

THE HOMILETIC SERVICE OF THE METROPOLITAN JOSEPH NANIESCU

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Abstract

This study describes and examines the homiletic activity of the Metropolitan Joseph Naniescu who occupies a leading position among the great bishops of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of the Romanian nation, a worthy servant of Jesus, a grand founder of holy establishments and churches, a scholar, a promoter of culture and arts, and father to all those in grief and need. Due to his vigilance and efforts, he managed to restore the prestige of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava, acquired during the times of his admirable predecessor, the metropolitan bishop Veniamin Costachi, whilst the Romanian Church in its entirety found great support in him, a steadfast brick laid at its foundation, being often represented by him before the state authorities of those times, defending the Church's rights and asserting its role in creating a unification of faith, language and nation, as such was played throughout the centuries. At the same time, he was a skilful speaker, with his soft, pleasant voice, controlled with sagacity and great artistic sense. He had a rich imagination and extensive knowledge of the Holy Scripture and of the Holy Fathers. A scholar with widespread concerns, Joseph Naniescu dedicated most of his activity to the preaching mission, standing out as a remarkable figure of the word delivered from the rostrum of the ancestral church.

Keywords: sermon, preacher, Joseph Naniescu, missionary, History of Romanian Orthodox Church.

Introduction

Among the remarkable figures of the 19th century, a leading position is occupied by the great metropolitan bishop of Moldavia, Joseph Naniescu, a man of honour, piety, adorned with the virtues that fit the valour of a bishop. Due to his exceptional qualities as well as the numberless activities carried out with passion and devotion toward the priority ideals of the Romanian nation, in its process of ongoing affirmation, the metropolitan bishop Joseph remained in the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church as an

icon hallowed by piety and gratitude, like a tree who has sprung near the water springs, destined by God to be of the righteous nation, a fervent patriot who knew how to generate in the souls of his disciples unswerving feelings for their country and people and a dour critique of the unfair rulers, a humble clergyman dedicated to prayer, a merciful missionary and a protective father.

1. Biography of Joseph Naniescu

Born on July 15th, 1818 he was the son of priest Anania Mihalache and of Teodosia, from the village of Răzălăi-Bălți. After a couple of years, his father died and his mother was left widow with two children to raise John and Jeremiah. Following some inner urges, divine calling and the advice of her uncle, the hierodeacon Joseph, she becomes a nun under the name of Fevronia, and raises her second son, Jeremiah, in the spirit of God, sending him to attend the schools of those times so that he may marry and become a priest¹. In turn, John is raised and educated by a relative of the family, Theophylact, hierodeacon from the Frumoasa Monastery. In 1831 he is brought to the Saint Spiridon Monastery in Iași, to study. Here he learns to write, read, and he learns the pattern and music of the psalms. In 1834, the hierodeacon Theophylact is appointed Father Superior of the Monastery of Saint Samuil the Prophet of Focșani, being accompanied here by his nephew. On November 23rd, 1835, is made a monk under the name of Joseph by the bishop Chesarie of Buzău, who addressed to him the following words: "I gave you the name Joseph, the name of my abbot, so that you may be a worthy man, and be like him some day!"². The next day, Sunday, November 24th, he was ordained deacon, due to his intellectual training and special voice. As an apprentice of bishop Chesarie, in 1836, the hierodeacon Joseph enters the School of Theology in Buzău, established

¹ Deac. P. I. David, *Mitropolitul Iosif Naniescu, milostivul, lesne-iertătorul și ctitorul-ierarh (Iosif Naniescu, Metropolitan Bishop, the Merciful, the Readily-Forgiving and the Founder)*, in „Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei”, LXVI (1990), nr. 1-3, p. 143.

² Protos. Vasile Vasilache, *Iosif Naniescu, strălucit mitropolit al Moldovei (Iosif Naniescu, Brilliant Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia)*, Neamt Monastery, 1940, p. 144.

at that time, and graduates it in 1840. His uncle and protector dies, and Joseph graduates the School of Theology with outstanding academic results, and registers with the „Sfântul Sava” College in Bucharest. Here, he completes his general education, also becoming acquainted with the exact sciences. At the same time, he mastered French and took serious interest in classical languages.

