

INTEGRITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE YEAR OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: It should be noted that the year 2020 had a specificity that contemporaries of the present times never imagined, namely the Covid-19 Pandemic, a real threat of mass disease, against which no effective defensive methods have been identified yet. It has been eight months since Romania lived an atypical reality full of challenges and unknown. Adapting to the new reality is done on the fly, but all social systems are upset and looking for quick ways to survive a fact that escapes, for the moment, any prediction. This unusual situation, which generated fear and one of the most unexpected methods of prevention, inevitably influenced and affected religious behaviour and especially how the rich Orthodox religious tradition is expressed. That is why we were confronted and challenged to create new strategies and means of expressing religiosity that would allow both the preservation of the Christian Orthodox specificity but also the observance of the restrictions of prevention against Pandemic infestation. Looking closely at what has happened and continues to occur in the direct relationship between the

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Pandemic and Religious Life, we wonder if religious life has suffered or will suffer, mutations and different positions from the spiritual manifestations known so far? Is the integrity of religious freedom threatened in the context of the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 Pandemic? And in the long run, we wonder, what mutations will be triggered in religious behaviour? Is there a risk of diminishing spiritual and religious rights and freedoms due to the Pandemic, as a form of abuse by the ruling political power? Here are just a series of questions that will guide the following lines and our analyses in the sensitive field of contemporary religious life.

Keywords: *Romania, religious freedom, modern society, Pandemic, Covid-19 and Religion*

Starting with March of this year, 2020, and until now, Romania has lived one of the most complicated and bizarre social experiences, generated by the threat of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Fearing illness and death, free life was locked up in the private space of the personal home, considered secure and trustworthy. Fear of disease “acted as an alarm signal, drawing our attention to the danger, to allow us to cope better.”² Two realities of human existence, *Pandemic and Life*, in seemingly irreconcilable doctrinal conflict, have been forced to cohabit in recent months, in Romania and the world. The recommendation: “stay home,”³ repeated obsessively on all possible communication channels, became a leitmotif of daily breathing for each of us in the first months of the Pandemic. Then the self-isolation began to enter the reflex of our daily activity, as it happened with the protective mask and the disinfectants. All the expressions of the life of our modernity have been questioned and our hopes suddenly limited, for fear of falling ill with the problem of Covid-19. Throughout 2020, starting in March, it has gone from total isolation in homes to the most curious and unexpected restrictions such as the approval of participation in public religious events based on residence in a particular city. Pandemic-specific

2 ANDRE, Christophe, *Psihologia fricii, temeri, angoase și fobii*, Meteor Publishing, 2019, p.9.

3 Feri PREDESCU, “Vulnerabili, dar neascultători. Ignoră recomandarea - stați acasă”, in *Evenimentul Zilei, portal de stiri*, 22 martie 2020, <https://evz.ro/vulnerabili-dar-neascultatori-ignora-recomandarea-stati-acasa.html> (accesat oct. 2020). ; Daniela DAVIDOV , Mesajul „Stați acasă” răsună pe străzile Capitalei. Amenzi pentru cei care nu vor respecta noile reguli, in *Cotidianul md*, 24.martie 2020, <https://cotidianul.md/2020/03/24/mesajul-stati-acasarasuna-pe-strazile-capitalei-amenzi-pentru-cei-care-nu-vor-respecta-noile-reguli-video/> (20.10.2020).

prevention measures have forced us to live in extended isolation even to close family members.

Religious life has not escaped untouched by this new existential reality of the Pandemic, marked by fear and uncertainty, a fear that has contaminated all the aspirations of intelligent human beings. The religious community life of the faithful was deeply influenced, and the participation of the faithful in the most important Orthodox holiday, Christian Easter, was cancelled for the first time in modern contemporary history. Modern ways of communication have been extended to most sectors of daily activity, from the needs of education to the fine springs of personal prayer. The online sphere and the internet have acquired a dominant dimension in everyone's life. How will religious sentiments be expressed in the years to come? But are fundamental human rights at risk of being limited to justify pandemic prevention measures, but in fact to diminish civic involvement in the democratic act of political power? The questions are numerous, and the clear answer is complicated. Still, some lines of research and prediction of the evolution of religious life in the globalizing context of the Pandemic can be intuited.

