

**Your Holiness Bartholomaios,
Archbishop of Constantinople – New Rome and
Ecumenical Patriarch,
Your Holinesses / Your Beatitudes,
Your Excellency Mr José Manuel Durão Barroso,
President of the European Commission,
Your Excellency Mr Traian Băsescu,
President of Romania,
Your Excellency Mr Călin Popescu Tăriceanu,
Prime Minister of Romania,
Your Eminences, Your Graces and Your Excellencies,
Dear Participants in the Third European Ecumenical Assembly,**

It is with great joy that we would like to extend to you all – on behalf of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, of the clergy, monks and nuns, as well as of the faithful of our Church – a warm word of welcome, here, in Sibiu, a century-old City of culture and Christian spirituality.

For almost a week, Sibiu, the “European Capital of Culture” in 2007 becomes, at the same time, a true “spiritual capital”, gathering together outstanding personalities of today’s Christian world, other distinguished representatives from all over Europe, delegates of the principal Christian European Churches, including many young people, who are a promise for the future of Christendom on the “old continent”, not only through their youthfulness, but mostly through their active involvement in the activity of their respective Churches.

The general theme which will be discussed during the next few days: “***The Light of Christ shines upon all. Hope for renewal and unity in Europe***” constitutes not only a message characteristic to the Orthodox worship; it is, at the same time, a very topical imperative in the context of the common effort that European Christians undertake at global level, on the way to restoring the unity of the Church. Likewise, the same is true at the European level, as an expression of the hope for renewal of the consciousness and responsibility of Christians within the contemporary society.

The Romanian Orthodox Church, as a majority Church in Romania, participated, from the early days of the Conference of the European Churches (KEK), in the ecumenical dialogue with other Christian Churches from the continent, a dialogue which has grown through the collaboration with the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). In this sense, the Romanian people had the joy to hear the Bishop of Rome saying in Bucharest, in May 1999, the Symbol of Faith in the Romanian language, while, three years later, in *St Peter's* Basilica, our father of blessed memory Teoctist, the Patriarch of Romania, and his friend, Pope John Paul II recited together the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), in order to give witness of a common treasure of Christian faith.

In these moments, we recall with much joy another European ecumenical meeting, which took place in October 1984, in Riva del Garda, Italy, when Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants, from a Europe still divided by the Berlin wall, have recited

² *Welcome speech of H.E. Daniel, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina, Locum tenens of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church addressed to the participants in the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, Sibiu, 5 September 2007*

together, in the *Duomo* of Trento, the same Niceno- Constantinopolitan Creed, as a living witness of a common root of Christian faith. More than two decades later from that event, here we are, meeting each other, after Basel (1989) and Graz (1997), in Sibiu, this beautiful city of Transylvania, a true “Europe in miniature”, rich in a common history of peaceful coexistence of Romanians, Saxons and Hungarians, who represent the principal Christian Churches of a Europe without dividing walls and with a wish for reunification, not only politically or economically, but also spiritually. Here, there is an arch over time which speaks about our duty, as Churches founded upon the living word of the Gospel of Christ, Who is the Light of the world shining to everyone, to promote the renewal of life and the unity in Europe.

This Light of Christ guided our path and strengthened our hope, especially during the years of atheistic communist dictatorship, so much so that Christians from Romania stayed firmly committed to the faith that they inherited from their ancestors, to the extent to which the Romanians remained one of the most religious people of Europe.

We are convinced that, through the enlargement of the European Union, the ecumenical dialogue will be promoted even further and we express, once again, our joy to welcome you to Romania, a country which has just become this year (2007) a member of this Union, yet, it has never ceased to manifest itself in a true European spirit. At the same time, as European citizens, we have the duty to work together with Christians from all over the world to manifest a common responsibility in confessing Christ through cooperation, by promoting the Christian faith and values, and through solidarity, towards solving the urgent problems that the society of today is confronted with.

In the joy of the love of Christ, we address you a warm welcome to Sibiu, to this European Capital of Culture, which became these days also an “ecumenical capital”!

D A N I E L

**Archbishop of Jassy,
Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina and
Locum tenens of the Patriarch of the
Romanian Orthodox Church**