



<https://doi.org/10.26520/mcdsare.2018.2.107-115>

**MCDSARE: 2018**  
**International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the**  
**Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education**

**THE LIVING CHURCH OF BRĂILA DEANERY DURING THE**  
**GERMAN OCCUPATION DURING THE GREAT WAR,**  
**REFLECTED IN ARCHIVE DOCUMENTS**

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***Abstract***

Between 23rd December 1916 - 10th November 1918, Braila lived the terror and drama of life under the German occupation. Over the centuries that have passed since then, few have been bent on the events of that period, and when they did, they focused on the aspects of the military situation and of the social, economic, albeit ecclesiastical life, though in those times of bitter suffering and humiliation, the role of priests, on the front, or in the parishes, was an extremely important one, since they were called to relieve suffering, to encourage souls, to cultivate hope, in a word to raise morale to their faithful. In the few pages where some historians have referred to Braila's situation during the German occupation, information on religious life is extremely low, and is presented tangentially, not for their intrinsic value, but to reinforce statements about other issues. The present study aims, on the basis of the archive documents of those years, kept in the custody of the Brăila Deanery, to address this shortcoming and to present the involvement of priests and churchmen from this cause in the war effort of the Romanian army, the main lines of liturgical, missionary, spiritual and cultural activities they have carried out among their parishioner, and last but not least, their social situation and their families during the Great War.

**Keywords:** Great Union; First World War; German Occupation; Church Life; Military Confessor; Braila;

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**Braila and the promoting of the Romanian national unity ideal**

The tradition of the good relations of Braila with the Romanians beyond the mountains, confirmed in 1368, January 20th, by the documentary act issued by the ruler Vlaicu Voda, granting some commercial privileges to the merchants of Brasov (Giurescu, 2002, p.44; Căndea, 1995, p.127), developed over the centuries by merchants and by the shepherds over the mountains that descended with the sheep to winter in the plane of Braila, made the Danube town not to be alien and indifferent to the

unionist struggle of the Romanian elites that militated for the accomplishment of Great Romania by the beginning of the twentieth century both sides of the Carpathians. On the contrary, the intellectual elite in the "Acacia town on the Danube" has intensively promoted and supported the unionist cause through cultural, artistic and political manifestations. Thus, since 1891, the Transylvanian Professor Ion Corneliu Tacit, who taught history and geography at the real Gymnasium in the city, set up in Braila "The League for the Cultural Unity of All Romanians"(Marinescu, 1998, p.286). The Braila branch of this organization was to be extremely active during the period of neutrality, by militating, through public meetings and actions, for Romania's entry into war in order to liberate Transylvania and Bucovina (Marinescu, 1998, p.283), being regarded as "one of the most active centres for the struggle for completing national unity"(Buculei, 1980, p.433). In this respect, on April 19th, 1916, lawyer Traian Țino asked the Braila City Hall to exempt from paying the taxes a cultural and artistic celebration to be held on May 15th with the aim of raising funds to help the Romanians in Transylvania (Mocioiu & Bounegru & Iavorschi & Vidis, 2018, p.155). After the withdrawal of the Romanian troops from Transylvania, many families of Transylvanian Romanians were received and housed in Braila, some of them being even found jobs that would ensure their everyday living (Marinescu, 1998, p.286; Buculei, 1980, p.440).

In this context, the enlistment and departure of the recruited troops from the city was made in an atmosphere of general enthusiasm, surprisingly rendered in the verses of a Braila writer participating in the Dobrudja campaign: "From the dwelling, the tug moved with a prop, And suddenly, everywhere, the triumphant ovations / Cross in the air with the rain of petals / Thrown over the barges by the crowd that remains"(Perpessicius, 2016, p.23).

The general enthusiasm, not only of the Braila people, but of all the Romanians, would soon transform into a real nightmare as a result of the Romanian army's defeats in front of the allied armies of the Central Powers, occupying Dobrudja and Muntenia, pushing the front up to the lower Siret line.

