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SUMMARY

FATHER ARSENIE PAPACIOC – THE INNER HUMAN BEING

(The architecture of a "continuous presence")

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Summary

This research aims to analyze from a theological perspective the spiritual personality of Father Arsenie Papacioc, to capture those spiritual elements that give him identity and validate him as one of the most profound contemporary spiritual leaders of Romanian Orthodoxy. The father is one of those who "lived Christianity ontologically"¹, which leads us to consider this approach as strictly necessary. On the one hand, because it is imposed as a way of honoring the memory of the great clergyman and, on the other hand, because it can contribute to a lasting assimilation on various cultural, intellectual, confessional levels of the exercise of holiness that the icon of the father offers to us. We mention that this existential model perfected by "Arsenie, the man of God"² deals with the scarcity of solutions that flood the life of man today, replenishing life on the path of fulfillment.

We will orient ourselves towards the substance of Father Arsenie's spirituality, identifying those inner features that draw the perimeter of his spiritual dimension and we will frame them in the treasury of Orthodox spirituality and theology. Because, in other words, speaking of Father Arsenie, we are only trying to capture, in pencil, a fact of life: "We can talk or write about Orthodoxy, Father Arsenie breathes Orthodoxy"³. This approach does not aim to build a biography of Father Arsenie but to theologially frame the spiritual image of the father and it is precisely in this perspective that the novelty of our project lies.

The motivation for writing this paper hosts both a scientific impetus and aspects of a subjective nature. Scientifically, because Father Arsenie is a spiritual universe that must be captured in an analytical note, in the sense that it can and must be officially recognized its rightful place in the gallery of the great living, who not only spoke about God but also made themselves chosen vessels by which God spoke to us. At the same time, by virtue of the legacy he left us, it would be unfair for our gesture to be only a gesture of remembrance in terms of Father Arsenie Papacioc, but it must be a gesture of recognition, of theological and spiritual recovery of him. Regarding the intrinsic, subjective motivation, I think that I am not a singular case and, therefore, I do not have to justify myself but only to state that the experience of meeting the parent was, for me, founding. When I met him, after a few questions I asked him

¹ Ieromonah Benedict Stancu, *Părintele Arsenie Papacioc, O clipă inima mi se făcuse cer*, Editura Elena, Constanța, 2012, p. 10

² *Ne vorbește Părintele Arsenie*, Vol. 2, Ediție îngrijită de Arhimandrit Ioanichie Bălan, Editura Mănăstirea Sihăstria, Vânători, 2004, p. 81

³ Danion Vasile, „Avva Arsenie Papacioc – un haiduc duhovnicesc”, în: *Atitudini*, Nr. 35, <https://www.atitudini.com/2018/07/avva-arsenie-papacioc-un-haiduc-duhovnicesc-de-danion-vasile/> (accesat la 11.04.2021)

and for which I received answers, the father took me out of the position of the interlocutor and instituted me in the secret of a special reality. Not just by answering the crucial question I had just asked myself, but by the power to build a new heart. At the age of 23, I was talking about my desire to become a priest. I had a goal set well in advance: to listen very carefully to everything he will tell me. This is how the father spoke to me about the two important things God created: the Mother of God and the priesthood. He pointed out that the angels also see and tremble at the work being done in the holy altar. I felt my inner dimensions open and I became easy. I wondered if I wasn't excited and experiencing a physiological sensation. There was nothing like that. It was not about the body but about my soul. To the feeling that you are emptying yourself of everything that fills you (carnal) and you become full of a new type of satiety, which was, indisputably, aievea, I would give it only one name: I lived spiritually. Father had given me a new heart, full of joy that I had finally received as a gift. During this time, I was preparing for the final resolution. I, who had already been to America twice, intended to ask his opinion; if he encourages me to leave the country for a few years and on my return to receive the ordination. Without remembering the question to the end, the father answers me: "Become a priest without delay"!

