

THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE, THE TENSIONS OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE POST-PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

The Pandemic threat made the social body sick, even before the COVID-19 virus attacked the individual's health. When Romania started the lockdown in March 2020, interpersonal relationships began to strain, and extreme behaviours appeared, never seen before. It could see the gradual escalation of social tensions due to the limitation of a large part of fundamental rights. The State's decisions to prevent Pandemic is seen as an abusive interference on the Churches' internal activity. The rites and rituals of the Orthodox Church, the religious denomination with the most significant number of believers in Romania, were either forbidden or distorted by the uninspired intervention of public authorities. Gradually, tensions between the State and the Church intensified to the point where public accusations against the State began to appear, in the public speech of the bishops and especially of Patriarch Daniel, the Romanian's spiritual leader Orthodox Church.

Do the State and its intervention in the activity of the Church affect the dignity of the human being? Does Religion's resistance to the social tension caused by the Pandemic express a high degree of resilience? Are the pressures between State and Church profound, or did the Pandemic superficially generate them? How will religious life in Romania be affected after the Pandemic? What will be the post-pandemic challenges that spiritual life has to face? We will study official institutional documents, press comments, and specialists' opinions expressed in the literature to answer these complicated questions. We will also try to assess, based on statistical information, whether the phenomenon of secularisation has been accelerated or diminished during the Pandemic restrictions. Our approach's limitations are that the Pandemic is an evolving process, and the conclusions still cannot be clear and convincing. However, we will try to predict the evolution of religious life in the post-pandemic period.

Our analysis will fall within the interdisciplinary field of sociology of religion, social sciences, legal sciences and contemporary history.

Keywords: *Romania, COVID-19, Pandemic, Religion, secularisation, religious tensions, modernity*

The dignity of human nature - the foundation of human rights

The fact that the direct involvement of the Creator created the human being shows the importance that God attaches to the first humans, and through it, to all humans. This direct relationship with God Himself represents the highest degree of recognition of human dignity for the Christian believer. This moment of God's creation of human nature is presented in the first chapter of an essential book of Christianity, the Bible, in Genesis: Then God said, „*Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule [...], over all the creatures that move along the ground; so, God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them [... and] God blessed them [...]*”¹

Human dignity is expressed not only by this ontological relationship with its Creator but also by the upright position of the human being and by the whole endowment of man with consciousness and rational capacity for communication and his metaphysical aspiration for perfection. That is why theologians consider the dignity of the human being as a *creative dignity*.² In the New Testament, the Holy Apostle Paul defines human dignity and the relationship with God through an engaging metaphor. He considers the human being related to God and of the same race as the Creator.³ This kinship and the permanent relationship of man with God, expressed in the Holy Scriptures with the expression „*image of God*”, represents a permanent aspiration of the life of the human being towards the Creator, therefore towards absolute and perfection.⁴ Human dignity is understood by the theologian Vladimir Lossky as the highest expression of human value

1 Genesis, chapter 1, 26-28.

2 Popa, Pr. Gheorghe, *Teologie și demnitate umană - studii de teologie morală contextuală*, Iasi, Ed. Trinitas, 2003, p. 63.

3 “*Therefore, since we are the offspring of God...*” Acts 17:29

4 Staniloae, Dumitru, *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa*, vol 1, (ed. A III-a), București, Ed. IBMBOR, 2003, pp. 410-411.

and is considered even royal dignity. Based on this royal dignity, the human being expresses his superiority over the entire creation. It is manifested by the ability of man to express himself rationally and freely with the possibility of self-determination of his existence.⁵ In an interesting legal-theological argument, human dignity is essential for the pluralistic organisation of contemporary modern societies and for promoting fundamental human rights and freedoms.⁶

Recognising human dignity by respecting fundamental rights and freedoms means respecting the gifts that man has received free of charge from God, his Creator, the most important of which is the gift of freedom. In this logic of respect for human dignity, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Paris, 10 December 1948)⁷ was drafted, which in its preamble, in its first paragraph, states: “*Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world*”. And in Article 1, the same Universal Declaration is said: “*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*”.

In conclusion, whether we argue theologically or legally, *human dignity is a fundamental characteristic of human existence that is closely related to individual freedom and all other fundamental rights*.

