

† MACARIE
ROMANIAN ORTHODOX BISHOP OF NORTHERN EUROPE



BESIDE US ON THE CROSS OF SUFFERING
STANDS CHRIST!

**Greeting Card and
Pastoral Letter for the Feast of the Lord's Resurrection**

Stockholm, 2024



The icon of the Mother of God “The Nursing Mother” from Țibleș is housed in the chapel of Bishop Macarie’s childhood home in Spermezeu, Bistrița-Năsăud. (Iconographers: Toma Chituc and Mihai Coman).

Front cover: Icon of the Resurrection of the Lord (fresco) housed in the chapel of Bishop Macarie’s childhood home in Spermezeu, Bistrița-Năsăud.
(Iconographers: Toma Chituc, Ioan Popa and Mihai Coman)

Illustrations: Ștefan Câlția



My beloved,

Christ is risen!

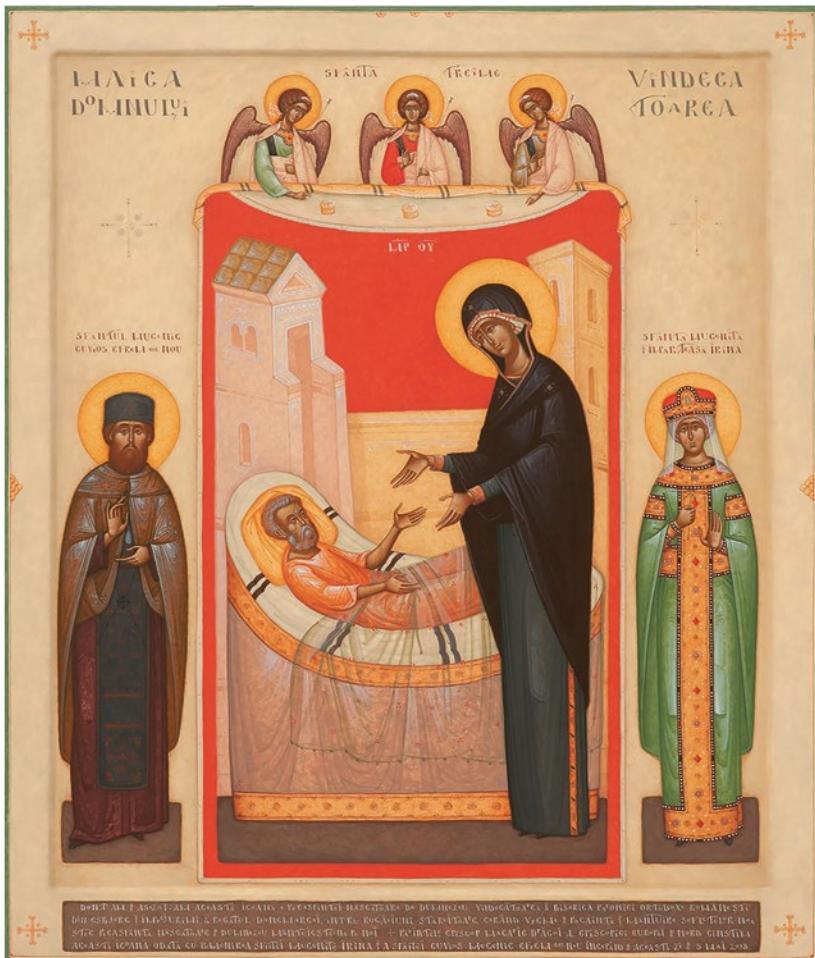
May the Lord grant you victory over the adversaries of life, the courage to bear the Cross of salvation, and a heart full of gratitude.

Your Servant, Brother and Friend,

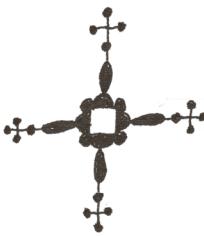
*+ Părintele Episcop Macarie Drăgoi
al Episcopiei Europei de Nord*



2024
THE COMMEMORATIVE YEAR
OF ALL THE HOLY UNMERCENARY HEALERS
AND
THE SOLEMN YEAR OF THE PASTORAL CARE
OF THE SICK



Icon of Our Lady "The Healer", preserved in the Romanian-Orthodox parish church in Esbjerg, Kingdom of Denmark (Iconographer: Mihai Coman)



† MACARIE,

Through the mercy and care of the Most High,
Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of
Northern Europe,

To all beloved brethren priests and deacons: fellow servants at the altar, members of monastic communities, and the chosen faithful people of God—I extend grace, peace, serenity, and joy from the Crucified and Resurrected Christ. Along with my fatherly and brotherly embrace, receive my blessing accompanied by the joyful Paschal greeting:

CHRIST IS RISEN!



Dearly beloved,

Christ became incarnate to heal mankind from the deadly wound of sin and the spiritual consequences of the catastrophic fall of our forefathers, Adam and Eve, from the Garden of Eden. Consequently, during His ministry on earth, He particularly sought out those who were sick, powerless, and suffering both physically and spiritually. He was often surrounded by the oppressed and impoverished, individuals who lacked anyone to comfort their souls, without a Good Shepherd to search out their troubles and ease their sorrows with love and compassion. These were orphaned souls who felt in their hearts that this Teacher brought with Him a fire of divine love that had never burned on this earth.