Integrity and religious freedom

The word integrity (fr. *intégrité*, lat. *integritas*), is inherited from Latin on the French chain, and the basic meanings *express a state of health, purity, totality, honesty and impartiality*.⁴ In the context of the Pandemic and the restrictions that have been adopted, the word integrity expresses very clearly the fragility of the application and observance of individual rights, especially the right to religious freedom and conscience. The relationship between integrity and religious freedom, therefore, involves three distinct notions (integrity, freedom and religiosity), all three have in common a significant legal component, which makes them compatible to the point of identification as a unitary whole. They mainly refer to human behaviour. And our contemporary reality, in the context of the Pandemic, shows us how strongly human behaviour is influenced by a forced approach to the equation of the three terms: *integrity, freedom and religiosity*.

4 Elena MUSETESCU-TELESA, *Dicționar Latin-român de uz școlar*, Polirom, Iași, 2014, p. 241.

Moreover, the three terms manifest themselves in *conflict* rather than in *harmony*, due to restrictions on public anti-COVID prevention. And their state of competition generates social tensions that fuel distrust in government decisions, anti-COVID prevention and preservation of *public health*. In other words, the disharmony between the integrity of respect for the right to religious freedom due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic situation and the message perceived by the direct beneficiary of measures restricting collective rights *creates the impression of two enemies, who dispute the authority of the social organization and human behaviour, during the health crisis*. Although these tensions were only sporadically expressed, they nevertheless fuelled a current of mistrust in government decisions. They managed to influence the behaviour of those who favour mystical interpretation rather than the rational, obvious one.⁵

However, the apogee was observed in the opinions of the decision-makers from the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church, who privileged, in some special situations, a victimizing public discourse, then a balanced one and in solidarity with the official governmental speech.⁶ The accusing ingredients used a populist arsenal emphasizing that the rulers' decisions were generated by people *without faith, nation and country, ... infested with the Covid of Marxism, whose main objective is the fight against Orthodoxy*.⁷ The main dissatisfaction expressed by the church hierarchs was fuelled by dissatisfaction with the Government's decision to limit the pilgrimage to St. Parascheva in Iasi. Metropolitan Teofan of Moldova emphasizes that such government interference in the activity of the Church has discriminatory nuances and considers that the *fight against the plague has a limit over which, if passed, it is not suitable for anyone*.⁸ Therefore,

5 Dora VULCAN, Theodor Paleologu, „Există în interiorul BOR un curent marginal de țcăniți pentru care masca e semnul Anticristului”, in Radio Europa Libera – Romania, 26.10.2020 <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/theodor-paleologu-exist%C4%83-%C3%AEn-interiorul-bor-un-curent-marginal-de-%C8%9B%C4%83%C4%83ni%C8%9Bi-pentru-care-masca-e-semnul-anticristului-/30911830.html> (26.10.2020).

6 Redacția, Atac violent al ÎPS Calinic: Guvernanți “fără credință, neam și țară”, “infestați cu Covidul marxismului” / “Lupta împotriva Ortodoxiei e în plină desfășurare”, 14.10.2020, ZIARIȘTII, platforma jurnaliștilor liberi, <https://ziaristii.com/atac-violent-al-ips-calinic-arhiepiscopul-sucevei-lupta-impotriva-ortodoxiei-e-plina-desfasurare-guvernanti-sunt-fara-credinta-neam-si-tara-infest/> (15.10.2020).

7 *Ibidem*.

8 Redactia DIGI 24, Mitropolitul Teofan acuza decizia de interzicere a pelerinajelor la Sfanta Parascheva: „Încalcă numeroase prevederi legale”, TV-Digi 24, 2020, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/mitropolitul-teofan-acuza-decizia-de-interzicere-a-pelerinajelor-la-sfanta-parascheva-incalca-numeroase-prevederi-legale-1381176> (10.10.2020).

we can observe an evident tension between the representatives of the Government and the leadership of the Orthodox Church, due to the protection decisions for the prevention of the spread of the SARS COV-2 virus.

What seems complicated to understand is the fact that the two entities, the Government and the Church, are in divergent positions and I would even say belligerent, in the situation where both are interested in promoting the same goals for the common good, namely healing and protection, against the pandemic threat. Only that the representatives of the Government privilege the medical way of prevention while the solution of the Church is fed by the intensity of the feeling of faith in the divine healing power. Where is the integrity of religious freedom in this complicated State-Church / Pandemic equation?