COVID-19 Pandemic, a source of threat to life and human dignity

Romania is today at a considerable distance, in time, from the totalitarian period of communism, 30 years ago. At present, Romania is interested in economic development rather than in promoting fundamental human rights and freedoms, which have not been contested for many years. That is why in 2020 when the COVID-19 Pandemic caused state institutions to restrict some fundamental human rights by isolating everybody at home

5 Lossky, Vladimir, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, Paris, Ed. Aubier, 1944, p.111.

6 Montgomery, John, Warwick, *Drepturile omului și demnitatea umană*, Oradea, Ed. Cartea Crestina, 2004, pp. 204-205.

7 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, - The declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>, (accessed 10.10. 2021).

as a form of prevention against the spread of the Pandemic, it was also seen as a *lack of respect for human dignity*. The state of health insecurity, the lack of adequate, sanitary means of prevention against infection with the COVID-19 virus and the suspension of fundamental rights, including the *right to participate in religious services*, have created a state of *anomie (social disorder)*. The anomie fuelled tensions between the State and religious denominations and between the State and society.

„Masked” tensions

The COVID-19 Pandemic, which began in March 2020, has influenced the daily behaviour of human existence due to protection measures against infection and the spread of the virus. These protection measures, of an unprecedented magnitude and complexity so far, have created a state of panic and fear and many dissatisfactions that then fuelled a series of public protests. Dissatisfaction was sometimes expressed through public riots, vehement and even violent protests against state decision-makers.

However, some dissatisfactions in the relations between the State and the Church were expressed only through gestures, attitudes and public expressions carefully camouflaged so that they send a message of dissatisfaction but at the same time do not create a conflict in collaborative relations. Therefore, the precaution of expressing displeasure did not compromise the institutional relations built over long periods for mutual support. Thus, various dissatisfactions were said to emphasise a state of dissatisfaction of the Churches. They were more or less blunt or more or less observable in public.

This tense mood and these dissatisfactions of religious denominations with the restrictive measures imposed by the State in the Pandemic, *we defined as masked tensions*. *Masked tensions* - therefore, it is a play on words that wants to emphasise that, on the one hand, the dissatisfaction existed real. Still, they did not express themselves openly and aggressively to compromise or break the collaborative relationship between the State and the Church. Moreover, with the passage of time and the decrease of the pressure of the Pandemic threat, the collaboration relations between State and Church were renewed as a result of the use of vaccination. In 2021, Religious Denominations have officially received frequent requests,

both from the health minister and Prime Minister Florin Cîțu, to support through their public influence, which Religion enjoys, the vaccination and immunisation campaign.⁸

Moreover, the President of Romania, Klaus Johannes, had a series of contacts and private meetings with Patriarch Daniel, whom the press appreciates as calming the tensions that appeared in the public space a year ago, in 2020. On the occasion of his 70th birthday, on 22 July 2021, the Patriarch of Romania received President Klaus Johannes an important decoration - "The Star of Romania", publicly congratulating him for „*balance and wisdom!*”⁹

But, let's continue with our analysis to understand more clearly how the tensions between the State and the Church manifested themselves in the years of the Pandemic 2020 - 2021, beyond the diplomatic appearances.

Pandemic, Covid 19 - as a source of social anomie, generating conflict

Looking at the period of the Pandemic from a sociological perspective, we can interpret it in a Durckheim logic of *social anomie*. Of course, not all the conceptual components specific to anomie are met, as defined by Emil Durkheim, and especially it did not generate significant long-term social changes. But we can consider that the Pandemic, at its beginning in March 2020, imposed isolation and restriction in interpersonal relationships that caused a social disorder, affecting relationships between people, developing fear, social and economic disruption.

The lockdown imposed by the pandemic prevention measures has affected the social force of moral and religious norms and values and legal values such as constitutional rights and fundamental human rights, *namely human dignity*. However, in situations of the normal functioning of life, these

8 Guvernul României, *Întâlnirea premierului Florin Cîțu cu reprezentanții cultelor religioase din România și cu cei ai Secretariatului de Stat pentru Culte*, Joi, 25 Martie 2021, <https://gov.ro/ro/media/foto/intalnirea-premierului-florin-citu-cu-representantii-cultelor-religioase-din-romania-i-cu-cei-ai-secretariatului-de-stat-pentru-culte&page=1>, (02.09.2021).