In 1849 he is appointed Father Superior at the Monastery of Șerbăneștii Morunglavului-Râmnicu Vâlcea. Here, he rebuilds the monastery and establishes a monastic life worthy of being followed; as a result, he caught the benevolent attention of bishop Atanasie Stoenescu of Râmnic. However, as the monastery was under the protection of the „Eforia școalelor” of Bucharest, Joseph is summoned by bishop Nifon and ordained priest by the prelate Timotei Troadoș, on August 29th 1850. In November 1852 he is promoted to the rank of protosinghel by the Saint Calinic of Cernica himself. In 1857 he is appointed Father Superior at the Găiseni Monastery (nowadays the Strâmbu Convent in Giurgiu district). Once again he becomes well-known due to his exemplary life, his flawless mass and his thrifty spirit, the metropolitan Nifon awarding him the rank of archimandrite and appointing him Father Superior of the Sarindar Monastery of Bucharest in 1863. As result of the transformations that took place in the romanian provinces, particularly of the secularization of the monastery estates and dissolution of the Father Superior position, archimandrite Joseph Naniescu was appointed Religion Teacher in 1864, first at the „Gheorghe Lazăr” Secondary School in Bucharest, where he remained two years, and then, in 1866, at the beginning of the school year he transferred to the „Matei Basarab” High School where he worked until he was elected bishop of Argeș³. On April 23rd, 1872, the archimandrite Joseph is ordained prelate. In January 1873, he is appointed bishop of Argeș, and on June 10th, 1875 he was elected metropolitan bishop of Moldavia and Suceava, being instituted on July 6th. After the solemn ceremony and after being handed the crutch, Joseph praised God for

³ Rev. PhD. Cand. Ioan Vicovan, *Un mitropolit de seamă al Moldovei – Iosif Naniescu*, in „Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei”, I (new series) LXVII (1991), nr. 4-8, p. 60.

everything, thanking the Mother of God and the Allpious Parascheva for advocating and placing such hope in his humble person. On the day that followed the festivities he began the work of the merciful Samaritan, examining the clergy, the monasteries and the parish churches. Almost everything was a ruin. The vaulted ceiling of the Metropolitan Cathedral had collapsed several times. The image of Manole the Craftman from Argeș, where he had come from, persisted, but the relentless hierarch was filled with hope, a strong faith and complete love. For 27 years, the venerable metropolitan bishop rules the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia with unseen gentleness and wisdom. This is where his richest spiritual, theological, pastoral and social activity in his entire life was carried out, standing as a living example, so hard to imitate. On January 26th, 1902 the metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu, "the holy and full of mercy" leaves behind his spiritual sons and moves to the heavenly home to stand before the Great Hierarch Jesus Christ. His tomb can be found on the southern part of the metropolitan church.

The Metropolitan Bishop Joseph is the first hierarch who, holding the Holy Cross in one hand and sprinkling the holy water, declared Romania's independence⁴. He is also the one who inscribes the martyrs and heroes of the Independence in the nation's diptychs, ordering that funeral monuments be raised in honour of those who sacrificed their lives for faith in Christ, against pagans and who shed their blood for their ancestral land⁵. The name of this great hierarch is connected with the completion of the building of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iasi, initiated by the metropolitan bishop Veniamin Costachi. The repair and construction works lasted almost ten years, and in this endeavour he was helped by a former colleague from the Saint Sava School, Vasile Boerescu, who, in the meantime, had become minister of Cults. The skillfulness of the great hierarch, his dignified appearance, the competence of the architects of those times led to the completion of the construction that had started in 1833. The furniture, the liturgical recipients, the sanctified objects, all was carefully gathered. The

⁴ Protos. Vasile Vasilache, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁵ Deac. P. I. David, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

painting was executed by his friend, Gheorghe Tătărăscu. The consecration took place on April 23rd, 1887, in the presence of King Carol I, Queen Mary, 12 prelates, a large number of priests, deacons and Christians⁶.

