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## The Cultural-Missionary Activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church Brotherhood and the Choir of the Orthodox Parish in Aiud at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century



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### Abstract

Aiud has been one of Transylvania's famous Hungarian cultural centers for almost millennia. During this time, the status of the Orthodox Romanians was insignificant in social life, as they were

deprived of church organization and their place of worship. The Great Union of 1918 would generate an extraordinary national-spiritual revival in the heart of the community through the establishment of the Aiud Orthodox Parish and the Aiud Orthodox Archdiocese in 1922, during the pastorate of the worthy priest Iosif Pop.

One of the missionary vectors of the dynamization of cultural-religious life in the framework of the new Archdiocese was represented by the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood, a lay organization founded on the initiative of Professor Sextil Pușcariu. Through the Branch in Aiud, the church structure intended for intellectuals supported the fight to defend Orthodoxy, preserving the Romanian people's spiritual balance and the revival of faith. The Choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish played a significant role in the organization's local activity, which was established to support the cultural-religious propaganda of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood.

#### Keywords

Aiud Orthodox Deanery, Dean Iosif Pop, Great Union of 1918, Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood, Aiud Orthodox Parish Choir.

## 1 Introduction

Aiud was among Transylvania's famous Hungarian cultural centers for almost a millennium. The status of the Romanians in the territory was insignificant, with the Orthodox believers having to fight bravely against the denationalization and the attempts to impose the received confessions arbitrarily. The Great Union of 1918 would trigger a particularly pronounced national-spiritual

revival in the heart of the Romanian community in Aiud, the state unification being considered a liberating moment.

At the head of the movement regarding the revival of the national spirit in Aiud was the priest Iosif Pop, the luminary and legal founder of the administrative-ecclesiastical structures here, being the first Orthodox parish priest of Aiud and the first arch-priest of the newly established Archdiocese, starting in 1922. The venerable servant of The ancestral Church had as its primary objective the affirmation and revitalization of Orthodoxy, given that, upon its arrival in Aiud, the righteous community, consisting of only 16 souls, was in the languor of alienation and administrative disorganization.

In the present work, we will deal with an essential segment regarding cultural-religious activities and events which, by their nature, increased and intensified the action of dynamizing church life in a pastoral-missionary aspect. Thus, we will seek to capture how the lay organization of "The Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood" represented a "catalyst" in cultivating and affirming religious and national values through the large-scale activities organized within the Aiud Orthodox Archdiocese.

In the beginning, we will point out the reasons for the establishment, the identity, and the objectives of F.O.R. Then, we will focus on the actions taken by the new organization within the framework of the Archdiocese Aiud. Thus, the work's main objective is to highlight how the local branch of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood "set in motion" the church life in the communities belonging to the Archdiocese. In the context of the commemorative Year of hymnographers and church singers, we will pay special attention to the activity of the choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish, referring to the unique mission that the formation fulfilled in the context of the meetings of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood.

## **2 The missionary pastoral goal of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood (F.O.R.) in Transylvania at the beginning of the 20th century**

The clergy of the ancestral Orthodox Church and the believers of the Romanian nation have permanently formed an indestructible soul unity. For centuries, the ancient Church was a generating factor of national brilliance and accomplishments, in its "hands" being placed the significant responsibilities for the religious-moral health of the country and the Romanian nation. The Transylvanian Orthodox Church, through the work of the Holy Hierarchy Andrei Șaguna, articulated its character as a "democratic structure," offering the laity a significant weight within the official corporations. Thus, the ordinary believers, as representatives of the laity and the clergy, with their apostolic attributions, formed, through obedience and fidelity, an actual executive body that decided the fate of the Church<sup>1</sup>.

The harmonious collaboration between the two structures has spread its radii of action within official ecclesiastical meetings and social unrest. Thus, out of the firm desire to cultivate and give scope to the fight to defend Orthodoxy and preserve the spiritual balance of the Romanian people, the illustrious university professor Sextil Pușcariu, a member of the Romanian Academy, launched the initiative to organize the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood. The new movement aimed to capture all believers, regardless of age, geographical origin, or social class, whose souls' love for Romanian law and ancestral faith vibrated in unison<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Sextil PUȘCARIU, "Chemare către credincioșii Bisericii Ortodoxe Române", in *Renașterea*, 2/1933, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1-2.