The importance of the work lies in the element of novelty it brings. A few books have been written about Father Arsenie, not many. In reality, however, their number could halve because most resume the same filmed interviews that Father Arsenie gave over time. On the other hand, the personality of the father is exposed in a memorialistic form without being placed in the context of Orthodox spirituality and without being emphasized, from this angle, the personality of Father Arsenie Papacioc. This work therefore opens a path that is far from being covered in its entirety. Therefore, we intend to draw the lines of flight of this subject which, of course, will find its fulfillment later and through the contribution of other researchers. I picked up those terminals that mark the spiritual axis of the father and around them I embroidered the theological discourse. At times it may seem that we have strayed too far from the subject, but this risk has been deliberate in order to emphasize, and in this way, the spiritual distances that Father Arsenie has traveled.

The methods used in the elaboration of the paper are the analytical-descriptive one, respectively the comparative method. The first used as a tool to capture and theological filtering of Father Arsenie's message and the second functioned as a mechanism of decantation or, more appropriately, of placing in the womb of Orthodox spirituality, of framing it in the picture of the great living of Orthodoxy. The chronology of the father's life occupies a limited space in the work because it does not bring an element of novelty and, at the same time, because the

purpose of this work is to reveal the spiritual biography of Father Arsenie, his inner features and not to make another review. , in chronological note, of his life.

The paper is structured on three main chapters, each with their subchapters and sections. I developed the subject of the inner man, and I captured the reality of the presence on the inner dimensions with the vital implications of the manifestation of the person on these coordinates. Of course we referred to the spiritual organs of interiority, namely the heart, mind and the relationship between them. Moreover, we probed the principles of asceticism and vigilance and that agonizing dimension of faith, with the four levels or areas of manifestation: freedom, love, suffering and prayer. The second chapter analyzes what we discovered to be the solution of time in Father Arsenie. Here we referred to the father's conception of time and our placement in time, correlated with a number of aspects related to the theology of time. In the third chapter we opened the CNSAS archive, which provides us, through the records of those who watched it, a memory that no longer belongs only to the job description. He metamorphosed into a proof of what he discovered and, in fact, should have denied: the sanctity of Father Arsenie. Here we treat some sensitive points, of which we mention only one: belonging, in youth, to the Legionary Movement. At the end of the paper we added some appendices that tell us about the father. Here we mention the recommendation he wrote, for ordination, to the one who would become Father Archbishop and Metropolitan Andrei, but also pages from the archive or the word of His Eminence Theophanes at the funeral service of Father Arsenie, July 21, 2011.

Father Arsenie Papacioc lived between August 15, 1914 and July 19, 2011. He is a man whose spiritual scope is validated especially by the legacy he left; a legacy for the treasure of humanity itself, through the living memory of an unquenchable example of holiness but also through the people it sprouted in Christ. In this sense, we bring to your attention a fragment from the memories of our Father, Archbishop and Metropolitan Andrei:

"Arriving in Cluj as an engineer, the fascination of my spiritual parents did not leave me. For a while I worked on doubling the Teiuș - Vințu de Jos railway. In Alba Iulia, at the Cathedral, Brother Petrică Jinaru was a singer and parish priest. At one point he invited me to go on a visit to the Dintr un Lemn Monastery. Who was a clergyman there in the 1972s? The well-known Father Arsenie Papacioc. After suffering in communist prisons, he was reinstated by Archbishop Teofil Herineanu at Filea de Jos Parish. When things relaxed, he was able to go to the Monastery of a Wood. Then he will reach St. Mary of Techirghiol, where he will remain until his move to the Lord. The meeting with him was a revelation. I took him as a clergyman and intermittently kept him until he moved into eternity. I also have a recommendation of his in the ordination file. The spiritual counsel he gave insisted more on a

vigilance of mind than on an exaggerated bodily will. The infinitely repeated saying cannot be forgotten: "If youth knew and if old age could"⁴.

About the recommendation, written from the pen of the heart and with the finesse of the Spirit, that Father Arsenie makes, in order to be ordained a priest, to our Father Archbishop and Metropolitan Andrei is mentioned in the book: Archimandrite Arsenie Papacioc, *Eternity hidden in a moment, Reunification*, Alba Iulia, 2004, p. 5. As a gift of great value I received a copy of this recommendation with the blessing of publishing it in this paper (see Annex I).