Sources of social tension

If we carefully observe the social tensions we mentioned above we understand that they were present mainly in the relationship between the religious behaviour specific to the Orthodox Church and the restrictions imposed by the Pandemic in other words, no significant protests or dissatisfaction were observed in the public space to complain about the religious manifestation on the part of other representatives of the spiritual life than the Orthodox Christians. No other Christian, Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal or Islamic denomination has expressed insistent dissatisfaction with the decision to close churches or mosques during the early days of the Pandemic in March and April. Believers in minority religious denominations overlooked the social frustrations caused by social isolation. But the dissatisfaction expressed by the faithful of the Orthodox Church, especially during the Easter holidays, was also visible in those expressed with institutional intensity. We are talking about a majority church in Romania, the Orthodox Church, an important institution for the cultural and historical development of Romanians, where the Orthodox Christian faith is understood at the same time as a way of life.

Therefore, she considered that it is normal for the voice of the majority to be stronger than that of the other 17 religious denominations recognized by the Romanian State. In the period of isolation, at the

beginning of the Pandemic in Romania, the Orthodox Church tried to be present in the public space through religious activities and events adapted to the situation. Thus, she authorized processions with Holy Relics and miracle-working icons wherever these possibilities existed. Thus, processions and prayers were organized to protect the country and the faithful against the Covid-19 virus throughout the country. Whether we are talking about the March with miracle-working icons, as scheduled at the Archdiocese of Buzau and Vrancea, or we consider the procession with the relics of St. Niphon, St. Filofteia, St. Demetrius, St. Parascheva, St. John Chrysostom, St. Joseph the New from Partoș or St. John the New from Suceava, we observe an intense religious activity in the special conditions of isolation and restriction of manifestation of individual freedoms. Although religious events have developed an emotional public sensitivity, in some situations, they have fuelled religious scepticism,⁹ which will accelerate in the medium and long term the phenomenon of secularization and religious indifference.

Regarding the religious scepticism I mentioned, we can bring to your attention the death of Metropolitan Pimen of Suceava, who died due to his illness with Covid-19, at the age of 91.¹⁰ The confusion created among the believers in Suceava by the death of Metropolitan Pimen is even more significant as in Suceava, the first city in Romania to enter the quarantine, on the very first day of the quarantine a procession was organized on the streets of the town, without believers, with the relics of St. John the New from Suceava.¹¹ The significance of the religious approach was carefully explained by the representatives of the Episcopate, stating that the procession aims to strengthen the hope of the faithful: *“It was a prayer of the hearts, made with much sobriety, with discretion, without the physical participation of the faithful, who prayed from their homes. In these times of crisis, unrest and unrest, the Orthodox Church urges*

9 Nicu, “Pandemia De Coronavirus, Combătută Cu Moaște Scoase La Procesiune”, in Ghimpele – polemă din 1866, 21.04.2020, <https://ghimpele.ro/pandemia-de-coronavirus-combatuta-cu-moaste-scoase-la-procesiune/>, (15.10.2020).

10 Redactia stiri, “S-a rugat strâmb? ÎPS Pimen a murit de COVID-19”, in BizBrasov – stiri care conteaza in Brasov, 20 mai 2020, <https://www.bizbrasov.ro/2020/05/20/s-a-rugat-stramb-ips-pimen-a-murit-de-covid-19/>, (12.10.2020).

11 Redactia, “VIDEO Procesiune cu moaștele Sfântului Ioan cel Nou în prima zi de carantină din Suceava, dar fără credincioși”, in HotNews.ro – știri non-stop, 1.04.2020, <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-23768753-video-procesiune-moaștele-sfantului-ioan-cel-nou-prima-carantina-din-suceava-dar-fara-credinciosi.htm> (11.10.2020).

more prayer for one another, practical solidarity, and observance of protective measures, inspiring trust and hope among the people.” - as specified in the communiqué posted on the Facebook page of the Archdiocese.¹²

The integrity of relations between the State and the Church

From what has been presented so far, it can be seen that the relationship between the Pandemic and Religious Life is tense. Pandemic and religious life are two realities of human life that reject each other and are incompatible. The Covid-19 Pandemic influenced not only the individual and collective way of life but also the entire traditional logic of religious life. Isolation and social distancing, which were used as primary methods of prophylaxis against the spread of the virus, also changed religious behaviour, especially in its community structure. Individual spiritual aspiration, as an expression of freedom of conscience, has been suspended for certain periods. The traditional religious practices specific to the Romanian Orthodox Church were also questioned, especially rites and rituals that represent an important part of the cultural life of ancient times and that grounded the continuity between generations, over the centuries and the relationship with future generations. In this complicated context of the Pandemic, the Churches, priests or pastors, together with the faithful, are challenged to look for solutions to maintain and deepen specific religiosity and traditional practices.

