

FATHER ARSENIIE BOCA - EXCEPTIONALLY WONDERFUL II

*Two stones meet in silence.
Two stars meet in light.
Two flowers meet in scent.
Two thoughts meet in words.
Two eyes meet in tears.*

*Freely adapted from the texts of † Bishop Daniil Stoenescu, Epicleze -
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Father Arsenie Boca
Wonderfully Exceptional

II

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FOREWORD

Shortly after the publication of ‘Father Arsenie Boca – Wonderfully Exceptional’ I understood that the book needed or deserved a sequel. The responses were almost unanimous in describing the publication as an anchor point of reflection and recognition in the continuing stream of worldly agitation and aggressiveness, as a confirmation of a different, but equally real reality, which far transcends earthly reality or as a breath of fresh air amidst the busy and pressing agenda of every day.

Additionally, testimonies about the miracles of Father Arsenie continue to multiply day by day. We cannot simply ignore these blessings. We must receive them with great gratitude and spread them with even greater zeal.

The first part aimed to portray this inspired monk who embodied the Orthodox Christian faith in an incomparable manner and remains a source of inspiration for many searching individuals to this day. Bishop Daniil Stoenescu describes Father Arsenie as a gifted preacher and an engaging priest, who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ in Romania in a powerful and beautiful way. In word and deed, with wisdom, courage and perseverance.

It is my fervent hope that this second collection of testimonies will also reach a wide readership, so that the unique Truth of Christ and the exceptional value of Father Arsenie can offer some peace and light, hope and perspective, even in these times of fear and darkness.

Therefore, I can say that the testimonies about the saint of Transylvania did not end with this second volume. In fact, it is impossible to include them all, as miracles and testimonies about this saint always occur, even as I write these lines!

That is precisely why we are publishing this collection, hoping that you will have the same impression.

Father Arsenie Boca is WONDERFUL AND EXCEPTIONAL!

Finally, I would like to thank Jamie Werkman, Romain Herbreteau and Lawrence Warry for their proofreading and corrections, to Jeroen van der Starre for his expert advice on publishing and printing this book, to Florin Duțu (photographs), Cezar Buterez (cartography), and to my husband Dominique for his patience and support.

Georgeta Germina Punga-Herbreteau
Rijswijk (Netherlands)

TESTIMONY



I have met countless people on my journey through life, from my childhood until today. No face was or is as serene, wise, loving, holy, and yet so human as that of Father Arsenie. And I am certain that it will remain so until I die. So wonderfully exceptional he was and remains for me, not only as a human being but also as a Christian, as a monk, as a priest, and as an unworthy bishop...

Adapted from the texts of Bishop Daniil Stoenescu, Epicleze - Volume 1, page 280, Publisher 'Învierea', 2012.

TESTIMONIALS



† TIMOTEI PRAHOVEANUL

**Bishop Vicar of the Archdiocese
of Bucharest**

November 12, 2009 - Indelible Memory

It is very rare for the memory of certain people to remain indelible as the years pass. In most cases, forgetfulness sets in and, along with it, the ingratitude of fellow humans. Beyond these realities that we observe around us, there are perspectives that offer us the possibility to hope that things can be different. This truth is based on the indelible memory we carry for a monk and great spiritual father from the tumultuous 20th century, Arsenie Boca, who linked his name to the Sâmbăta Monastery in Făgăraș and Prislop Monastery in the region of Hațeg.

His ministry in troubled times, the overwhelming trials he endured, the 30-year “exile” and the repeated and unjust humiliations place Arsenie Boca among the martyrs of the 20th century, a “martyrdom” assumed with exemplary humility, obedience, and patience. At the same time, Father Arsenie became one of the most well-known servants of the Romanian

Orthodox Church in recent times. Thousands of pages have been written about him, compiled into numerous books and articles. Testimonies from believers across different regions of the country, especially from the Făgăraș area where he is revered like a saint, are constantly added.