In His great mercy, the Saviour did not shy away from being approached, questioned and touched by the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the crippled and the lame. He approached the lepers and brought peace to the souls of those tormented by unclean spirits. He healed them all completely. The Gospels always bring us, in these moments of human suffering, to the feet of the One who is the Son of Man, the Son of the Virgin, the Son of God, the Son of the Heavenly Father. There, on the periphery, alongside those who are forgotten, neglected, despised or simply overwhelmed by the weight of life's sufferings, we find Him. And in the end, when they condemned Him vilely and crucified Him on the cross, He was caught between two robbers. The heart of the one crucified at his right hand was changed when he saw the Innocent One sharing the same condemnation and suffering.

This depiction of Jesus crucified alongside the thief, whose conscience awakens in his final moments and whose heart is transformed, serves as the quintessential image of our Christian experience in a hostile world. The Savior willingly embraces the Cross, accepting the same condemnation that we have brought upon ourselves by our actions. He walks to the Cross to redeem us through His suffering. He allows himself to be condemned in order to save us from condemnation. He submits to torment, torture and excruciating pain to liberate us from such suffering. Moreover, He descends into hell to open the path to the Kingdom. His desire is to save us and grant us Heaven, and for this purpose, He does everything and gives Himself completely to us.

Brothers and sisters,

In the account of His earthly life we do not find Jesus in the high circles of the society of his time. We do not find Jesus in the palaces of the emperors or the imperial tribunes. Only once did Jesus reach the Sanhedrin: when He was subjected to an unfair, perfidiously orchestrated trial. Only once did Jesus reach Herod's palace: when He was mocked because the Jewish king wanted a show of "miracles". And only once did Jesus reach the palace of the Roman governor in Jerusalem: when He was sentenced to death on the Cross.

The Teacher, Wisdom incarnate, did not engage in fruitless debates. He responded sharply and decisively to the Pharisees. To those who tried to trap Him with His words or justify themselves through their knowledge of

the Mosaic Law, He presented a clear reflection of their pettiness and their failure to truly fulfil their calling as men of God, using simple yet truthful parables.

Jesus did not align with the scholarly or political elites, nor did He identify with the masses. He rejected their attempts to crown Him king merely because He had provided them bread in the desert. They hailed him with cheers of “Hosanna” upon His entry into Jerusalem, yet He knew that these same people would, within days, call for His death on the Cross in the Praetorium. His sermons were not designed to merely comfort the ears of the many, but to help them rediscover a forgotten inner dignity, an image of likeness they had lost. His teachings were awakening and powerful, capable of breaking down the walls of inner falsehood and illuminating the forgotten depths of humanity. The healing that He, the Savior, offers is holistic: encompassing body, soul, mind, and heart. Complete restoration of man is possible only through Him and in Him.

Right-worshipping Christians,

Many of you are facing various challenges, pains, and difficulties in life. Whether it's illness, loss, personal setbacks, professional hurdles, or family issues, these trials are a part of our everyday existence and shouldn't bring us down, as they are inherent to life on this earth. Often, we pour a great deal of energy and strength into efforts that ultimately prove to be vain and futile. Sometimes, we realize this only after losing what is truly

essential and enduring—those treasures of the soul such as family, good friendships, and those simple yet profound moments of communion, like having an honest, heart-to-heart conversation over a cup of tea. Even when we reach moments of awareness and sadness, let us not be discouraged, for it is never *too* late!

A grieving heart can change the personal universe in which you, dear brother, and you, dear sister, might feel all hope has vanished. It's important to recognize that when sorrow pierces our hearts—whether it stems from illness, family troubles, or any other distress affecting our soul or body—Christ Himself stands with us on the Cross of Sorrow. He never leaves the Cross within the heart of each one of us. We have forgotten, deceiving ourselves into believing it's possible to live untouched by suffering. He is always there, watching over us with love. In the face of pain, how do we respond? How will we react? Will we mock Him and drive Him away, like the unrepented thief? Or shall we surrender to His boundless love and cry out with sighs, like the repentant robber crucified on His right hand: “O Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom”.

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, so we now sing, filled with the joy of the Resurrection. Treading on sickness with His suffering, and on pain with His pain, He fills death, suffering, and even hell with the grace of His Resurrection. In this way, and only this way—by allowing Christ to imbue our suffering with meaning—can we overcome the trials of this life, where challenges are inevitable and victory is

possible only through the one Who conquered hell. Let us then take a firm hold, that is, let us hasten our steps toward the Lord who awaits us with open arms on the Cross to give us the sweet embrace of the Resurrection! Amen.

**Your fellow celebrant, father, brother and friend,
devoted supporter and fervent supplicant to God,**

† Bishop Macarie

Issued in the Episcopal Residence in Stockholm, the Kingdom of Sweden, on the Feast of the Lord's Resurrection 2024



THE OFFICIAL COAT OF ARMS OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF NORTHERN EUROPE

In the central shield, surrounded by a prayer rope and capped at the bottom with a cross, is the image of St. Andrew the Apostle, the Patron Saint of Romania. This shield rests upon the crutch and the archpriestly cross, topped with the archpriestly mitre. To the right of the shield stands Saint Voievode Stephen the Great, wielding a sword, and to the left, The Holy Martyr Constantine Brancoveanu, holding the Holy Cross. The presence of these figures reflects the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Northern Europe's mission in monarchic countries where it is customary to honor Holy Kings, including the Christian Kings of Scandinavia, thereby making our Holy Rulers, Defenders and Confessors of the Orthodox Faith renowned.

At the base of the shield, the sash bears the blessing of the Savior Jesus Christ: "Peace be with you!" and the names of the two Holy Romanian Voievodes are inscribed.



The icon of Our Lady “Joy of the Afflicted”, preserved in the Romanian-Orthodox parish church in Vejle Kolding, Kingdom of Denmark (Iconographer: Stanislav Grecu)