The initiator of the movement, Professor Sextil Pușcariu, would launch a resounding appeal to all priests and believers from the suffragan dioceses of the Metropolis based in Sibiu, inviting them to be present at the "St. Nicholas" church in Cluj, on March 5, 1933, day in and day out, which was celebrated on Sunday of Orthodoxy<sup>3</sup>. In the sermon delivered on the occasion of the New Year, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan defined the meeting set up by Professor Pușcariu as "an enlivened call from Cluj, Romanian, and Orthodox," seeing it as an initiative aimed at offering Transylvanian intellectuals the chance to contribute effectively to carry out the activity of the ancestral Church<sup>4</sup>.

The action of the Orthodox laity enjoyed the initiative and support of numerous intellectuals from Cluj, all responding to a pressing need felt in the heart of the Church and the nation. Within this organization, the laity was invited to assist the clergy in the missionary work carried out, just as, during slavery, the intellectuals defended the ancestral faith through a lively and responsible church activity. From the beginning, the organization's supporters promoted a movement to revive the faith, an action the parish priests needed help to carry out effectively. Thus, the laity was called to the apostolate in a sustained and organized formula under the direct coordination of Sextil Pușcariu and through the effective involvement of over 300 Transylvanian intellectuals<sup>5</sup>. Among the many adherent members of the movement were also three believers from Aiud: Dr. Adrian Darămuș (lawyer), Dr. Simion Pădurean (lawyer), and Mihail Papiniu (retired major)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> \*\*\* "Colaborarea mirenilor cu clerul", in *Telegraful Român*, 4-6/1933, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ioan Gh. SAVIN, "Acțiunea ortodoxă a mirenilor din Ardeal", in *Re-nașterea*, 7/1933, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Sextil PUȘCARIU, "Chemare către credincioșii...", p. 3-4.

The movement of the Transylvanian laypeople resonated in every corner of Orthodox Transylvania and within the Holy Synod of our Church. Thus, in the plenary session at the end of February (1933), the members of the high church forum took note with great joy in the context of the exemplary and vigorous mobilization of the lay people across the Carpathians. Consequently, it was unanimously decided that the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood responded to a pressing need through its action and mission, especially in Transylvania, where ancient law constitutes a solid foundation of social stability<sup>7</sup>.

The great event of the establishment of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood, scheduled for March 5, 1933, enjoyed a special scope. Not by chance, the event was viewed in the spiritual order with the same significance as the Assemblies of Blaj (1848) and Alba Iulia represented in the political order (1918)<sup>8</sup>. În mijlocul manifestării au fost prezenți toți ierarhii ortodocși din Transilvania, inclusiv mitropolitul Nicolae Bălan, alături de care s-a aflat Întâistătătorul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, patriarhul Miron Cristea<sup>9</sup>.

The event was animated by the joy, excitement, and presence of thousands of clerics, monks, and believers from all the cities of Transylvania who participated in the cultural-religious ceremonies organized on this occasion. In the context of the beautiful moment spent in Cluj in the spring of 1933, the date of March 5, of the founding of the F.O.R., it was called "one of the most brilliant religious affirmations of the soul of our nation."<sup>10</sup> Thus,

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<sup>7</sup> \*\*\* "Veniți la praznicul dela Cluj", in *Renașterea*, 8/1933, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ioan MATEIU, "Pentru apostolatul nostru", in *Renașterea*, 15-16/1933, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> \*\*\* " 'Frăția Ortodoxă Română'. Grandioasa adunare dela Cluj', in *Renașterea*, 10-11/1933, p. 1-19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

driven by the feeling of Orthodox solidarity, the fight to defend the saving faith and to support the ancestral law was started in an "official" way, within and under the guidance of the Holy Church.

### **3 Establishment of the branch of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood in the Orthodox Archdiocese Aiud**

The establishment of the organization of the laity at the level of the Metropolitanate of Transylvania was received with great joy and excitement by the intellectuals and laypeople of Aiud. The testimony of the faithful from the old "fortress of Hungarian culture" was reproduced in the pages of the "Renaissance" publication, alongside the joyous voices of the Orthodox Romanians from Sighisoara, Hațeg, Orăștie, Făgăraș, Petroșani or Sebeș. Thus, in the February 5, 1933 edition of the magazine of the Diocese of Cluj, the enthusiasm of the Aiudian believers is highlighted: "The undersigned (intellectuals from Aiud), we note with pleasure the initiative started by the center of our Holy Bishoprics, for the establishment of the "Orthodox Union" association in the Metropolitan Transylvania, based in Cluj, to which we enthusiastically join and give our consent to be signed in the call that will be launched for this purpose."<sup>11</sup>