The second great foundation of his predecessor – preserved by Joseph – that he saved, was the „Veniamin Costachi” School of Theology in Socola. As it did not have a building of its own, it rented rooms in traders' houses. Seeing this, the Metropolitan Bishop Joseph bought the palace that had belonged to the former ruler Mihail Sturza in Iași, had it repaired and moved the theology school there. This was followed by the restoration of the following churches „Sfinții Trei Ierarhi”, „Sfântul Nicolae Domnesc” in Iași, the Houses and Chancellery of the Metropolitan Church and other parish churches, convents and monasteries.

2. His homiletic activity

The Metropolitan Bishop Joseph was also a man of light. Day and night he would study books, sermons and manuscripts, practice psalm and linear technique. He was thus artfully preparing what would later become the treasure of the Cultural Heritage, organizing libraries and endowing them with church books and works of the soul sprung from the wisdom of the world, making them available who those who wished to receive light and avoid the secularization. In defence of the right faith he established „Revista Teologică” („The Theological Magazine”) from his own fund. He remarked himself with translations and printings, by deciphering certain manuscripts and by prosody to musical works. Notable is the fact that he donated his own library, consisting of over 10,000 books and 300 old Romanian printings to the Romanian Academy.

At the same time, he was a talented speaker, gifted with a smooth, pleasant voice, which he controlled with intelligence and artistic sense. His was a rich imagination, and he had thorough knowledge of the Holy Scripture and of the Holy Parents. A scholar with wide interests, Joseph Naniescu dedicated a great part of

⁶ Rev. Ioan Vicovan, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

his activity to the preaching mission, standing out as a remarkable figure of the word uttered from the rostrum of the ancestral church. Thus, driven by the advanced ideas of those times, he used the sermon as means for the religious, moral and social education of the Christians, being a missionary before the occurrence of the missionary issues and fighting against many injustices that affected his pastorate.

At the impressive masses held in the grand cathedral, which shined in all its glory, the prelate of Moldavia showed particular attention to the rostrum he had erected, ensuring that it was lit with the zeal of famous preachers. As much as time would allow it, he would often preach himself, but in order for the live spring of holy knowledge to continuously flow in the souls thriving for the holy truth, he always made sure that the preaching position in the cathedral was taken by worthy priests. Thus, at the beginning, there were the archimandrite Isaia Teodorescu, professor and principal of the „Veniamin Costachi” School of Theology, prelate Varlaam Răileanu, and later the young hiero-deacon Nicodim Munteanu, a most dearest spiritual son, the future patriarch of Romania (1939-1948). To make sure that the sermon was thoroughly prepared, he would have the preacher present the sermon in writing to him on Saturday evening. This shows us what great value he placed on the sermon. Its thorough preparation and the fact that the hierarch himself was subjected to verification are two testimonies of the manner in which the rostrum of the Metropolitan Cathedral came to its brilliance during the time of Joseph Naniescu. Undoubtedly, the metropolitan bishop was aware of the following imperatives regarding the preacher and the sermon:

– The priest must know whom he is preaching to, that is, what spiritual training and what vocation each individual has, because the sermon is an admirable means of persuasion and spiritual guidance of man;

– Some are interested in the form of our sermon, others are drawn by our awareness, attitude and gestures, many come bearing in mind the preconception that nothing interesting is to be found in a sermon, and it is these that we see leaving, one by one, when the priest climbs into the rostrums – very few open their conscience to be evangelically seeded, and even fewer find in the

sermon an occasion for spiritual search and for checking their religious sincerity;

– No sermon can be convincing if the preacher does not undergo a „spiritual transposition”, if he does not put himself in spiritual contact with his listeners, observing them and even capturing their moods, so that, like a doctor who gives the right medicine for the diagnostics, he too, in his sermon, can appease all consciences. That is why, first and foremost, the preacher must be an experienced psychologist, so that he may know whom to preach the Gospel to and that he may preach it fully and with benefit for all; any lack of inspiration that so many preachers complain about is just the natural consequence of the „factory-made” sermon, of the sermon laboriously prepared from sermon books and lacking any personal religious experience; he who is talented, who practices and who shows intensity can master his sermon by reflecting on it. Words will come easy, inspired and alive. However, quite often, due to unexpected indispositions, unforeseen nervousness, he is at loss for words, for the proper expression, he repeats himself, risks pleonasms and at times, conventionalism;