As a chronology of Father Arsenie's life, although this is not necessarily part of the strong dynamics of this work, it is worth mentioning, however, some landmarks.

He was born on August 15, 1914 in the village of Misleanu (later Perieți), Ialomița County, as the seventh son of the spouses Vasile and Stanca, receiving the name Anghel at the Baptism⁵. In 1932 he graduated from the School of Arts and Crafts, wood carving department⁶. On May 10, 1933, however cries in the Legionary Movement, which we will discuss in more detail in the last chapter of the paper. After finishing his military service (1936 - 1937) at the 40th Infantry Regiment, he returned for a short time to Misleanu. During 1938 we find the young Anghel as a worker at the Malaxa Factory. The first arrest, respectively the first detention in the next series will be in Miercurea Ciuc, between December 1938 - April 1940. From October 1940, until the beginning of the following year, Anghel Papacioc is mayor of Zărnești. For participating in the legionary rebellion of January 21/22, 1941, he was again arrested and sentenced by the Brașov Tribunal to 6 years in prison and 2 years of prohibition of civil rights. It was issued in August 1941, based on Law no. 2054/1941, in order to go to the front, but the Mobilization Office gives him an order to leave the hearth. For attempting to cross the border, he was arrested on July 6, 1942 and imprisoned at the Vaslui Penitentiary, from where he would later be transferred to the Aiud Penitentiary. Here he will serve his sentence until September 8, 1946, when he will be released. 1947 is the year in which Anghel Papacioc knocks at the gate of the Cozia monastery to be received in public. A real monastic circuit will begin, reason for which, after a spiritual stop at the Sihăstria monastery, in 1949 he was ordained a monk at the Antim monastery, on behalf of the Sihăstria monastery, his godfather being a monk, Father Petroniu Tănase. It's called Arsenie now. One year later, on the

⁴ IPS Andrei Andreicuț, „Minunații noștri Părinți duhovnicești”, În: *Tabor*, Anul XI, Nr. 10, Octombrie 2017, p. 5

⁵ Sorin Alpetri, *Între timp și veșnicie, Viața părintelui Arsenie Papacioc*, Ediția a II-a, mult îmunătățită și adăugată, Editura Accent Print, Suceava, 2015, p. 16

⁶ Arhimandrit Andrei Tudor, Mariana Conovici, Iuliana Conovici (ED.), *Am înțeles rostul meu...Părintele Arsenie Papacioc în dosarele securității*, Humanitas, București, 2014, p. 35

day of his monasticism, on September 26, 1950, he was ordained a priest by the Metropolitan of Moldova, Sebastian Rusan. From January 1952 he became the abbot of the Slatina monastery, after having previously lived in the desert for two years. He had retired to the mountains of Stânișoara, together with Father Ilie Cleopa, due to the growing threat posed by the Securitate against them. The reason was the "religious propaganda" that they carried out, in fact the quality of the monastic life that was outlined in this monastery and the power of attraction it exerted, even for outsiders. On June 14, 1958, the great arrest took place (the Slatina monastery had been besieged by about 80 militiamen) on behalf of the Rugul Aprins (the Burning Bush) Movement. Father Arsenie Papacioc will endure detention at the Jilava Penitentiary and then at Aiud for 6 years, between 1958 and 1964 when he was released based on Decree no. 411/1 August 1964. Here the father will refuse to accept the prison's re-education program because it promotes atheism. After release, it will be closely monitored, the follow-up file being transferred to all locations where the parent will work. He will be sent as a parish priest in the parish of Filea de Jos in Cluj County (2 years), from there we will find him, for certain successive periods, at the monasteries Cheia, Căldărușani, Dintr un Lemn, Cernica until, in January 1976, he be appointed spiritual priest at the hermitage "Saint Mary" in Techirghiol. This will be his last stop and from here he will move to the Lord on July 19, 2011.

Father Arsenie, the inner man, is a true preacher of the Sacrament of Christ. This is the expression of the Holy Apostle Paul. We find it in the epistle to the Colossians and more. It doesn't mean much. He is a preacher of Christ because in the personality of Father Arsenie Papacioc is outlined, as in a whisper, what another confessor of Orthodoxy, secular this time - Mircea Vulcănescu - said, that "the life of the Christian is a great adventure of love by God who wants to be loved by a free being"⁷.

