Pastoral work within the military environment requires specific qualities tailored to military chaplaincy, such as: adaptation to the garrison environment, rigidity, and routine; psychological resilience; pastoral tact; courage; and a profound understanding of military psychology to maintain the emotional and moral balance of the troops.

V.4. The Duality of Authority: Canonical Obedience and Military Discipline

- **Institutional Symbiosis:** This subchapter analyzes the positioning of the military chaplain as a subordinate caught between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the military hierarchy.

- **Hierarchical Balance:** The research demonstrates that these two spheres are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. The military chaplain acts as a connecting vector that respects the rigors of military regulations without diluting his personality, his pastoral and sacerdotal vocation, or his sacramental freedom.

V.5 - V.6. The National and International Legal Framework

The text highlights the international legal status of the military chaplain according to the Geneva Conventions, which strictly recognize chaplains as non-combatant personnel. In accordance with ecclesiastical canons, the use of weapons, the deprivation of life, homicide in war, bloodshed, and direct participation in hostilities are strictly forbidden; the chaplain's involvement remains exclusively pastoral. International Humanitarian Law guarantees social protection to ensure the sole provision of religious assistance to the wounded, prisoners of war, and the sick.

V.7. The Role of Prior Parish Experience

- **The Pastoral Foundation:** The chapter concludes by demonstrating that previous pastoral activity within a parish environment constitutes a decisive factor in the success of the pastoral-military mission. Prior experience in a civilian parish equips the military chaplain with the spiritual and pastoral maturity required to address spiritual crises and specific pastoral challenges within military units with tact and efficiency.

CHAPTER VI. The Psycho-Pastoral Role of the Military Chaplain

VI.1. The Invisible Wounds of Military Personnel

This section defines and analyzes the concepts of psychological trauma and moral injury (*moral injury*) that occur as a result of unavoidable actions that conflict with the ethical-moral benchmarks and conscience of the soldier, arising as an existential crisis and existential fragmentation. War disrupts the soldier's inner peace and peace of mind, necessitating a pastoral and spiritual-ascetic intervention for ontological restoration and emotional balance.

- **The Sacrament of Confession as Pastoral Therapy in Healing Trauma:** Confession holds a distinct sacramental value compared to secular psychology. It offers the soldier a sacred framework for unburdening the conscience, finding peace of mind, liberation from the burden of guilt, and transfiguring traumatic memories through divine forgiveness by grace, thereby renewing the bond with God. Here, the soldier benefits from a sacred and secure therapeutic space to release the conscience.

VI.2 - VI.5. The Theological Approach to War Trauma and Sacro-Pastoral Therapeutics

This subchapter highlights military pastoral care as a means of inner healing during the soldier's moments of suffering and trial. It analyzes missionary work through specific methods of communication and spiritual therapy designed to bring comfort and peace within the rigorous environment of the military. The text analyzes the essential role of the military chaplain as a shepherd and spiritual physician, whereby religious assistance becomes a source of spiritual healing

and inner restoration for the soldier's being. Military pastoral care possesses a palliative nature that bandages the invisible wounds within the soldier's being and brings peace where remedies are limited.

The section brings to light specific methods of spiritual, pastoral, and missionary approach tailored to military life both within the unit and on the battlefield necessary for the message of the Gospel to bear fruit in the hearts of soldiers. It emphasizes the importance of person-to-person dialogue and spiritual listening, through which the priest descends from the pulpit into the midst of the actual anxieties of his military flock. Finally, the power of spiritual edification through the dynamics of the word is evaluated, capable of instilling courage and clear moral benchmarks in the life of the soldier.

VI.6 - VI.10. The Mystery and Holiness of the Word Within the Military Environment

This part analyzes the spiritual power of the word within the army, its limits, and the sin of distorting truth through falsehood. It examines the insufficiency of the human word when faced with the great mysteries of the world and how distortion can alter the soldier's conscience.

The research highlights the respect for the word and its sacred value, manifested in the military oath, which is viewed as a covenant of fidelity to God and the homeland. The virtue of Christian and military honor is reaffirmed, grounded in the respect for truth, where the word becomes, through the oath, a seal upon the life of the soldier.