Six weeks after founding the section of the Diocese of Vad, Feleac, and Cluj, it was the lay people from the Aiud Archdiocese to lay the foundations of a local branch. The event took place on the afternoon of Sunday, June 25, 1933, in the presence of an impressive number of clerics, intellectuals, people of culture, and right-

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<sup>11</sup> \*\*\* "Un glas înțelept dela Iași. Pentru organizarea laicilor", în *Re-nașterea*, 5/1933, p. 3.

eous believers from the entire Archdiocese. This solemn and historic moment for the Aiudian Orthodoxy took place in the presence of three members of the Episcopal Committee, namely Professor Valer Moldovan, president of the diocesan section, Dr Sebastian Bornemisa, vice-president of the forum, and Dr Aurel Gociman, member of the Committee of direction<sup>12</sup>.

The event of the establishment of the section of the Aiud Archdiocese began at 3:00 p.m., with the celebration of the Vespers service in the presence of Archpriest Iosif Pop, at the local Orthodox chapel, the only place of worship of the Right Worshipful Romanians of Aiud<sup>13</sup>. The general assembly meeting took place in the festive hall of the 1st Mountain Hunters Division, premises made available with great kindness and goodwill by General I. Nicolau, who was present at the event together with all the priests from Archdiocese Aiud<sup>14</sup>. The meeting was opened by Archpriest Iosif Pop, who addressed the Diocesan Committee of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood's representatives with a warm welcome. Next, Prof. Valer Moldovan presided over the work of the meeting, highlighting with great enthusiasm the flourishing situation of the right faith in the new Archdiocese in the context of the establishment of the F.O.R. branch: "In Aiud, the city so alienated in the past, today we find an imposing focus of Orthodoxy, supported with a lot of conscience and dignity from all the Romanian people in the locality."<sup>15</sup>

On the same optimistic note, Dr. Sebastian Bornemisa also spoke: "For the delegates of the Center (our note, the diocesan section

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12 \*\*\* "Constituirea Frăției ortodoxe române la Aiud", in *Universul*, 174/1933, p. 2.

13 *Ibidem*.

14 \*\*\* "Frăția ortodoxă la Aiud. Impozanta manifestație creștină din Aiud", in *Patria*, 137/1933, p. 2.

15 \*\*\* "Constituirea Frăției ortodoxe române la Aiud" ..., p. 2.



of the organization), it is an unexpected satisfaction to see that the Romanian world in Aiud lives in an imposing understanding and that it is grouped around the national Church. It is a great pleasure to see such an understanding and fruitful collaboration between all professions, the army setting an example, through General I. Nicolau<sup>16</sup>. The messages of the two representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood within the Committee of the Diocese of Cluj are particularly eloquent regarding the dynamism of spiritual life within the parish community of Aiud. The words of appreciation, addressed on the occasion of the establishment of the branch of the new organization, were of overwhelming importance at the time, reflecting, at the same time, the intense and fruitful pastoral-missionary activity of the tireless priest Iosif Pop.

The lawyer, Dr Adrian Dărămuș from Aiud, was elected president of the local structure. On behalf of the new Committee, he thanked all the believers who gave the vote of confidence to the members of the local structure of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood. Then, Prof. Valer Moldovan, president of the diocesan section, held a special conference in which he highlighted the purpose of the movement of the Transylvanian Orthodox laypeople, emphasizing as essential objectives the deepening of Orthodox conscience and discipline and the dynamism of social and cultural-national activity within the Romanian Right-Glorifying Church<sup>17</sup>.

In the last part of the event to establish the new organization's branch, the choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish, led by retired major Mihail Papiniu, performed a bouquet of religious songs. The artistic moment of the vocal ensemble consisting of "gentlemen

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> \*\*\* "Constituirea Frăției ortodoxe române la Aiud" ..., p. 2.

and ladies of the best society"<sup>18</sup> enjoyed a special appreciation, the musical-ecclesiastical activity of the Aiuden intellectuals being considered as an expression of the love of the Orthodox Romanians for the Righteous Church and, at the same time, a proof of the harmony that reigned in the bosom of the parish community in the locality. This exceptional climate was due to the fruitful pastoral-missionary activity of Archpriest Iosif Pop. The establishment of the local section of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood in Aiud was also due to the worthy 42-year-old priest; this solemn moment proved to be an occasion of spiritual uplifting for the Romanians of Aiud and the distinguished guests present<sup>19</sup>.