– A sermon, in itself, is neither long nor short – but it can always be bearable or unbearable – namely, interesting and therefore passionate, or bland and dull and therefore impossible to follow with sympathy and thrill by the audience⁷;

– The sermon’s role is to update the assertion “Today he was crucified on wood!”. The priest should place his Eucharistic experience before everything else. The sermon is the permanent act of the embodiment of the Logos, thus representing a soteriological act; a *second imperative* consists in stressing the importance of preaching the fundamental truths, which have always been challenged or contested during history; the *third imperative* is based on the idea that the priest has the duty to preach from the depth of his own inner life or from the reality of the present day and the working of God’s word⁸.

⁷ Rev. Prof. PhD. Grigore Cristescu, *Predică și cateheză*, Sibiu, 1929, pp. 66, 92.

⁸ Idem, *Predică și predicator în vremea noastră*, in „Studii Teologice”, XII (1950), nr. 3-4, p. 149.

In addition to the sermons delivered in the Metropolitan Cathedral and in the churches where he served, the metropolitan bishop was invited to deliver solemn speeches at festivities, whenever grand events in the life of the church and the nation were being celebrated, in the presence of the intellectual class of the high rank aristocracy, where the front seats were occupied by the country's ruler and by the metropolitan bishop of the country.

Over time, the life and activity of Joseph Naniescu constituted the subject of many studies and research which highlighted various aspects. For this reason, further on, we shall attempt to briefly present the homiletic preoccupations of the great metropolitan bishop, by selectively examining some of the speeches delivered on such occasions. As an overview of all the sermons of the prelate Joseph Naniescu would require an extensive editorial space, we shall take into analysis, as an example, only two parentheses:

a. *Funeral speech for the late blessed Chesarie, Bishop of Buzău, who died on 30 November, in the year 1846 and mentioned at the time of the 40th day evocation, by the Hierodeacon Joseph Naniescu, speech which was printed at the time through the efforts and at the expense of the Bishopric of Buzău, in the printing shop of pitar. Zaharia Carcalechi in Bucharest, at the beginning of the year 1847*⁹

The outline of this necrology is classical: a biblical text, introduction, approach and closing. What we notice is that there are no forms of greeting. The sermon has the following structure:

The biblical lexicon (the motto): „Remember your great men who gave you God's word and, watching their life become fulfilled, to follow their faith” (the Jews 13,7). As the rules of using the text provide, the metropolitan bishop Joseph announces the subject matter proposed to be dealt with from the very start.

The Introduction starts from the idea that God is the Master of Heaven and Earth and expresses the truth that life and death are in his hands. By invoking the words of psalmist David: „From the very beginning, You, Oh, Lord, have founded it and the work of Your Hands are the skies; these will vanish and change, but You shall always remain the same, and Your years shall not lessen”

⁹ Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1892.

(Psalm 101, 25), the author makes the following remark: „Therefore, all in this world are because they should be; they come to light for a while, just to vanish and change; this is the fate of all creatures in the world, and it is man’s as well, man, this earthly god: to be born, to live and to die, this is his motto. Yes, my brothers, we are born only to die and pass through the world like travellers who come, go and disappear”¹⁰.

The Approach comprises words of praise addressed to his spiritual father, bishop Chesarie of Buzău, who is a model worth following through “his humble, restrained and holy existence, his fervent zeal, both in matters of the church and enhancement of good moral, as well as for the advancement and happiness of his nation; and, above all, his entire perseverance which he deliberately would put in everything in order to stimulate morality by word and make an example by action”¹¹.

After evoking the figures of bishops Damaschin of Râmnic, Chesarie of Râmnic, Filaret and Joseph of Argeș, the author outlines a brief biography of bishop Chesarie, where he also presents his accomplishments of great value, and then, like a refined psychologist, he presents to us the following characterization: “The humbleness of his conduct and the truly monastic frugality of his existence, the rigor of the gospel morale perseveringly preserved in word and action; the rite and panophy of the heavenly mass in all its grandeur; the deliberate caring for the proper order of churches and behaviour of priests for the fulfilment of their debts. All these were those things of significance for which his Holiness sacrifices, with content and enthusiasm, most of his years in the Pastoral Throne... His desire, for a better condition of the