On December 23rd, 1916, January 5th, 1917, Braila was occupied by the Central Powers troops, in the town and rural villages surrounding the cavalry division commanded by the German Count von der Goltz, made up of ten thousand Germans, Turkishes, Bulgarians, Austrians and Hungarians (Giurescu, 2002, p.256; Semilian, 2007, p.151; Petrovici, 1939, p.28). Being in the immediate vicinity of the front line, throughout the occupation, Braila "enjoyed" an exceptionally severe regime of true terror, maintained by requisitions, the prohibition of elementary rights, the rationalization of food and all commodities, propaganda, threats and punishments of the most drastic.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

### **The Braila Deanery under the German Occupation**

During the German occupation, the Orthodox clergy had the difficult task of morally supporting the population, confronted with material shortages of all kinds, poverty, illnesses, requisitions of the German army, abuses, terror of war, bombings, prohibitions and constraints all sorts, with the rationalizations of food imposed by the Germans, the priests themselves, with their families, being confronted with the same problems.

#### **a. Administrative-church situation**

The administrative activity of the Deanery and the sacramental-liturgical and missionary-pastoral work of the priests in the deanery were carefully monitored and supervised by the Imperial German Command, that almost any church activity required the approval of the Germans. For this reason, the correspondence between Ilie Didicescu, on the one hand, and the Prefecture and Braila City Hall, on the other hand, was daily.

From this correspondence it appears that the appointment of priests in parishes, their transfer or appointment to substitution could not be achieved only with the blessing of the bishop, the approval of the German commander of the city being mandatory(A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tabs 7, 13, 14; 1918, file 1, tab 13). Also, the acceptance of provisional substitution of some parishes or of some sections of urban parishes by refugee priests could not be made without the consent of the representative of the occupation army(A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 7, 14). Even the payment offices of clerical and non-clerical staff were endorsed by the German Command's representative( A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tabs 190, 231, 291-295).

In order to understand how strictly the control of the German occupier was on the activity of the Braila Deanery, it is of little importance that the ministry was obliged to draw up an activity report on a monthly basis and forward it to the Imperial German Command (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tabs 1, 12).

Since after the fall of the night, both public and domestic lighting was forbidden, on March 29th, 1917, the Rector Didicescu asked the Mayor to ask the German Command if the Hours of the Vigils Service may be committed from 18.00 in the evening and the Resurrection at 24.00, and if the bells and the ham may be tolled and if the services may be done with the lights on (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 65). Although there is no answer to this request, we can assume that this was a negative one, since in the following year, in the address of 19th April 1918, the Rector Didicescu invoked the positive settlement of his "peace of mind" claim (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 49). This time, churches have been granted the permission to toll the hams all wood or iron throughout the Holly Week and the Feast of the Holy Resurrection (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 49).

The churches did not escape from the requisites made by the Germans, being aimed at the bells, candles and even the remains of wax left from candle burning. In this respect, on May 11th, 1917, at the request of the German Command the City Hall requested a report on the number of bells of each church in the city, the metal from which they were cast and whether they had historical or artistic value, and one day later they asked for the inventory of the candles and candle scraps held by each church (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tabs 112-113). On May 22nd, through Address 1195, the German Command issued an order for the requisition of the great bells from the churches of "Saint Nicholas", "Saint George", "The Holy Emperors", "The Holy Archangels", the Greek, the Catholic, the Armenian, the Lipovan and the Evangelical. These were left just a middle bell, but they renounced the requisition of the candles because the quantities were insignificant (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tabs 116-117). In order to save the great bell of "The Holy Apostles' Church" from the requisition, the priest Stephen Bârzănescu presented to the City Hall a report showing that the bell "is of artistic value undeniable by the height, strength and harmony of its sound", that it was manufactured at Munich, that it serves also for the clocks of the clock in the tower and that its dismantling would lead to the deterioration of the tower, instead offering the smaller bell from the other tower (Mocioiu & Bounegru & Iavorschi & Vidis, 2018, p.539). In exchange for the bell, in the spring of 1918 the Germans unveiled the bronze tin church with which it was covered, right during the *Te Deum* service, which marked the conclusion of peace at Buftea-Bucharest (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 412; Petrovici, 1939, p.48; Giurescu, 2002, p.257).

#### **b. The mission of the priests during the occupation**

The role played by the Braila priests, who understood not to take refuge in the territory controlled by the Romanian army, but to bear with their parishioners the deprivations of all kinds of life under foreign occupation, was an extraordinarily important one, a fact confirmed by the testimonies of those who lived at that time, and the attitude of the German occupant.