9 Zănfir, Carmen, *De ce l-a decorat Iohannis pe Patriarhul Daniel: „Parteneriatul dintre Culte și instituțiile Statului să se dezvolte conform valorilor comune”*, 22.07.2021, <https://alephnews.ro/guvern/motivul-pentru-care-a-fost-decorat-patriarhul-daniel-de-catre-klaus-iohannis/> (8.09.2021).

social norms ensure social stability. Therefore, the *anomie* we identified as being generated by the protection measures against Covid 19 has fuelled numerous and varied forms of social tension and conflict. The Church's expressed their dissatisfaction when the religious holidays of Easter 2020 were forbidden¹⁰ or when it was recommended to avoid the veneration of icons and the distribution of communion with the same teaspoon¹¹. These liturgical aspects have added the dissatisfaction of the believers who could not have the burial of their family members, who had died of covid, with a specific religious service. Dissatisfaction was expressed by the Orthodox Church and other Christian denominations or the Muslim community¹². For example, the burial must be done on the day he died, which was not allowed due to hospital formalities that delayed the burial for many days.

These dissatisfactions between the Church and the State have accumulated over time, especially since there were no medical explanations to justify the adoption of decisions. Because the subject is vast and requires a lot of attention, we will try to limit ourselves in our analysis and stop at a period in which the clearest tensions were expressed and at the highest level of relations between the State the Church. More precisely, we will analyse the period in which the dissatisfaction was expressed by Patriarch Daniel, the highest authority of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church is the majority in Romania, with 86.5% of the total population.

It is necessary to emphasise some details regarding the political and electoral context of 2020 in Romania to understand better the source of the masked tensions I was talking about at the beginning of my presentation. So, I propose to deconstruct the Romanian reality of 2020 and recon-

10 Pora, Andreea, Scandalul înțelegerii Bisericii - MAI pentru Paște. Conflict între președintele, Vela și Orban. Ce spun partidele și polițiștii, 15.04.2020, <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/scandalul-%C3%AEn%C8%9Belegerii-biseric%C4%83--mai-pentru-pa%C8%99te-conflict-%C3%AEntre-pre%C8%99edinte-vela-%C8%99i-orban-cum-spun-partidele-%C8%99i-poli%C8%9Bi%C8%99tii/30555758.html>, (9.09.2021).

11 Ionescu, Sinziana, *Recomandare DSP către preoți: „Folosii la împărtășanie lingurițe de unică folosință”*. Răspunsul Bisericii, 24 martie 2020, https://adevarul.ro/locale/constant/video-recomandare-dsp-preoti-folositi-impartasanie-lingurita-unica-folosinta-raspunsul-bisericii-1_5e79b36d5163ec427124a909/index.html (9.09.2021).

12 Manea, Magda, Începe Ramadanul, luna pocăinței și sacrificiului pentru miliarde de credincioși musulmani. În contextul pandemiei de coronavirus, rugăciunile se vor face doar acasă, 23 Aprilie 2020, http://stiri.tvr.ro/incepe-ramadanul--luna-pocaintei-si-sacrificiului-pentru-miliarde-de-credincio-i-musulmani--in-contextul-pandemiei-de-coronavirus--rugaciunile-se-vor-face-doar-acasa_860340.html#view, (8.09.2021).

struct it with sufficient components explained and understood. 2020 was also an election year, with local elections on 27 September and parliamentary elections on 6 December. A year earlier, in November 2019, there were presidential elections, with Klaus Johannes being elected president for a second term. The President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis, is a captivating personality. He is of German ethnicity and Lutheran Religion, being politically supported by centre-right parties, the most important of which is the National Liberal Party¹³.

We think also it is helpful for our analysis to mention the year 2014 when Iohannis won his first term as president. His opponent, Victor Ponta, supported by the Socialist Party, used a powerful nationalist message based on ethnic and religious identity in the election campaign. Victor Ponta used in his statement the characteristics of being *Romanian and Orthodox*¹⁴ to distinguish himself from his opponent Klaus Iohannis, from a German minority in Romania (representing 0.17% according to the National Renaissance of 2011), and religious minority, being Lutheran (with a percentage of 0.03% of the total population of the country). However, the relationship between the minority and the majority, both ethnic and religious, did not influence the election in 2014, and Klaus Iohannis, politically supported by the centre-right parties, also won his first term as President of the Country. In 2014, the Romanian Orthodox Church, which is the majority in Romania (with a percentage of 86.5% of the total population), and which in principle promotes a nationalist discourse, had a real difficulty of neutrality in the context of presidential elections. We can imagine how challenging it was. Let's go back to 2020.