¹⁰ Mitrop. Iosif Naniescu, *Cuvânt funebru pentru răposatul întru fericire Chesarie, Episcopul Buzăului, răposat la 30 Noiembrie, anul 1846 și pus la pomenirea de 40 de zile, de Ierodiaconul Iosif Naniescu, care cuvânt s-a tipărit atunci cu cheltuiala casei Episcopiei Buzăului, în tipografia pitar. Zaharia Carcalechi în București, la începutul anului 1847* (Funeral speech for the blessed deceased Chesarie, Bishop of Buzau, who died on November 30th, 1846 and mentioned on the occasion of the 40 day commemoration by the Hiero-deacon Joseph Naniescu who printed the speech at the expense of the Bishopry of Buzau, in the printing press pitar Zaharia Carcalechi in Bucharest, in early 1847), Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1892, p. 4.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

Romanian Church and of its clergy, the fervent zeal to reach the fulfilment of his ideal as soon as possible, tormented him day and night, and if a power beyond that of human would have been at his disposal, then we would have seen the birth of those things that only hearts with the most truthful feelings barely dare to wish for humankind, for their country and nation. But man's powers are limited and circumstances different, he can only work, want and pray within these boundaries. This is what he, blessed man, did: whatever was in his power he worked, what not he desired, what he desired he prayed for"¹².

The Conclusion consists of two moments: a brief synthesis of those previously elaborated and the following advise addressed to those present: "Everyone who is a true Romanian, of good soul and mind, shall shed a tear today over the grave of he who valued above all what was Romanian, virtuous, honest and true. Shed, I say, a tear for he whose actions show him in his true feelings, and calls, repeating his words: unselfishness, sacrifice, faith, justice, correction...May all the malevolence, envy and rottenness of this world know that we are mourning a pious prelate, a virtuous patriot, a man unique in his kind"¹³.

b. *Speech delivered by the His Holiness Archbishop and Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia and Suceava and exarch of the Lands, D. D. Joseph Naniescu on the occasion of the consecration of the great church, the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iași*¹⁴

This sermon, with rich theological contents, was delivered in the presence of King Carol I, of Queen Mary, of 12 prelates, a large number of priests, deacons and Christians on April 23rd, 1887. The plan of the sermon is the following: gospel text, introduction, approach and conclusion.

The biblical text (the motto): "Oh, Lord, I have love the good decorum of Your house and the locale of the establishment for Your worship" (Psalm 25, 8); "After that, I walked the path to the western gate, before the temple and I contemplated and behold, the Lord's glory filled the temple of the Lord and I fell to the

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

¹⁴ Tipografia Națională, Iași, 1887.

earth with may face down" (Iezechiel 44, 4). These two texts clearly show the subject matter approached by the preacher during the sermon.

The *Introduction* includes the evoking of the figure of the first founder of the cathedral, the metropolitan bishop Veniamin Costachi, who, by printing many books at his own expense, by decorating all monasteries, from the greatest to the most smallest convents "lost in villages spread on the hills and fields of our country", during the entire time of his pastoring, acted as a leader of public teaching¹⁵. He then evidences the importance the Church had to the spirituality and unity of the Romanian nation, as well as the all-presence and care of God: "When prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah, referring to the Church, say the House of the Lord, it is from these words of the prophets that we come to learn the greatest and undescribed glory of the Lord's power and grandeur... We must understand, therefore, that this name is but a dispensation for the mortal and limited nature of man and we must perceive its figurative sense, just as we understand when, together with the psalmist we say: «The Heavens speak about the glory of God and the skies announce the working of His Hands». Which is, therefore, the House of our Lord almighty and endless? For, if we imagine that God lives in a house with boundaries, made by man, we shall sin. But the great prophet Isaiah allows us no mistake in this sense. He says, as if speaking for God: What house shall you build Me, says the Lord? Which is My haven? Is not the sky My throne and the land beneath My Feet? (Isaiah 66, 1) and the prophet adds: For the Almighty lives not in houses made by human hand, for He is without boundary in His Being"¹⁶.