I want us to remember these two aspects, these two coordinates: love of God and freedom. They open to us the inner perspective of the personality of Father Arsenie Papacioc. Love and freedom validate each other. You cannot lead an authentic spiritual life without these two coordinates, without the love and freedom that Christ gives you. They validate each other, and the suffering is what confirms them as authentic. The premise of the inner man in Father Arsenie Papacioc is a biblical one. The psalmist David says, "Test me, O Lord, and know my heart" (Ps 138: 23). I would also like to remember this word: heart. Father Arsenie said about the heart that it is a being in being. It's like doubling us, in the best and most positive way

⁷ Mircea Vulcănescu, „Creștinul în lumea modernă”, în: Ioan I. Ică jr, Germano Marani, *Gândirea socială a Bisericii*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, p. 78

possible. The heart is a being in being because there each of us appropriates the inner dispositions of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the innermost dispositions of Christ that we can own, which is evident from the example of Father Arsenie, is related to the Sacrament of the Cross. Father Arsenie shows us that in order to truly live, to truly experience the Sacrament of the Cross, you must commit yourself completely. It's about that madness that the father talked about many times. You must fully commit yourself to this assumption of the Cross. Doing this does not you can ignore neither the freedom nor the love that must manifest. The Mystery of the Cross becomes, as I like to say, the Mystery of the reached horizons. It is a paradoxical expression because the horizon is something you cannot reach, but the Mystery of the Cross, if we live it as Father Arsenie Papacioc shows us, is the mystery of the horizons reached. What horizons do we reach? Those of which the Holy Apostle Paul tells us in the epistle to the Ephesians: "We know the breadth and the depth and the height of God" (Eph 3:18). We can say that we even have a spiritual testament of the father, a testament that boils down to the above expression: "Be a man of the Cross and a son of the Resurrection!"⁸. This is a far-reaching theological expression. Here we find a quintessence of authentic Orthodox spiritual living. When he was ordained a monk and had Father Petronius as his monk's godfather, Father Arsenie carved a wooden cross for Father Petronius at his request. He builds his inner structure on the coordinates of the Cross. The inner dimension of Father Arsenie Papacioc will not be exhausted in the ranks of this composition. What we set out to do is to open the angle of this perspective, to offer some structured arguments for what is already demonstrated, namely the sanctity of the father and his transformation into a pneumophoric human person. The major themes of spirituality he experiences are vast chapters of theology transposed into action. The way in which they coexist in a harmony of intra-Trinitarian love assumed personally, will fascinate many generations. Here our work opens a path that claims to be crossed.

Keywords: Inner man, time, heart, mind, presence, vigilance, freedom, suffering, love, prayer.

Contents 2

Introduction 6

CHAPTER I. THE INNER MAN 11

I.1. Preliminaries 11

I.2. The Inner Man - Conceptualization 13

⁸ Arhim. A. Papacioc, *Veșnicia ascunsă într-o clipă*, p. 165

I.2.1. The Cruciality of the Inner Man	20
I.3. The heart - realm of presence	23
I.3.1 Being in being	23
I.3.1.1. The topos of the heart	27
I.3.1.2. Icon, Image, presence	31
I.3.2. Inner Dynamics (Heart and Mind / Reason)	39
I.4. Vigilance vs Asceticism	49
I.4.1. Preliminaries	49
I.4.2. Vigilance	53
I.4.3. Asceticism	60
I.5. The agonizing dimension of faith	68
I.5.1. The heroism of freedom	68
I.5.2. Love (In the love of enemies we overcome the nature that must be defeated in any way)	78
I.5.3. Suffering (Mystery of the cross - an instrument of spiritual renewal)	82
I.5.4. Prayer (The force of relationship with God)	93
I.5.4.1. A short definition	93
I.5.4.2. Prayer and virtue	95
I.5.4.3. The dynamics of prayer	97
CHAPTER II. FATHER ARSENIE PAPACIOC AND THE SOLUTION OF TIME	101
II. 1. Definition of time	102
II.2. Time categories	105
II.2.1. The origin of time	105
II.2.2. Place of time - consciousness / space / heart	107
II.2.2.1. Time and Presence	108
II.2.3. The nature of time	109
II.2.3.1. Kronos - Cyclic / circular / horizontal time	109
II.2.3.2. Linear time - historical / concrete	114
II.2.3.2.1. The musicality of time	114
II.2.3.2.2. Memory / retention and protection	115
II.2.3.2.3. History as provisional. Time of God's patience	117
II.2.3.3. Kairos - sacred time (liturgical, existential)	119
II.2.3.3.1. Liturgical time in the Life of the Church	128