In 2020, local elections were held in September and parliamentary elections in December. So the period we retained for our analysis, autumn 2020, is full of intense political activity with various electoral games and the most sophisticated political precautions. In addition, a centre-right Liberal minority government has had to deal with an unprecedented health crisis due to the covid-19 Pandemic.

13 Balázs, Magdolna (trad.), *Un sas minoritar, în fruntea statului național unitar roman*, 20 noiembrie 2014, <https://hatarok-nelkul.com/ro/?p=646>, (29.09.2021).

14 Dadacus, Livia, *Ponta la lansarea candidaturii: nu vreau sa mă acuze nimeni că sunt român sau ortodox în țara mea*, 29.07.2014, <https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/ponta-la-lansarea-candidaturii-nu-vreau-sa-ma-acuze-nimeni-ca-sunt-roman-sau-ortodox-in-tara-mea-13001004>, (18.09.2021).

Let's try to imagine under what conditions the electoral campaigns could take place, in the context in which the meetings inside could not exceed 20 people, and outside could not exceed 50 people. In addition, the participants in these meetings had an obligation to wear a protective mask and maintain a minimum distance of 1 meter between the participants¹⁵. The same conditions of distancing and number of participants were applied similarly to religious events. Therefore, we can understand the dissatisfaction of the Orthodox Church and its believers of not being able to organise the two pilgrimages, symbolic for the contemporary religious life, except in extremely limiting conditions.

Therefore, we continue to ask ourselves whether the state of *anomie*, we mentioned at the beginning of our study, has fuelled conflicting situations or not in the relationship between State and Church.

But let us return to our analysis of the tense relations between the State and the Church.

We remind you that the period we are referring to is in October 2020, when the most important religious pilgrimages occur, usually with the impressive participation of hundreds of thousands of believers from the country and abroad. We mention here primarily the pilgrimage in October, between October 24-27; the pilgrimage of Saint Demetrius, the spiritual patron of the city, takes place in Bucharest.

On the occasion of the pilgrimage to St. Dumitru, in Bucharest, during the open-air religious ceremony, Patriarch Daniel expressed a very harsh opinion of the representatives of the Romanian State, whom he likened to the communist leaders of the 1989 Revolution.

Then, in 1989, the communist leaders decided not to allow the pilgrimage of St. Dumitru in front of the cathedral in Bucharest, forcing the Church to move the relics of St. Dumitru to a nearby church. That moment is considered to have *favoured divine intervention*, which accelerated the fall of communism. Patriarch Daniel also publicly expressed the same opinion in 2020. „*In the autumn of 1989, on the occasion of the feast of St. Demetrius the New, on 27 October, the communist authorities banned the worship of holy relics. (...) This humiliation of the pious Saint Demetrius the New*

15 Tudorache, Viorel, *Reguli pentru campania electorală în pandemie: evenimente în aer liber cu 100 de participanți. Maska este obligatorie*, 28 august 2020, <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/reguli-pentru-campania-electoral-a-in-pandemie-3106054>, (9.09.2021).

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.¹⁶

The harsh and unequivocal speech of the Patriarch expressed dissatisfaction but at the same time stressed the need to respect the dignity of the Christian in prayer (using the indirect metaphor – “*this humiliation of the pious Saint Demetrius...*”). Also, the tone and content of Patriarch Daniel’s intervention show the existence of natural tension between the State and the Orthodox Church, a tension fuelled by sometimes chaotic and sometimes uninspired or even abusive measures¹⁷ applied by state representatives to discourage religious ritual to prevent infection. COVID-19. This tension between the State and the Orthodox Church continued in 2021, even if it was greatly diminished and was no longer publicly expressed through direct interventions at the highest level. Only some local, marginal opinions or attitudes of some hierarchs considered non-aligned with the measures recommended by the Romanian State regarding vaccination or prevention of the spread of the pandemic virus could be met. We also mention the frequent public appearances of Bishop Theodosie of Constanta¹⁸ and Bishop Ambrozie of Giurgiu¹⁹, who expressed distrust of health measures, including vaccination, promoting mainly the power of prayer and the Orthodox faith. But apart from these attitudes, considered

16 Dudescu, Denisa, *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).

17 Andronie, Alexandra, *Reacțiile enoriașilor din Constanța după ce au fost scoși din biserică de jandarmi: “Dumnezeu nu îmbolnăvește! Lăsați-ne în pace*, 25.11.2020, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/reactiile-enoriasilor-din-constanta-dupa-ce-au-fost-scosi-din-biserica-de-jandarmi-dumnezeu-nu-imbolnaveste-lasati-ne-in-pace-1407406>, (9.09.2021).