The Germans paid attention and showed openness to the religious needs of the Christians in the city, understanding to allow the commission of religious services, and not to impede the great participation of Christians in these services, in the context in which they forbade meetings of any kind in the city. In fact, even the Germans organized several religious concerts in the Greek church of the city, attended by German officers and "the entire Greek colony in Braila" (Petrovici, 1939, p.92).

In turn, some Bulgarian officers participated in the Sunday services performed in the churches of Braila, their presence in churches, besides the religious motivation, which we cannot exclude altogether, with certainty an important military motivation, because they could know the state of the spirit of the population, the degree of dissatisfaction with the occupation regime, the messages sent by the priests in this respect. Thus, following a sermon at the celebration of the Epiphany of the year 1918 by priest Grigore Balaban from the "Holy Emperors" church, the Bulgarian officers present at the service complained to the German Command, accusing him of insulting the Bulgarian army as he affirmed that the Bulgarians and the Turks are barbarian, cruel and savage. The second day the house of the priest Balaban was searched and he was arrested and closed, being judged and acquitted on January 29<sup>th</sup> (Petrovici, 1939, p.156). Apparently during the detention he was even beaten. It is certain that shortly after his release from prison he moved to the eternal (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 45).

The fear among the priests was so great that the others signed a letter of de-isolation from the attitude of the priest Balaban the day after his arrest (Petrovici, 1939, p.156).

And yet, the attitude of priest Balaban was not singular. For similar positions, the Imperial German Command banned priest Constantin Constantinescu from Șuțu from serving in the village, establishing his forced residence in Braila (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 228). Priest Bucur Stan from Tătaru, was arrested and imprisoned under the guilt of anti-German propaganda (Deac & Toacă, 1978, p.176), and the priest of Gemelele was deported to Germany for the charge of espionage(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 412, ).

In addition to exercising this strict control over church life both from the administrative point of view and from the messages sent by priests to their parishioners in the service, which was certainly exercised throughout the territory controlled by the Germans, they tried to influence the religious life of the Romanians by imposing the Gregorian calendar. In the order issued by General August von Mackensen on March 20th, 1917, intentionally or not, the feast of the Nativity was passed on December 24, and that of the Resurrection was not even remembered as one of the religious holidays. Nicolae Petrovici, a witness of those events, conspired in his memoirs: "If the Germans intentionally removed Easter from the holidays of the Orthodox world, then they probably wanted the idea of the Resurrection not to be a moral support in the great disaster for the Romanian people as a hope of salvation, for as the Savior defeated death, so also the Romanian people, who at one moment in the occupied territory, were waiting for the day of Resurrection, of Salvation"(Petrovici, 1939, p.148).

An important part of the mission of priests in the given situation was that of cultivating a pure moral life among their believers, especially parishioners whose husbands were left on the front. The same priest, Grigore Balaban, advised them "to avoid the proximity of the enemies and not to expose their sight; to remember forever that men, their brothers and their parents are at war and may be killed by our enemies" (Petrovici, 1939, p.155). An important role in the accomplishment of the pastoral mission had its liturgical service, which in the first year of occupation was affected by the lack of church singers who had been mobilized(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 6). An advantage in this respect came from the then prefect of Braila, Iancu Berceanu. On October 12th, 1917, he sought and obtained the approval of the German Imperial Command for the performance of religious services in the countryside, where the situation of the churches and priests was much heavier than in the city, especially in the villages close to the front line, and for the establishment of choirs composed of pupils and school pupils singing the Divine Liturgy (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 298). A similar approach was taken in the spring of 1918 for the churches in the city (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tabs 33-37 ).

Beyond the immediate practical necessity of this approach, to compensate for the lack of church singers, the establishment of these choirs was aimed at "enhancing the religious sentiment in the population", as the Prefect wrote in the address sent on 20th October to the Deanery, "in all times of great need and of soul pains like those we are going through now, man finds great comfort in the church. Until today, only faith in God has saved mankind from despondency. It is our duty, therefore, to keep people from losing this moral support"(A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tabs 298-299).