VI.11 - VI.13. The Dilemma of Conscience and the Ethics of Sacrifice

This section addresses the most difficult moral trial of the Christian soldier: the tension between the divine commandment not to kill and the grim reality of war. The profession of arms can be transformed from an act of violence into a virtue of defense and sacrificial love for one's neighbor.

CHAPTER VII. The Pastoral Potential of Soldierly Virtues

VII.1-VII.2. The Spiritual Foundations of the Soldier's Life

This subchapter analyzes the moral core of military duty from a Christocentric perspective. The soldierly vocation is defined through the lens of absolute love, bridging love and ultimate sacrifice by the willingness to lay down one's life for one's neighbor.

Death on the battlefield must not be viewed as an end, but as a supreme act of sacrifice and self-giving in the spirit of sacrificial love. Virtues such as prayer, faith, and merciful love are investigated as crucial resources for moral resilience within the military environment.

Prayer in crisis situations is not a formal act, but an existential anchor that keeps the soldier's being alive during tense and critical moments.

VII.3-VII.4. Transfigured Military Virtues: Honor and Comradeship

Military honor is reevaluated through a theological lens, being associated with human dignity created in the image and likeness of God; it implies altruism, love, and service to one's neighbor,

justice, truth, gentleness, the refusal to abuse power, non-violence, and unconditional respect for the weak and defenseless.

Comradeship transcends simple professional solidarity, being analyzed as an extended form of collective moral responsibility. It transforms into a profound relationship of communion and co-responsibility in the face of suffering and death, where the life of the comrade to one's right or left becomes more important than one's own safety.

VII.5. The Evangelical Paradox: Love for Enemies in the Context of War

• The Ethical Tension

This subchapter addresses one of the most difficult and challenging New Testament commandments within the context of armed conflict. The thesis demonstrates that the Christian warrior is called to combat evil, aggression, and injustice, and to defend the life of the neighbor, the innocent, and the defenseless, without manifesting feelings of personal hatred toward the enemy.

• The Christian Sense of Humanity in Combat

Emphasis is placed on the responsibility of dignity. The enemy, who is also created in the image of God, must not be viewed with hatred if wounded; they require mercy, a fact that mandates and reflects the moral principles of religious assistance.

VII.6-VII.7. Defending Life, Self-Sacrifice, and the Mystery of Military Friendship

This section analyzes the relationship between the duty to protect the lives of the innocent and assuming the risk of one's own death on the battlefield. The soldier does not fight because they hate what is in front of them, but because they love what they left behind the front lines, in the spirit of sacrificial love.

Friendship as a Mystery of Communion Among Soldiers

The chapter concludes by defining friendship within the military environment as a form of unity in the spirit of sacrificial communion. Under conditions of siege and danger, it becomes the expression of fraternal communion a virtue through which the power of grace is manifested, where selfishness is dissolved in favor of altruism and the common good.

CHAPTER VIII. Missionary and Pastoral-Military Exigencies

VIII.1-VIII.2. The Liturgical and Public Dimension of Military Chaplaincy

• The Military-Religious Ceremony on Heroes' Day

This subchapter analyzes Heroes' Day as a meeting point between the liturgical memory (*anamnesis*) of the Church and the national identity of the army. Within the soldier's consciousness, military-religious ceremonies do not represent a simple act of protocol, but a living communion with the departed who sacrificed their lives on the altar of the ancestral homeland.

This communion, held in a spirit of prayer, transfigures the honoring of ancestors and heroes into an act of profound gratitude and patriotic education with a distinct military and religious profile.

- **The Military-Religious Ceremony at the Taking of the Military Oath**

The sacramental and moral status of the military chaplain's involvement in the sacred act of taking the military oath is analyzed. The presence of the military chaplain and the invocation of God's name in the prayer of sacralization of the military oath impart a spiritual dimension, transforming a contractual or legal obligation into a sacred duty of conscience and an eternal covenant sealed by the soldier with their own life.