The Approach comprises a description of the Church's role in the life of the Romanian nation, its purpose being to "unite all righteous believers in one thought, in one faith, in one feeling

¹⁵ Mitrop. Iosif Naniescu, *Cuvântul făcut de Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arihiepiscop Mitropolitul Moldovei și Sucevei și exarh al Plaiurilor*, D. D. Iosif Naniescu cu ocaziunea sfințirii bisericii celei mari Catedrala Mitropoliei din Iași (Speech prepared by His Holiness Metropolitan Archbishop of Moldavia and Suceava and exarch of the Lands, D.D. Joseph Naniescu on the occasion of the consecration of the great church, the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iasi), Tipografia Națională, Iași, 1887, p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

and even in the same aspiration, through love and dedication for the common good"¹⁷. After a brief depiction of the efforts made to raise and decorate the stately cathedral, the metropolitan bishop Joseph further shows that the Church, in addition to the purpose of guiding Christians towards redemption, bringing them closer to God, also had a social and charitable role, namely to help those in suffering and sorrow, because "our immortal rulers of old have attired the homeland with these religious monuments, churches and monasteries, endowing them with sufficient estate to maintain and preserve them for the generations to come, for the existence of those living in them, servants of the Church, and for the sheltering of the poor, of the disabled and of the widows who came running to these refuges of redemption, fleeing the storms and needs of worldly life"¹⁸.

However, the Church, points out the author, also worked towards attaining an educational, moral and cultural goal, constituting the "foundation of society, the foundation of the existence of this nation. The Church was the school of the people, a school of morale and enlightenment, a school of order and discipline, a school of love and brotherhood; because our Church is a national Church, and because our clergy is a national clergy, elected and sprung from the bosom of the Romanian nation; for all these reasons, it can only feel and think in the Romanian spirit"¹⁹.

The scholarly Metropolitan Bishop does not forget to show the truth that the ancestral Church is the one that preserved the national being, it was "in all past times the ship that, like Noah's ark, from the time of the universal flood, represented the salvation of the Romanian people, opposing relentless strength against the rage of the invading waves of intruding tribes from past centuries, and preserving, up to this day, our language, our history, our nationality, through the unity of religious faith"²⁰.

The Conclusion comprises practical advice of particular contemporary nature: "Let us maintain faith in God together with our ancestral traditions and customs, because our forefathers lived

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

in their spirit, fought the all the hardships transgressing the centuries up to present day and preserving for us our country, our church and our national identity, which cannot be separated. And the God of your parents shall always be with us, as He was with them, for it is only in this way that we shall keep our heritage, the most sacred depository they entrusted to us, and the reason they asserted that the jewellery and happiness of a nation is the protection of its ancestral laws"²¹.

Upon reading the texts of these sermons, we can observe that the metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu carried out an outstanding activity in the homiletic field as well, being driven by his great passion and awareness of the duty to transform the rostrum of the Church into a genuine dais in the service of his pastorates, through which he conveyed to them religious, moral, cultural and patriotic knowledge.

We notice that the *language of the sermons* is simple, carefully selected, with a rich biblical fund, adapted to the listeners and the circumstances where he delivered them. It is necessary to highlight the richness of the vocabulary and of the literary means used by the author in his preaching. The nuanced and varied vocabulary, the close connection and the high esteem of the author for the live, colourful tongue of the nation. In his speeches the admirable hierarch uses various rhetorical figures. Among these we mention: *the epithet*: "such fatal destiny", "our deep sorrow", "proper mourning", "a language rich in speech", "higher calling", "sublime hours", "the undusked light"; *the metaphor*: "it is the model of pastors and the pride of the Prelates", "a new battlefield now opens to the good fighter", "he rests in the bosom of eternity", "respectful and holy shadows", "through your deeds you have sacrificed yourself on the altar of the Motherland"; *personification*: "he restored the subjugated language", "awakening the memory of past time... the Church calls", "the convents in the mountains today mourn, the churches, the houses and other things call and shall continue to call until the end of time", "the most sincere hearts hardly dare to wish humankind"; *prosopopeea*: "Blessed are you, deified soul, praise be you, happy souls!"; *the comparison*: "and