Through the good collaboration between priests and teachers, which had been part of a long tradition, such choirs were set up in each parish, and the results were immediately felt, as Nicolae Petrovici confessed in his memoirs that " churches were very frequented, "and" church chants were like a soul's comfort in the misfortunes of that time, and as a hope in a better future" (Petrovici, 1939, p.155).

Many will find their comfort and relief of the soul sufferings for the loss of their loved ones by their memorial service and by the priests' the words of courage and the assurance that their sacrifice was not in vain, and they had just moved from this life to the eternal in Christ.

The comfort of those in distress was not limited to the spiritual side, but also manifested itself in the care and material help of the poorest of Braila, homeless, war orphans, widowers with many children or numerous families (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 109 ). Also, the clergy were called to achieve a minimal sanitary education for the faithful they worshiped to prevent them from contracting contagious diseases. By circular Order 9/1918, Bishop Dionysius of Buzau had the rural priests to take the necessary measures "to combat contagious diseases". In order for this order to be put into practice, the priest Ilie Didicescu asked the Brăila Prefecture to issue 35 orders of free passage from the German Command without the permission of which the priests could not take any action (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 385).

An extraordinarily important role was played by the Brăila priests in raising the moral of the population by maintaining hope for a favorable end of the war for Romania, strengthening the patriotic sentiment among them, and supporting the national ideal of the Great Union, for which, as we have seen, the Braileans also militated before the beginning of the war. The appeal to the priests of the new prefect of Braila, General Alexandru Văitoianu, appointed in the post of resumption of hostilities by the Romanian Army against the Central Powers' Army in November 1918, is witnessed in this respect.

Immediately after the installation, on November 11th, 1918, he asked the priest Ilie Didicescu that on the next Sunday, in all the churches of the Deanery, after the Holy Liturgy, starting at 10.00, the *Te Deum* service "of thanksgiving to the Almighty for mercy which He has shown to our beloved and beloved Land and to the entire Romanian nation the one who is exasperated and oppressed by the enemies whom He has saved us"(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 422). In Circular No.1322 sent the following day to the priests, the ministry instructed them as the word that they were to teach after the *Te Deum* service to show that "M. S. King, who, as a good Romanian, entered the war with our allies for the slander of our national ideal, pursued for centuries by Great Romania, will firmly hold the word given through those Proclamations to fulfil all the demands of the people through ownership and granting of equal rights. You will show that the prospect of the King and his armed pride and speed could not be accomplished without the will and power of God, Who has always protected our dear Country and its brave men. [...]"

Make a warm appeal to our villagers in the countryside to respond now and with infinite love to the commend of the King's MS under the flag to clear the enemy alongside the Allied Armies and our beloved sister Transylvania as he cleaned the other loved sisters: Bessarabia and Bukovina.

Urge the population to tenacious patience, for there is not much until the suffering and relief of their suffering comes to an end. Looking at the moment it seems difficult, looking at the future, it is brilliant. Going over the hardships of the moment, with the unconditional contest of all, we will go to the much desired land and we will see with tears of joy: The achievement of the national ideal, Great Romania, Happy people, working his own and good field, resting quietly in his home, not afraid of the enemies that we and our allies have defeated for ever" (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 422).

#### **c. Participation of priests and church singers from Braila Deanery to the military campaigns of the Romanian Armed Forces**

During the Great War the priests fulfilled the mission of shepherds of their spiritual sons not only in the middle of the civilian population but also on the front among the officers and soldiers of the Romanian Army. From the documents kept in the Archives of Braila Deanery we find out that four Braila priests, two from the city and two from the rural area, were mobilized and participated in the military campaigns of the Romanian Army as military confessors.

One of those who accomplished this mission within the Romanian Army was the priest Nicolae Donescu, from the parish of „St. Elijah”(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 2), mobilized within the 45/60 Infantry Regiment. One of the officers who met him thus appreciated the results of his soldier's mission: "It is a real help for officers for the educational part of the troops. On the two chapels, made on the front, he seldom served under the enemy's fire, influencing palpably the souls of the soldiers"(Nazarie, 2018, p.165). He would be demobilized on April 24th, 1918, when he demanded the salary for his return to the post(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 67).