VIII.3-VIII.4. Catechetical and Philanthropic Work in the Soldier's Life

- **Didactic Activity**

This section addresses the teaching and catechetical mission of the military chaplain within the armed forces environment. Beyond liturgical activity and service, the military chaplain conducts an intensive program of spiritual and moral-religious formation a religious education program tailored to the military profile, lectures on various specific topics, and spiritual dialogues, offering soldiers spiritual benchmarks in the face of the moral errors and nihilism of contemporary society.

- **The Social-Philanthropic Mission**

This section analyzes the role of the chaplain as a symbol of solidarity and altruism through the organization of humanitarian activities within the military sphere. By involving soldiers in philanthropic actions, it contributes to developing a sense of merciful love and cultivating spiritual sensitivity.

VIII.5-VIII.6. Ethical Dilemmas of the Profession of Arms and Typikon References

- **The Professional Army between Mercenarism and Vocation**

This section of the chapter analyzes the transition from a compulsory military service to a socio-professional, contractual army. It counters the perspective that the professional soldier is a simple paid executor, demonstrating that from a Christian standpoint, the profession of arms remains a vocation of sacrifice, defined by assuming the ultimate risk for the defense of peace, the homeland, and one's fellow human beings.

- **The Liturgical Specificity**

The chapter concludes with an analysis of practical rules from a liturgical and ecclesiastical perspective, as well as the typikon adaptations required under conditions of isolation or on the battlefield. It proposes several liturgical expressions adapted to the specific ministry and liturgical activities of the military clergy, emphasizing the rhythm of the soldier's spiritual life.

CHAPTER IX. The Homeland as an Echo of Eternity, Love, and Patriotism

IX.1-IX.3. The Ontological Roots of the Homeland

- **The Dual Citizenship of the Christian Soldier**

This subchapter describes the condition of the human being as an earthly creature with deep roots in time and space, within a geographical and historical reality, yet carrying within their being

the calling of the heavenly homeland and the image of eternity of the Divine Kingdom. Earthly patriotism is presented as a preparation for the heavenly, cosmic one, within the dimension of eternity, where the human being remembers their origin as a child of God and an heir to the eternal homeland.

- **The Sacred Genesis of Attachment:** This section substantiates the thesis that the homeland has its source in God; it begins with faith in God, the essence of all nations created in the "divine image and likeness" and manifests through natural filiation toward parents, whose remains rest in the soil of the homeland. Love for the homeland springs from the divine commandment to honor one's parents and ancestors, who left behind a country and a strong, authentic faith as an inheritance.

- **The Land of Memory**

The homeland is defined as that theandric space where time past, present, and future meets in the spirit of the language, culture, and faith transmitted by ancestors. The earthly soil does not represent a simple place or geographical space, but a hearth of spiritual memory and an ancestral calling to return in time and space.

IX.4-IX.6. The Soldier's Sacrifice, Collective Patriotism, and the Challenges of Globalization

- **The Guarantor of Freedom Through Sacrifice**

This section analyzes the way in which the homeland, as a divine gift, is defended and valued through the soldier's sacrificial love for family and nation. Although patriotism has become an outdated concept among younger generations today driven by the phenomenon of globalization the risk assumed by the soldier on the battlefield represents the expression of absolute fidelity to the ancestral soil, faith, and nation.

- **Collective Patriotism**

This is analyzed as a force for social and ecclesial cohesion. Unlike chauvinistic or extremist nationalism, the collective patriotism proposed by Orthodox theology is grounded in Christian love for all people created in the divine image, which entails solidarity and shared responsibility, free from selfishness and hatred toward other nations and cultures.

- **The Contemporary Challenge**

This part addresses the dynamics of identity in the era of globalization, characterized by the blurring of earthly borders and cultural frontiers. The thesis demonstrates that Christian patriotism is neither an anachronism nor an archaism, but a necessary anchor of moral steadfastness for preserving patriotic identity and dignity, as well as cultural specificity, in the face of the secularizing spirit of today's world, estrangement from faith, and tendencies toward spiritual emptying.