The real responsibility of religious ministers in Romania but also all over the world is to look for solutions to *adapt and up-gradation* of spiritual life to the new realities dominated by real threats of illness. Whether they are priests, elders, pastors, imams, or rabbis, monks, or believers as a whole, they are all called to seek a new form of expression of individual and community religiosity. Interpersonal relationships are contaminated, literally and figuratively, by the spread of the Covid-19 virus, and it is not anticipated that in the short term, preventive treatment against diseases will be found. Even if prophylaxis accelerates the finding of medical solutions for prevention or treatment, the wounds, and I am referring primarily to social damages, will still suffer for a long time. That is why the current situation requires thinking and finding a new way of life that in the field of religious

12 Arhiepiscopia Sucevei și Rădăuților, *Comunicat de presă*, <https://www.facebook.com/Arhiepiscopia.SV/posts/2512401335740764>, (11.10.2020).

experience to propose an adaptation to new realities. It is considered that the threat of the Pandemic will last for another critical period, probably a year or two, and the risk of another virus, different but just as threatening or even more robust, is a foreseeable risk. In this probable situation, it is necessary to think of a religious way of life, which involves as few risks as possible for our lives and our individual and collective rights. A new spiritual way of life must be as risk-free as possible, especially for the risk of losing religious freedom and all the legal benefits gained so far in the history of religious liberty.

The perception of hostility, between the State and the Church, in the context of the Pandemic

Observing the details of religious life during the Pandemic, I find that there is a perception that there is a real competition between the State and the Church. And the battle is between two rivals, one trying to impose on the other an opinion that the second did not like. State decision-makers, namely the Government and the Department for Emergency Situations, with the support of the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, impose on the Religious Denominations and especially the Romanian Orthodox Church a set of restrictions that the Church, ministers and believers have significant reservations to respect in the form proposed by the Government. The paradox of the situation is that the State, wanting to do good by force, is not understood and supported by Religious Denominations it accumulates strong dissatisfaction among the population and these dissatisfactions can be transmitted negatively electorally. We remind you that only in a few weeks, at the beginning of December, on the 6th, there will be parliamentary elections.

But beyond this paradox, we wonder if the democratic State has the authority to limit and control the intimate liturgical life of the Churches? Specifically, with what legal and decision-making powers can the secular State interfere in the internal behaviour of church life, were to regulate the most delicate details of religious rituals, such as the worship of icons, prayer, and communion?

I believe that the State, during the Pandemic, has far exceeded the limits of its authority in the field of religious life and is beginning to exaggerate in the area of prohibitions and absurdity that it creates

through its decisions. Religiosity being an act freely assumed by each individual must be expressed as an act of supposed will and not as an act of legally constrained behaviour. The limits of freedom of expression of religious behaviour must not conflict with and harm the life and liberty of others. However, precisely at the confluence of these individual and public boundaries, it seems that the grey area is not clear enough to define and explain. But even so, the Romanian State should at most recommend to the Religious Denominations what should be done during this period of the Pandemic, for the common good and saving people's lives. And the leaders of the Denominations, respectively the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the hierarchy of the other Churches, would have an obligation to regulate the internal liturgical behaviour following the public common good and to convince the ministers and believers of what must be done concretely by each for the common good, for the Protection of Life and Health against the threat of Covid-19 Pandemic. Of course, the State, which has institutions of power, force and coercion, and can decide to apply sanctions where the decision to promote public health and the common good is not respected. But it can do this, and it is recommended to do so, only after all avenues of negotiation have been exhausted to find a shared decision between the decision-makers of the State and those of the *Cults*.¹³

Once a collaboration protocol has been agreed, it must be strictly followed. In case of non-observance of the protocol by the Cults, the first to be sanctioned are the decision-makers and executors of the world of Cults, and only ultimately the believer himself. In this complicated equation of Institutional Integrity and Negotiation, the leading role should have been exercised by the State Secretariat for Cults (SSC), through its specialized attributions by law. The State Secretariat for Religious Affairs has specialists able to think, together with the Churches and Denominations in Romania, of practical strategies and methods for the protection of public health and the common good, which then turn into a protocol of joint responsibility State-Church. However, this approach and the public presence of the SSC, lacking unacceptably and inexplicably, was continuously improvised a superficial and inefficient

13 Religious CULTS: it is necessary to specify that in Romania the term CULTS refers to religious entities that are recognized by law by the Romanian State, so the term Cults is a legal and administrative term, and has no negative connotations. The term Religious Cults is equivalent in English to the term: Religious Denomination.

collaboration between the representatives of the various mysteries and the leadership of the Orthodox Church, leaving the impression that the Church fights for its freedom of worship, and its traditional liturgical manifestations. At the same time, the State becomes, through its anti-COVID actions, the enemy of religious liberty and the millennial ancestral traditions of the Church.