The second cleric of the city who performed the mission of military confessor was the parish priest of „St. Elijah's” Church, priest Bejan Enăchescu, mobilized within the 75/76 Infantry Regiment. According to a report by one of the officers, "on the front, he was tireless, often advancing in the first lines to bury the dead. He has greatly contributed to raising the morale of the troops and its officers"(Nazarie, 2018, p.98). In another report, another officer emphasized the patriotism that animated priest Bejan and which he instilled to the soldiers: "He is very conscientious and, through his sermons, has raised the morale of the troops very much. Good preacher, he has enough power to cultivate and strengthen the love of the Homeland" (Nazarie, 2018, p.98). For his merits he was advanced to the rank of captain assimilated on July 1st, 1917 (Nazarie, 2018, p.208).

After his demobilization, on May 30th, 1918, he sent a complaint to the deacon Didicescu requesting "the priest's confessor salary according to the Captain rank." In the same complaint, the priest Enăchescu said: "I believe that the military and the priests, whether civilians or army confessors, have

done and done the service for this country, for in a country, whether small or large, the pillars which support the development of her are but the army, the school and the Church"(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 122). A third cleric mobilized as a military confessor was the priest Gheorghe Bălănică, from the Jugureanu parish, who informed, by a document dated August 5th, 1918, that he had been demobilized since July when he resumed his activity at the parish, requesting reinstatement in due wages(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 191).

The fourth cleric mobilized to accompany the troops as a military confessor was the priest D. Tebeica of the Parish Surdila Greci (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 425), who worked in the 63/79 Infantry Regiment(Nazarie, 2018, p.215). From an archive document it appears that he accompanied the Romanian troops to Moldavia, working as a priest attached to the "St. Spiridon" church in Galati until October 1918, when he returned to the parish (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 290).

The time when these priests were mobilized on the front meant for their numerous families a period of hard trials, with material shortages and sometimes with humiliation. The wives of the two priests mobilized from the St. Elijah parish in order to support their families in the absence of husbands asked the archbishop Ilie Didicescu that the spirits of their husbands should be filled by priests accepting half of the income on the stole what would be brought the respective ancestors to the families of the subordinates. Thus, on 12th January 1917, the wife of priest N. Donescu signed the name "Maria Priest N. Donescu" a receipt addressed to the parish Didicescu requesting that her husband's enchantment be replaced by priest Mihail Panait, refugee in Brăila from Isaccea, Tulcea, with which he had concluded a written agreement by which he undertook to offer half of his income on the stole that he had obtained from the parish, so that she could keep his three children(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 2). On the same date, the priest Mihail Panait addressed to the priest a request to replace the priesthood of priest N.Donescu, in which he indicated that he agreed to give his family half of the income on the epitrachelion (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 2). A similar approach was made by the wife of priest confessor Bejan Enăchescu, who at the same time demanded the replacement of his husband's priesthood by priest Toma Cheorpec, who also accepted to give Bejan's family half of his stole income from religious services (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 15).

By Address nr.1 from January 12th, 1917, Didicescu asked the Mayor of Braila to intervene with the German Command of the City to allow the refugee priests in Dobrudja to provisionally replace the city priests mobilized in the army or refugees in their turn in Moldavia (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 7). As a result of the favorable reply to the German authorities on 17th January(A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 13), the Prosector Didicescu approved on the same day the request of the refugee priest Mihail Panait (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 14).

Taking into consideration the instability created by the departure of some priests from Braila to refuge in Moldavia and the arrival of other refugees from Dobrudja, those in the city often demanded the transfer from one to another, so that on September 18th, 1917, the presbyter Maria Bejan returned with a second demand, requesting that his husband's priesthood be replaced by priest C. Ganescu of the "Saint Dimitrie" parish of Islaz, under the same conditions as stole income(A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 248).