18 Neacsu, Bobi, *ÎPS Teodosie a ignorat iar restricțiile și a ținut o slujbă la miezul nopții cu zeci de credincioși*, 1.01.2021, <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/ips-teodosie-a-ignorat-restrictiile-si-a-ținut-o-slujba-la-miezul-noptii-cu-zeci-de-credinciosi-ordinele-omenesti-nu-pot-sa-anuleze-poruncile-dumnezeiesti-3358394>, (27.10.2020).

19 Toma, Alina, *Declarațiile controversate ale episcopului de Giurgiu: “Vaccinurile sunt expirate. Nu vă grăbiți să vă vaccinați”*, 18.10.2021, <https://ziare.com/social/coronavirus/episcopul-de-giurgiu-pozitie-antivaccin-1705593>, (10.11.2021).

rebellious by the state leadership and the media, Patriarch Daniel refused to speak publicly in support of the government's measures to vaccinate COVID-19.²⁰

The post-Pandemic challenges

Although the realities in Europe and around the world do not encourage us to think optimistically about when the Pandemic will be gone, from our daily lives, through an optimistic exercise of imagination, let us consider ourselves to consider the Pandemic is over. And let's try, if only mentally, and identify the efforts that need to make to rapidly revive the regular rhythm of human existence without the restrictions imposed by other pandemics. In other words, if we make sure that the virus does not spread, we should at least let the ideas circulate.

So, the Pandemic is over! Where are we now, and what do we have to do next? How profound was the impact of the Pandemic on our existence? How long will it take us to rebuild the pandemic-shaken springs of our lives? What are the first decisions and steps we must take to regain our ontological freedom received from the Creator, from God, freedom aggressively limited by the pandemic constraints in the field of religious life? What should we do first after the Pandemic? What important lessons did the Pandemic teach us, and what conclusions can be drawn from this „two-year intensive course” on a global scale? Who has lost and gained from everything that has happened in these two years? To make a claim for completeness obvious, would the number of questions above be much larger and more complex? But one question remains unanswered. How long will we get rid of the pandemic threat? There is already a deep concern in the collective mind that this situation created by the Pandemic, which drastically limits our daily existence and human dignity, risks prolonging itself *sine die*.

Ignoring the pessimism that a possible answer would generate and privileging the optimism we talked about earlier, I propose to continue our exercise of inspiration, trying to find some of the solutions that harmonise with the theme of our debate. The pessimism of the Pandemic²¹, accord-

20 Valica, Carmen, *Tăcerea patriarhului. De ce se teme PF Daniel să îndemne credincioșii să se vaccineze?* 1.11.2021, <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/patriarh-pandemie-vaccinare/31534108.html>, (10.11.2021).

21 Barboșanu, Dragoș, OMS: *Pandemia se va termina atunci când cel puțin 70% din populația planetei va fi vaccinată*, 28-05-2021, <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/>

ingly to Pfizer and BioNTech studies for the vaccine, predicts the Pandemic's threat will end in 2023 and 2024 at the earliest.

But pessimistic is the length of this term, 2024, which we cannot know whether or not we will survive, so optimistic is the period that the United Nations defines as dominated by Happytialism¹. Happytialism is a play on words that emphasises the importance of the environment for a better world. In the same logic of reconstruction after the current Pandemic, the US administration, led by President Joe Biden, speaks of the need to rebuild our lives after the Pandemic on a solid and long-lasting basis that considers all the lessons of the past. He uses the phrase *build back better*². Let's rebuild better and stronger. The expression of the American president inspired various international organisations, which, depending on their field of activity, paraphrase it, saying: *build back greener*,³ referring to caring for the environment or *build back safer*⁴, referring to security relations. The Davos Forum focused on the reconstruction of the post-pandemic period. The theme of the 2021 online forum on January 25-29 was: *the great reset*.⁵ We can consider that the Pandemic period offers a window of opportunity to rethink human existence according to other criteria and rules that avoid significant future threats, namely the threat of pandemics, desertification of the planet, poverty and hunger, etc. So, we can breathe a sigh of relief that we are not the only one's today who are worrying about life after the Pandemic. It is a natural planetary concern and concern that should give us the impetus to find the best solutions. And I think now is the right time to look for post-pandemic solutions so that we can prepare

oms-pandemia-se-va-termina-atunci-cand-cel-putin-70-din-populatia-planetei-va-fi-vaccinata.html, (accessed 11.11.2021).