#### **4 Action of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood within the parish communities of the Aiud Archdiocese. The activity of the Aiud Orthodox Parish choir as a pastoral-missionary vector**

The members of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood within the Aiud branch started different action programs from the beginning to dynamize the cultural-spiritual and pastoral-missionary life within the De. The local structure of the lay organization, among the first branches established at the Diocese of Cluj, understood the essential role that it had to fulfill, acting with perseverance, and preparing activities aimed at cultivating religious

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem.*

consciousness and the spirit of the national tradition<sup>20</sup>. In cultivating and preaching the right faith, the choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish, existing since the establishment of the local branch of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood, stood out.

The objectives of the Aiud choral formation were carefully mentioned on the occasion of the extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council on August 11, 1933. How the organization of the new church vocal ensemble in Aiud is presented denotes the enthusiasm awakened in the heart of the local community and, at the same time, the fundamental aim on which the choral formation would perform in the context of supporting the pastoral-missionary activity of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood within the Archdiocese. Thus, in the third point of the Minutes, drawn up at the end of the meeting, the following was mentioned: "The Council takes note with great pleasure and satisfaction of the fact that a choir has been established at our church, which it considers as a tool of cultural propaganda - the religious branch of the Branch of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood from the Archdiocese."<sup>21</sup>

The functioning of the choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish was also presented in detail in the Minutes. Thus, prior to an optimal organization carried out under the authority of the laws and statutes of the Church, the Parish Council established that the vocal formation had an ecclesiastical character, aiming to participate in the religious services officiated in the local Orthodox Church. Retired Major Mihail Papiniu was appointed choir conductor, while Captain Ionescu was designated as substitute conductor,

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<sup>20</sup> \*\*\* "«Frăția Ortodoxă Română» în stațiunea balneară Uioara', in *Re-nașterea*, 35/1933, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Archive of the Orthodox Parish Aiud II (APOA2), Register of Minutes from the Assembly and the Parish Council meetings, 1927-1963, *Minutes*, August 11, 1933, unregistered document, p. 2.

the latter expressing his availability and willingness to take care of the choral activity voluntarily<sup>22</sup>.

The work for the training and coordination of the vocal formation was distributed by mutual agreement between the two army representatives, and the whole activity was carried out under the careful care of Archpriest Iosif Pop. For the effort made in organizing the choir, the Parish Council approved that Mihail Papiniu be rewarded monthly with 300 lei, noting that said gratification could be increased, at the end of 1933, by up to 500 lei per month. Also, during the same meeting, the members of the Parish Council decided, at the proposal of Archpriest Iosif Pop, to purchase a harmonium. The instrument, indispensable for the optimal development of the choral musical activity, was to be bought from the monetary fund intended to build the Church<sup>23</sup>.

The religious-cultural activity of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood was intensified in the countryside since the summer of 1933. Thus, on August 13, just two days after the Parish Council meeting, the organization's local branch carried out a cultural-religious action in the commune Râmet-Pleașa. Also, under the careful coordination of Archpriest Iosif Pop and lawyer Dr Adrian Dărămuș, president of the branch, the local structure of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood was present in other localities in the east of the Apuseni Mountains<sup>24</sup>.

Shortly after, on August 15, the branch members from the Archdiocese of Aiud organized a meeting in Bedeleu Parish (today, Izvoarele). The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary would represent a day of great joy for the faithful of this Parish, the

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> \*\*\* "Știri diferite. Aiud. Propagandă religioasă", in *Universul*, 226/1933, p. 10.

priest's meeting, and the presence of intellectuals generating a particular enthusiasm in the heart of the community at the foot of the Apuseni Mountains. The choice of Bedeleu Parish among the first places of action of the organization of the Orthodox laymen was not by chance, it being well known that the Orthodox here, together with their spiritual shepherds, were subjected to complex trials and sufferings by those who sought the denationalization of the Romanians and the rejection of the right faith<sup>25</sup>. The place of worship became unaccommodating for the multitude of believers. Numerous councils of priests officiated the Holy Liturgy, and the liturgical responses were offered with artistic mastery by the choral ensemble of the Aiud Orthodox Parish. Priest V. Ștefănescu, the author of the report published in the pages of "Renașterea" magazine, recalled the fact that the vocal group led by Mihail Papiniu made up of officers, teachers, and intellectuals, "brilliantly performed the beautiful mixed Liturgy by G. Musicescu"<sup>26</sup>, the liturgical chants "God have mercy three times", "Cherubic (B major)", or "We praise You" being "profusely applauded" by the believers.<sup>27</sup>