- II.2.3.3.2. Prayer 132
- II.2.3.4. Moment and presence 137
- II.2.3.5. Christ - the axis of time 145
- II.2.3.6. Time and Eternity 151
 - II.2.3.6.1. Contradictions / antinomies of time 152
 - II.2.3.6.2. Death and prepaschal time 153
 - II.2.3.6.3. Eternity - the meaning of time 157

CHAPTER III. INTERPRETATION OF A SERVICE REPORT (CNSAS DOCUMENTS) 160

- III.1. The Legionary Movement and the Burning Bush 163
- III.2. From the CNSAS Archive 167
 - III.2.1. "We started from the icon and we will reach the icon" 167
 - III.2.2. The Legionary Movement - Childish Naivety and Shame on Humanity 168
 - III.2.3. The Burning Bush 170
 - III.2.4. A man without reproach 171
 - III.2.5. I could not renounce God at the cost of my life 176
 - III.2.6. Founding meetings 182

Conclusions 185

Bibliography 188

Annex 197

ANNEX I. Recommendation of Father Arsenie Papacioc for the ordination of the Most Reverend Father, Archbishop and Metropolitan Andrei (August 10, 1978). 197

ANNEX II. From the CNSAS Archive - The declarations of Father Arsenie Papacioc of detachment from the Legionary Movement (January 14, respectively March 24, 1939). ACNSAS, Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 5, pages 18-19 198

ANNEX III. From the CNSAS Archive - The opinion of Father Arsenie Papacioc about the Legionary Movement. ACNSAS, Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 2, pages 358-359. two hundred

ANNEX IV. From the CNSAS Archive - Conviction in the group The Burning Bush. Minute 125 of 8 November 1958, Military Tribunal, Region II, Military in ACNSAS, Information Fund, file 185003, Vol. 2, tab 106 201

ANNEX V. From the CNSAS Archive - The great clergyman of Aiud. ACNSAS, Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 5, pages 34-35; 40-43. ACNSAS, Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 3, row 148 202

ANNEX VI. From the CNSAS Archive - Liturgy and The Catechetical Method of the Father, practiced during his detention in Aiud (1958-1964). ACNSAS, Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 3, pages 194-196. ACNSAS, Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 3, row 104-105 206

ANNEX VII. From the CNSAS Archive - A description of the Father. ACNSAS, Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 1, tab 220, p. 2. He is also characterized as a man with “deeply religious beliefs” in the Informative Fund, file 185003, Vol. 1, tab 52 210

ANNEX VIII. The icon from Filea. ACNSAS, Information fund, file 185003, Vol. 3, tab 305 and a photograph of the icon that is still in the parish church 211

ANNEX IX. The Convent of His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Theophanes of Moldova, at the funeral of Father Arsenie Papacioc (July 21, 2011, St. Mary's Monastery, Techirghiol). 213

ANNEX X. The book of Mr. Sorin Alpetri, with autograph, to Father Ioan-Tănase Chiș, (Techirghiol, October 28, 2018). Photo at the tomb of Father Arsenie Papacioc. Mother Maria Dinu together with the family of Father Ioan-Tănase Chiș (Techirghiol, October 29, 2018). Father Ioan-Tănase Chiș in the hermitage of Father Arsenie (Techirghiol, October 30, 2019). 216

ANNEX XII. The Official Monitor regarding the awarding of the distinction “National Order“ For Worth” in the rank of Knight”, to Father Arsenie Papacioc, on behalf of the President of Romania, Ion Iliescu. 219