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

the world seems a theatre with different stages", "they, like morning stars adorning the heavenly sky, shine in the national temple through the light of their virtues", "thus, like a new Zorobabel, began to rebuild this Jerusalem"; *the rhetorical interrogation*: "why do we anguish ourselves so, aggrieve and mourn for those who die?", "But about the blessed Gregory the Metropolitan Bishop, what shall I say?"; *antithesis*: "like the wave of the river no longer seen by the sunset, washing on the same shore where it saw the first light of sun", "not knowing how to live or die", "he was splintered by the day and night"; *the rhetorical exclamation*: "Praised be you, happy souls!", "And yet, you, respectful and holy shadows...!"; *rhetorical invocation*: "Lord of kindness and wisdom!", "Oh, blessed man of earth! Oh, pious Prelate! Oh, blessed mortal!... Oh, virtuous soul!"; *synecdoche*: "almost all convents benefitted from His benefactor and helpful hands".

The Grammatical Style is characterized by fairness, purity, accuracy, propriety, orality, clearness, fineness, artlessness, dignity and harmony. His realistic sermon based on the Holy Scripture and the Holy Parents, but deeply rooted in the matters of life, are the most eloquent example of how a sermon should be. Only by following this path it shall attain its goal: the happiness of the Christians on earth and the acquiring of redemption in eternal life. Furthermore, we must remark that this entire oratorical effort sustained by the metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu, from beginning to end, is vibrant with humbleness and simplicity, virtues that characterized his entire exemplary life.

Conclusions

Deeply impressed by the exemplary activity of the metropolitan bishop Joseph, the historian Nicolae Iorga chose to illustrate his life in words of particular sensitiveness and literary beauty: "Elected Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia in 1875, this Basarabean, who lived until old age in the poorest sanctums near the metropolitan church of Veniamin Costachi, built on the basis of the layouts of Gheorghe Asachi himself and sanctified by a King of Romania, was, as was the great Veniamin, always merciful and generous, the honest guardian of the estate left to the Metropolitan

Church, consisting of buildings, adornments and vestments, a faithful servant in the church of his Lord and unequalled lover of culture, like a ring of gold among the bronze of the old church books and the harsh iron of the new laic culture, descended upon the Church as well. What resident of Iasi, Moldavia, what Romanian treasuring the law of his ancestors did not shed a warm tear when the body of the 82 year old senior was lowered in 1902, in the monk style, in the grave outside the church walls where he, a live saint, had spent over thirty years in worship, among the faces of the immortal saints? An era in the history of the Romanian church ended when the long with eyelashes closed on the cheeks grown hollow from the harsh life, forever sealing the light of the eyes once full of life²².

In addition to the variety of the subjects approached in the speeches delivered by the metropolitan bishop Joseph, we must observe their well-trimmed form, illustrating the superior theological and laic culture of the distinguished orator. They also demonstrate that the author is a master of the art of the rostrum. Invited to speak before a pretentious audience, the preacher would prepare his sermon in an orderly manner, and with a great degree of clairvoyance, as can be noticed from the careful reading of his speeches. As a preacher extremely well familiarized with the message of the gospel and skilled at summarizing and conveying the teachings of the Holy Scripture, the author masters the contents of the texts of the New and Old Testament which he quotes in every speech.

Permanently concerned with the proper functioning of the church life in all its aspects, the metropolitan bishop Joseph Nănescu remains an enlightened mind of our Church, a great lover of culture, teacher of innovation, protective father of those in need and helpless, a role model with his life lived to the last breath in an exemplary holiness that rose to the height of the service Christ had entrusted upon him. For this, he has remained in the memory of his successors under the name of Holy Joseph, dignified and

²² Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii Românești și a vieții religioase a românilor*, second edition, vol. II, Editura Ministerului Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, București, 1932, p. 242.

pure like the patriarch Joseph, merciful and gentle like Saint Nicholas, poor in terms of material belongings, but rich in the spiritual ones, crowned by virtues and worthy of having his name placed in the sinaxar of the saints²³.

²³ Rev. Lect. PhD. Zaharia Matei, *110 ani de la plecarea la cele veșnice a mitropolitului Iosif Naniescu*, în „Ziarul Lumina, 25 ianuarie 2012, p. 5.