If the number of confessional priests is 4, the number of the singers incorporated in the Romanian Army was much higher, being probably not a parish, either from the city or from the countryside, from where at least one singer had not been mobilized, if not both. This is why the religious service has suffered greatly, especially in rural areas. It was hard to get back to the lectern with older singers who were not mobilized for that very reason. In the town of Braila, the only churches with a singer were "The Assumption of the Virgin", "The Holy Apostles", "St. Elijah", "Saint John the Baptist", "Saint Nicholas", "Saint Spiridon" and "Saint Paraskeva" (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 6). We will probably recall here only a part of the mobilized singers, about whom the priests from the parishes in which they were working informed that they had been demobilized, asking for their salaries to be paid again. According to the documents, the singers Ioan P. Costache, from "St. John the Baptist", demobilized on June 3rd, 1918, were incorporated for whom, on July 19th, the church's parish priest asked to intervene in the "German imperial command" to be exempt from the requisition (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 107), Vasile Coman and Toma Costache, from „St. Elias”(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 110), T. Grigorescu and Gh. Manescu, from "St. George", together with Traian Georgescu (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 112), Ioan Bălhaç, singer of

"Saint Paraskeva" parish(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 133; Bounegru, 2005, p.219), Vasile Râmbu from the parish of the "Holy Emperors"(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 532), Andrei Mateiu from the Silistraaru parish, mobilized in October 1916 at the 7th Riders Regiment(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 105), Ioan A. Beschea, from the parish Osmanu(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 106), Gheorghe I. Perianu and Gheorghe I. Perianu II, from the parish of Scorțaru Vechi (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 108), Sava Marin and Ghiță Petre from the Latinu parish(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 111), Ioan Petcu from the Vădeni parish, mobilized at the beginning of the campaign and left to the hearth on 12th May 1918(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 285), Gheorghe Negoită, from the parish of the "Holy Voivodes" of Perișoru, mobilized on October 1st, 1916, was not demobilized on December 7th, 1918(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 500), Dimitrie Dafinoiu, from the Ulmu parish, demobilized on June 20th, 1918(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 504), Neagu Brânză, from Parlita parish(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 531), and Gheorghe Gh. Caragață, from the Tataru parish, mobilized on October 14th, respectively November 20th, 1916, demobilized and returned to the parish(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 537). Among the mobilized singers, Nicolae Balaban, from the "Saint Dimitrie" parish in Islaz (Braila), mobilized since 1916, fell on the front(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 503).

As in the case of the families of the mobilized priests, the families of the singers suffered material and financial shortfalls, in the context in which they were not paid during the period when the wages were mobilized (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 105).

#### **d. Refugee priests in and from Braila Deanery in the way of the Bulgarian and German occupation armies**

Following the defeat of the Romanian army in the Battle of Turtucaia, Dobrudja was occupied by the Bulgarian armies, where a large number of Romanian Orthodox priests on the right of the Danube fled both in Braila and in the rural localities of the county. These, many of them with many families, had to face not only the shortcomings of the war, which were confronted by all the Romanians, especially those in the territories occupied by the enemy, but also by the losses of the usefulness in their parishes, in their households, of their wealth, which remained at the will of the occupants, most often looted, scattered and destroyed. In order to support their families, most of these unfortunate refugee priests have requested to fill in various parishes or sections of parishes left vacant either by mobilizing or retreating the title priest or as a result of the death of a priest. In some cases the situation of some of them was so desperate, miserable, that some priests from Braila offered, on their own initiative, part of their parishes to survive on the epitrachelion. It is the case of, for example, the priest C. Ganescu of the "Saint Dimitrie" Parish of Islaz, who informed the priestly on September 18th, 1917, that he received in his priesthood priest N. Popescu, a refugee from the Pașa-Câșla, Tulcea County(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 247).

In fact, all the priests who were refugees in the Braila Deanery from the counties of Dobrudja found understanding and enjoyed the support of the priesthood, who took all the necessary cares to the Prefecture of Braila and through it to the Imperial German Command, obtaining the agreement that the refugee priests to serve in the churches of the city, some even to be enrolled on paying bills so that they can support their families.

The priest Mihail Panait, a refugee from Isaccea, Tulcea, after having replaced for several months the priesthood of N. Donescu, priest from the "St. Elijah" parish, started on April 14th, 1917 for a while replaced the "Assumption of the Virgin" parish (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tabs 135, 168). After his departure from "St. Elias", starting January 13th, 1918, the priesthood of N. Donescu was to be replaced by another refugee priest, Ioan Ciocan, who came to Brăila from Cerna-Voda (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 13). After the demobilization of Priest N. Donescu and his return to the parish on April 24th, 1918(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 67), priest Ioan Ciocan requested and obtained, starting with May 8th, 1918, the replacement of the priest's priesthood of Anghel Constantinescu from "Saint Paraskeva", a refugee in Moldavia, Galati (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 72).