An example in this sense, I consider unfortunate, could be observed in October 2020, on the occasion of religious pilgrimages, both that of the Pious Parascheva from Iasi (Oct. 11-14) and that of Saint Dumitru from Bucharest (October 24-27), where the religious intensity of the moment was disturbed by the adoption of totally ineffective restrictive measures. It should be mentioned that in the religious landscape of Romania after 1989, *“the (religious) pilgrimage is one of the forms of the response of the Romanian society to the great shock of the collapse of the communist system”*.¹⁴ Religious pilgrimages developed every year and gradually became institutionalized, becoming important landmarks for many Christians who, by participating in journeys, considered that they were fulfilling one of their primary annual responsibilities of personal religiosity.

Regarding the restrictions on participation in religious pilgrimages in October, which the Government adopted to prevent the spread of the Pandemic, it should be noted that participation in the pilgrimage was accepted only to believers residing in Iasi, for the pilgrimage to Pious Parascheva, or those living in Bucharest, for the faithful participating in the Pilgrimage of St. Demetrius. Although the Government accepted the organization of pilgrimages in public and did not completely ban them, precisely to show respect for the dimension of the integrity of the right to religious freedom, however, it is considered that religious freedom was abused by the decision to participate in the event only to residents, who proved their residency by presenting their identity card.

However, suppose the State has through the country's Constitution and international treaties little control over freedom in general and religious freedom in particular. In that case, it cannot abuse its prerogatives without *creating abusive situations of discrimination*, even if the State's approach is in favour of health rules and respect for the human right to life, which is a priority right over other fundamental rights. It is

14 Mirel BANICA, *Nevoia de miracol; fenomenul pelerinajelor in Romania contemporana*, Polirom, Iași, 2014, pp. 7-8.

the neutrality of the State towards the Cults and the representatives of the religious experience that obliges it to strictly respect the aspects that can cause religious, ethnic or social discrimination.

One such case considered discriminatory is the one with the presence at the pilgrimage only based on a *resident card*, in the situation when in the markets and malls in Bucharest we meet human agglomerations as numerous as at pilgrimages, maybe even more numerous. So it isn't easy to understand why only those with a Bucharest bulletin can go to the religious event, and *Bucur Obor Square*, the largest agri-food market in Bucharest, as many people can go as at the Patriarchate but without justifying their presence at the market, with residence in the identity card.

Visibly irritated by the confusing and humiliating situation that the Orthodox Church experienced during the pilgrimages of Pious Parascheva and St. Dumitru, Patriarch Daniel expressed at the particular sermon of the feast of St. Dumitru in Bucharest, a deep dissatisfaction with the Government in function, which stopped the participation of several believers in pilgrimages, recalling, somewhat as a threat, the fact that: *"In the autumn of 1989, on the occasion of the feast of St. Demetrius the New, on October 27, the communist authorities banned the worship of holy relics. (...) This humiliation of the pious Saint Demetrius the New was rewarded, in the sense that in a few months the communist regime fell. (...) God does not allow himself to be mocked! He is patient for a long time, but he is also just"*¹⁵

Respect the *integrity of religious freedom*, and such restrictions should not occur. I have in memory an experience that I lived myself, like a Christian pilgrim in 2000, considered a *Jubilee Year* by the Roman Catholic Church, when the Shroud of Turin was exhibited for worship and adoration, more precisely the canvas with which the Church *appreciates that the body of the Saviour Jesus Christ was wrapped after the crucifixion* on Golgotha and that over the years the face and contour of the body of Jesus remained impregnated. I would have experienced a robust religious frustration if I had been forbidden, based on residency in Italy, to worship the Shroud, this universal treasure of Christian piety. I

15 Denisa DUDESCU, Patriarhul Daniel amintește de interdicțiile impuse de autoritățile comuniste, la pelerinajul marcat de restricții anti-COVID: „Peste câteva luni, regimul a căzut”, in *Libertatea*, 27.10.2020, <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/patriarhul-daniel-despre-moastele-sf-dimitrie-cel-nou-autoritatile-comuniste-au-interzis-inchinarea-moaste-3200356>, (27.10.2020).