1 Happytialism: *A New Economic System, Socio-Political Philosophy, and Human Development Paradigm which places the Primacy of Happiness, Well-Being, and Freedom at the Center of Human Development and All Life*, <https://happytialism.com/>, (accessed 11.11.2021).

2 Biden, Joe, *The Build Back Better Framework*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build-back-better/>, (accessed 11.11.2021).

3 European Green Party: *Build back greener*, <https://europeangreens.eu/content/build-back-greener>, (accessed 11.11.2021).

4 *Build back safer*, <https://www.ageas.co.uk/press-releases/2021-press-releases/now-is-the-time-to-build-back-safer/>, (accessed 11.11.2021).

5 Davos 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/events/the-davos-agenda-2021>, (accessed 11.11.2021).

with the strategies needed for the time when the time will become favourable for the new social reconstruction.

Religious life suffered greatly during the Pandemic. These sufferings are far from over now. Religious life will be left with deep wounds and post-pandemic sequelae, which will undoubtedly influence the spiritual life by abandoning or isolating the Church. *I also appreciate that the phenomenon of secularisation will accelerate in the post-pandemic period, mainly due to the competition between religion and science in the complicated course of the COVID-19 pandemic experience.*

I would have expected to see, or at least to hear, that each denomination makes an internal, objective, and sober assessment of *what did not work according to expectations*, paradoxically using *this window of opportunity* of the COVID-19 Pandemic. I expect each religious denomination to understand the messages of dissatisfaction from believers and the public or the State and adopt a series of decisions or strategies for post-pandemic reconstruction.

We could speculate that in the post-pandemic period, we will become estranged from each other, that the intensity of faith will diminish, and religion will suffer. But they would be merely speculative conclusions. But now, what I can say is to think more about the relationships between us, the relationships between people, and what we can do today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow for us, for our family, that is, for our fellow men. Let us live beautifully and in a balanced way. Let us re-learn the small but essential things' modesty, humility, and joy. Let us cherish our freedom and dignity, nature and implicitly its Creator.

Conclusions

Our analysis highlighted a tense relationship between the State and the Church in 2020 and 2021, in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Although deep tensions were identified, they were only partially expressed. They were managed with great public caution and diplomacy not to cause an institutional rupture between the State and the Church.

This aspect of public diplomacy has led us to define tensions between the State and the Church as "masked" tensions. More precisely, we identified real tensions, with deep roots but expressed with great public caution, in fact, a situation, we believe, mature in the relations between the State and the Church.

A large part of the causes must be sought in the *depth relations between the State and the Church*, in contemporary Romania and not only in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The period of apparent social anomaly caused by the Pandemic COVID-19 favoured the expression of dissatisfaction, but *the roots of their tensions are profound*. The pressures of 2020 mainly are explained by the specific manifestations of the Pandemic and the sophisticated electoral context of that year.

You may have noticed that I used the expression: *apparent social anomie* because I did not think that the term *anomie* was characteristic and appropriate to define the entire period of the Pandemic sociologically. The term *anomie* can only be used to describe the beginning of the Pandemic in Romania, more precisely the months of March, April, May, and June 2020. After this period of lockdown of the Pandemic, various forms of social relaxation appeared to invalidate the use of the term *anomie* as defining for the entire period of the Pandemic. In Romania, the tensions during the Pandemic between the State and the Church did not affect the relationships of collaboration and mutual respect, nor did they degenerate into hostile actions between the two actors.

But in the collective mind was formed the opinion that the dignity of the Christian and his fundamental rights were neglected and disrespected by the representatives of the State. These measures were perceived by many Orthodox believers, but also by believers of other denominations, as abusive and inconsistent with religious rite and faith. During the restoration of the social structure and the collaboration relations between the State and the Religious Denominations, a sustained and profound effort will have to be made to rebuild *mutual trust and respect for dignity*.

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- ✦ Balázs, Magdolna (trad.), *Un sas minoritar, în fruntea statului național unitar roman*, 20 noiembrie 2014, <https://hatarok-nelkul.com/ro/?p=646>, (accessed 29.09.2021).

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