To the multitude of these testimonies, I also add a few related to the famous Father Arsenie Boca. In November 1989, I was a hierodeacon and a student at the Theological Institute of the University in Bucharest. One day, near the Institute building, an unknown woman told me that Father Arsenie had passed away and will be buried at Prislop. I couldn't reach the well-known monastery in those days to attend the funeral service. But, many years later, during a pilgrimage to the Hațeg area, I stopped at Prislop right on the feast day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I went to the monastery intending to attend the Holy Liturgy, but upon arriving, I had the joy of being part of the serving clergy.

The impressive multitude present at the feast moved together with the devout clergy, after the dismissal of the Liturgy, to the grave of the Father Arsenie Boca. After a few minutes of walking along a path under the lush crowns of beech trees, we arrived in a meadow - a grove - where the monastery's cemetery is located. One grave was covered with a multitude of flowers, as if someone had been placed under the freshly turned soil just a day or two earlier. The bishop and the clergy

sang the Trisagion, and the crowd of believers remained close to the grave until late. I later found out that the hundreds of flowers were not placed only on the feast day. I returned to Prislop at another time, after returning from a journey outside the country, and found the same carpet of flowers and the unextinguished lamp of love. From my limited experience, I can say that I have never encountered such care for those departed from this world, not even at the uncanonized saint Paisie Olaru or the tireless missionary and abbot Cleopa Ilie. Every day, even on the frosty ones covered with deep snow, the flowers of gratitude are added.

Hundreds or thousands of flowers are brought from different corners of the country by people who hold special feelings for Father Arsenie. It is a rare, almost unique gesture, and it strengthens the conviction that the efforts and sacrifices of the Church's servants are not in vain. Some time passed and, by God's grace, I met some nuns who spoke to me about Father Arsenie with a respect that amazed me. They had known him closely, stood by him during times when the bitter wind was deadly, listened to him, and followed him to the end.

They spoke of a long period of silence and humility during which Father Arsenie was "exiled" for 30 years, from the Communist Decree 410/1959 until his release from earthly life. He worked for a while at the Skete of the Nuns in Bucharest, painted the iconostasis and church at Drăgănescu, enjoying

the blessing and tacit support of Patriarch Justinian. It is said that one day, the patriarch called him and discussed appointing him as the abbot of Cernica Monastery.

Who knows why the patriarch's thought was ultimately not fulfilled!

What is certain is that Father Arsenie retreated into exemplary silence, spoke little, traveled alone in the mountains, praying at length and seeking comfort and reward only from the merciful and all-knowing Lord. Sometimes, believers would come from afar, waiting from morning till evening to see him, even for a moment, when he would pass by on his way to the forest thicket, from which he would return at dusk.

Before his passing, he did not leave his solitary cell for a month. Shortly after his body was laid to rest in the soil of Prislop, the times allowed for his name to be mentioned among the confessors of a dark era. People speak of his pure heart and the power of his words, of the gift of foresight he received from God. Hundreds and thousands of people would gather at the Sâmbăta and Prislop Monasteries to listen to him or at least to see him. The testimonies of the people are overwhelming. His serene face and spirit-filled words have remained permanently imprinted in their hearts.

I asked these nuns what Father Arsenie particularly instructed them to pursue in their lives. They replied that he reminded them of the obligation to fulfil their monastic vows, and they emphasized obedience in particular. He himself had gone through difficult moments but never complained. He respected the decision to leave the monastery, although he always remained a devout monk.

At several churches in Bucharest, such as Domnița Bălașa, Boteanu and Saint Elefterie, in Drăgănescu, Sibiu, Predeal, Sinaia, or other places, he would listen to Liturgies and pray in secret, believing that God knows the hidden things and rewards them.

His spirit-filled words have been preserved in hearts, as well as precious notes carefully collected by faithful and sincere disciples. Recently published, the writings saved from the fury of enemies complete the image of a devoted, cultivated, and inspired servant.

The words “the memory of the righteous is a blessing” are fitting for Father Arsenie. The unfading flowers weave the crown spoken of by Saint Apostle Paul.

Father Arsenie’s spiritual trajectory is a special one. Endowed with gifts, humble, and withdrawn into his own world, he lived the last days of his earthly life in a nest of tranquillity, from

where he moved to the city of light, into the kingdom of peace promised by the Savior Christ to all who have fulfilled His commandments.

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