have not experienced such discrimination, but, indeed, the same difficult conditions for the protection of public health were not the same as those now caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

But another detail is worth mentioning, which I think could be adapted to the current reality of pilgrimages in Romania, namely the holy cloth of the Shroud of Turin, which is not permanently exposed in the Church just to be protected from the destruction of harmful environmental factors, it was placed on a wall in 2000 at a height and distance sufficient not to be touched by hand, and a safety glass protected the canvas. Believers who passed in front of the holy relic prayed and worshipped with respect and piety, often even sitting on their knees. A series of miracles and miraculous healings are mentioned in the archives of the Church in Turin due to the intensity of the faith in front of the Shroud.

I think that such an organization would have been appropriate in the case of pilgrimages in Romania, especially in the context of the current reality and the risks of pandemic infection. Suppose the worship of the relics of the Holy Pious Paraschiva and of Saint Dumitru had been done by imposing a certain distance. The worship and veneration of the relics would have been done “*in spirit and truth*”, ie only by worship without actually touching the relics or scraping, so that there is no risk of threatening to transmit the virus. In that case, I think the situation would have been much more straightforward.

However, one question remains, how well-intentioned are the representatives of the State and the Denominations to find *particular solutions, in exceptional cases like the current one*, and where are the specialists from the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, especially the Secretary of State,¹⁶ with their competences: “*to ensure the connection between the cults recognized by law and ministries, the other bodies of the central and local public administration, to respect the freedom and autonomy of the Cults, to prevent and eliminate any abuses*”.¹⁷

16 The Secretary of State for Religious Affairs is Victor OPASCHI, appointed to lead the Secretariat for Denominations since 2013, and apparently approved by the leadership of BOR; personally even by Patriarch Daniel, cf. Newsweek.ro; *Patriarhul Daniel blochează depesedizarea dorită de Iohannis. Cazul Victor Opaschi*, in Newsweek.ro, 18.02.2020, <https://www.dw.com/ro/patriarhul-daniel-blocheaz%C4%83-depesedizarea-dorit%C4%83-de-iohannis-cazul-victor-opaschi-newsweekro/a-52415526> (26.10.2020).

17 Secretariatul de Stat pentru Culte, *Statul si Cultele Religioase*, ed. Litera, București, 2018, p.10.

Short conclusions

The pastoral activity and the personal life of the priests underwent structuring changes generated by the need to adapt to the new reality of the Pandemic. Religious rites and rituals, specific to Orthodox liturgical practices, in particular, were called into question and faith in itself, as an aspiration for eternity, threatened with the acceleration of the phenomenon of secularization and community religious abandonment. The institutional positioning between the State and the Church has generated new situations of communication and collaboration that have fed currents and external manifestations and suspicions of religious discrimination and violation of fundamental rights and legal and spiritual integrity.

The phenomenon of social contestation of Religion, religious education and clerical institutions has been accelerated, which in the medium and long term, as mentioned above, will consequently accelerate the phenomenon of secularization and religious indifference, otherwise specific to the modernity of contemporary social issues. The online alternatives of damaged spirituality and religiosity, which were adapted to the religious realities of the time of the Pandemic, cannot rise to the level of the spiritual expectations of the faithful. Practically, the methods of digital religiosity, e-faith, at most can feed a spiritual reality of superficial, superficial information, but emptied of the deep meaning of the sacred, depth provided primarily by interpersonal relationship.

Pandemic religiosity, i.e. in suffering, sick of isolation and individuality, will result in the medium and short term acceleration of the phenomenon of secularization, religious indifference and abandonment of community relations. And in the long run, it will fuel selfishness, individualism, self-isolation, anxiety fuelled by fear and suicide. Through all this, human evolution will be oriented towards a wild logic of social life based more on the instinct of survival than on the altruistic sense of communion with the other.

The primary source of study for our conclusions is the press analysis and participatory observations in various situations. It should be noted that the lines of investigation that were privileged in this study are at risk of being invalidated once the threat of the Pandemic passes. However, at this stage, we preferred to analyse the context that defines the integrity of religious behaviour, respect for fundamental rights and the influences generated by the restrictions of prevention against Covid-19 infestation, because we consider it necessary to study to keep the memory of the moment the relevant details.

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