Another refugee priest in Dobrudja was V.Slioneanu, a former parish priest in Silistra and a deacon of Durostorum, to whom Bishop Dionysius of Buzau approved the "provisional replacement until the clarification of the entire Dobrudja situation", starting July 3rd, 1918, in the second post from the "Holy Emperors" parish(A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tabs 404, 126). He came in the place of another outcast priest, Mihail Vasiliu, a refugee from Dorobantu, Tulcea County, as early as December 4th, 1916, who,

having a large family of ten members, after replacing for a while a part of the parish "The Holy Emperors", requested the transfer to the parish Mihai Bravu (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 132).

The refugee of the war and the Bulgarian occupation of Dobruđa was also the priest Teodor Martinescu, a native of Vișani, but a servant in Ducuzol, Constanța. This, withdrawn with the five members of the family on the left of the Danube, requested the replacement of part of the Șuțești parish (A.B.D., 1918, file 1/1918, tabs 153, 280).

A priest from Braila, particularly from Surdila Greci, Ioan Sandulescu, fled to his native village in Gheringic, Mangalia, where he served as a priest. After providing substitution in the Surdila-Găiseanca parish, whose priest, D. Tebeica, had been mobilized as a military confessor priest, for a while, he requested the replacement of the Rosiori parish, vacanted by the death of the parish priest in that village (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 387).

From Constanta, the priests Anton Popescu, who requested the provisional replacement of the Coltea parish (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 428), Ioan Teodorescu, refugee from Pecineaga, Tulcea, appointed on May 30th, 1917, the mayor of the city to provisionally serve the confessor service of the patients in the hospitals in the absence of the priest (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 127), a refugee probably in his turn in Moldova, Niță Trandafirescu, a second refugee from Osmani, Tulcea, requesting the appointment to the Pitulați parish (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 435) and Ion Berteșteanu (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 229).

In addition to the refugee priests in the Dobruđa counties, the documents mention the presence of a refugee priest in Popești-Leordeni, Ioan Gheorghidi (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 229). He replaced the parish "Saint Paraskeva", in the place of the priest Anghel Constantinescu, refugee in Galați until August 20th, 1918, when he returned to the parish where he was the holder (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 215).

Not only the priests of Dobruđa took the path of wandering, but some of the priests of Braila, few of whom, however, chose to leave their parishes and homes to take refuge in Moldavia, the only territory left under the rule of the Romanian authorities at that time. They chose the path of exile. These are the priests Anghel Constantinescu, from the "Saint Paraskeva" (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tabs 67, 72, 215), Ioan Nicolae, from the "Assumption of the Mother of God" (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 135), and perhaps the confessor priest in the hospital (A.B.D., 1917, file 1, tab 127). Priest Anghel Constantinescu, a personality of the local church and cultural life of his time, retired to Galați. From December 15th, 1917, he worked as a teacher at the "St. Andrew" Seminary in Galati, a school whose director was to become in 1918 (Bounegru, 2005, p.208). Also, from a report by the rector Ilie Didicescu to the Prefect of Brăila, submitted on November 11th, 1918, it appears that the priests from Pitulați and Romanu had fled to Moldavia (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 412).

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The reality outlined on the basis of the information in the documents and the memoirs of those involved in the events of the First World War fully confirms the faith of Bejan Enăchescu in the fundamental role they had, and should have it today, and beyond, The Church, the Army and the School: "I believe that both the military and the priests, whether civilians or army confessors, have done and do the service for this country, for in a country, whether small or large, the pillars on which it is based in her development are the army, the school and the church" (A.B.D., 1918, file 1, tab 122). The research of the sources revealed that it was only through the close cooperation of the three basic institutions of the Romanian nation that it was able to rise and turn the fate of the war, crowning the sacrifices of the front and the sacrifices of the civilian population through the realization of the Great Union. At the celebration of the centenary of the Great Union the knowledge of the sacrifice and the last combatant on the front or at home is a duty of honor and soul, since only on the basis of their sacrifice can we hope that the present and future generations will be able to bring the Romanian nation to the anniversary of other hundreds of years.



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