IX.7. The Cult of Heroes and the Martyric Dimension

- **Heroes: The Unknown Saints of the Earth:** The chapter presents a theological reflection on those fallen in the line of duty who sacrificed their blood and lives on the altar of the homeland,

assimilated into a special category of martyrs "from all times and all places." Through this supreme gesture, they manifested sacrificial love for their neighbor, fulfilling the Savior's commandment: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). The great historian Nicolae Iorga stated that this nation "will endure for eternity only through sacrifice and the cult of heroes." The hero is par excellence the martyr who sacrifices himself out of love, after the image of Christ, who sacrificed Himself for the life of the world.

- **Anonymous Sanctification**

Even though many Romanian heroes remain unknown in earthly records, their sacrifice enrolls them in the eternal memory of the Church, transforming them into spiritual intercessors for the people and the faith they defended with their own lives.

CHAPTER X. The Monographic Component

X.1. The 26th Battalion "Avram Iancu" – Historiography

- **Military Identity and Tradition**

This subchapter constitutes the monographic component of the research, analyzing the historical trajectory, tactical specificity, and elite missions of the soldiers from Brad.

- **Symbolic Anchoring**

Bearing the resonant name of "Avram Iancu" confers a powerful spiritual and patriotic identity upon the battalion, linking military duty to the sacrificial values of the Romanian people in the Zarand region.

X.2. The "Saint Great Martyr George" Military Chapel

- **The Spiritual Center of the Unit**

This section documents the founding and evolution of the church establishment within the edifice. The military chapel is viewed not only as an architectural edifice, but as the spiritual heart of the community of arms, carrying deep symbolic and historical significance.

- **Spiritual Patronage**

The choice of the Saint Great Martyr George as the spiritual protector substantiates the battalion's infantry profile, as the saint is the patron protector of the Land Forces. Furthermore, it reflects the symbiosis between the military courage specific to mountain troops and Christian fidelity, with the sacred space becoming an anchor of recollection for mountain scouts before military exercises or complex missions.

CONCLUSIONS

Religious assistance represents the symbol of unity between the military phenomenon and the spiritual values promoted by the Church among soldiers, evolving from liturgical ministry to mission and chaplaincy adapted to the military sphere, which offers moral support to soldiers and provides moral and spiritual counseling. By adapting to the pastoral challenges specific to the profession of arms, military chaplains are no longer just performers of religious rituals; within the

army, they become pillars of psychological, emotional, moral, and spiritual support, both at the unit level and during missions.

The new military-focused chaplaincy emphasizes the formation of conscience and moral values, helping the soldier manage the stress and moral dilemmas specific to war, while helping the military chaplain navigate the specific challenges of the pastoral activity carried out among his flock. Although the Orthodox tradition is predominant, the structure of Religious Assistance in the army has an "ecumenical" character, ensuring religious assistance for various denominations through personal counseling on different issues or situations specific to the inner state; individualized chaplaincy is specific in this regard.

Within the military environment, preaching from the pulpit gives way to person-to-person dialogue, shifting the emphasis to confession or personal counseling, thereby adapting the discourse to the rigorous reality of the army. Military chaplaincy acts as a crucial spiritual therapy for soldiers undergoing existential and identity crises, fear, or loneliness. Through his pastoral ministry, the military chaplain becomes "all things to all people" a spiritual comrade, a confessor beyond military rank, and a spiritual father.

The profile of his new chaplaincy integrates the capacity to serve in the harshest conditions, under the open sky, demonstrating that within the dynamics of its pastoral mission, the Church moves together with the Army.

The thesis has highlighted that the core of the new chaplaincy remains Eucharistic, showing remarkable missionary flexibility. Demonstrating a balanced ecclesiological openness, the military chaplain, in the spirit of his ministry, offers spiritual consolation and respects the freedom of belief of each soldier without diluting his own dogmatic identity.

The institution of the military clergy focuses on the moral profile of the soldier by cultivating patriotic sentiment and Christian virtues: duty, honor, fidelity, and sacrificial love for country and fellow human beings in the spirit of the Gospel.

In conclusion, the new chaplaincy within the Romanian Armed Forces attests to the Church's fidelity toward its universal ministry and vocation to accompany soldiers with grace and the saving word, across all circumstances of life and history.

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