On August 20, 1933, on a Sunday, just five days after the meeting organised in Bedeleu Parish, the members of the Aiud branch of the F.O.R. organised a similar cultural-religious event in the spa town of Uioara (Ocnele-Mureșului). In the first part of the day, a council of clerics performed the Divine Liturgy in the parish church. The answers in the pew were given by the mixed choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish, made up of intellectuals and officers who interpreted the church songs from the musical repertoire of

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<sup>25</sup> V. ȘTEFĂNESCU, "Conferințe preoțești și cercuri religioase. Prasnice creștine", in *Renașterea*, 36/1933, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

the composers Dumitru Georgescu-Kiriac and Gavriil Muculescu<sup>28</sup>. Also, in the evening, the Vespers service was celebrated<sup>29</sup> which was attended by both the faithful from Uioara and a significant number of tourists at the local recreation centre<sup>30</sup>.

As in Bedeleu Parish, the meeting of the Aiud branch of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood enjoyed the exceptional musical performance of the mixed choir from Aiud. The members of the vocal formation, masterfully directed by retired Major Mihail Papiniu, framed the main sections of the organization's meeting through the beautiful musical moments prepared<sup>31</sup>. The artistic evolution of the vocal formation, as well as its purpose in the context of the activities of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood, were highlighted in the press of the time with selected words of appreciation: "The F.O.R. Choir proved to be the most precious means of elevation in the action started by the Brotherhood, being also a proof of what solidary devotion can do for the faith and the Church"<sup>32</sup>.

The branch of the Aiud Archdiocese of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood continued its cultural-religious activity in the countryside and the following period. Shortly after, on September 8, 1933, the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, the members of the organization and the choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish were present in the Măgina Parish, pastored by priest Candin Suci. Here, they carried out a program that awakened religious and national-patriotic consciousness. The Holy Liturgy on the

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28 \*\*\* " 'Frăția Ortodoxă Română' în stațiunea balneară Uioara" ..., p. 4.

29 \*\*\* "Știri diferite. Uioara", în *Universul*, 231/1933, p. 8.

30 \*\*\* " 'Frăția Ortodoxă Română' în stațiunea balneară Uioara" ..., p. 4.

31 \*\*\* "Știri diferite. Uioara", în *Universul*, 231/1933, p. 8.

32 \*\*\* " 'Frăția Ortodoxă Română' în stațiunea balneară Uioara" ..., p. 4.

day of the holiday was performed by Archbishop Iosif Pop, parish priest Candin Suciú and priest Emil Felea (from Bedeleu Parish)<sup>33</sup>.

The liturgical responses were given by the members of the mixed choral ensemble of the Parish of Aiud, led with artistic refinement by conductor Mihail Papiniu. In the teaching speech delivered on this occasion, Archpriest Iosif Pop emphasised the fundamental importance of cultivating children's religious education right from the heart of the family<sup>34</sup>. During the evening conference organised by the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood in the town of Măgina, the members of the mixed choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish, which would also accompany the organization this time on the occasion of the activity carried out in the Archdiocese, gave a special religious concert<sup>35</sup>.

The pastoral-missionary and cultural-religious activity carried out within the framework of the Aiud Archdiocese through the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood enjoyed broad appreciation in the pages of secular publications of the time. The action started in the localities near the city of Aiud. It was cataloged in the "Universal" newspaper as "a lively action in the heart of the population" and "an example worthy of imitation."<sup>36</sup> All these words highlighted the missionary zeal and apostolic zeal that Archpriest Iosif Pop cultivated in the bosom of the Orthodox communities on the radius of the Archdiocese, as well as the tireless work that the first shepherd of the Aiuden Orthodox exercised for the propagation of the right faith and the national identity of the Transylvanian Romanians.

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33 \*\*\* "Conferințe preoțești și cercuri religioase. Cerc religios și F.O.R. în parohia Măgina (prot. Aiud)", in *Renașterea*, 39/1933, p. 5.

34 \*\*\* "Conferințe preoțești și cercuri religioase...", p. 5.

35 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

36 \*\*\* "Știri diferite. Aiud. Activitate culturală"..., p. 10.

The presence of the members of the local branch of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood was also enjoyed by the right-wing believers from Cetea Parish, located at the foot of the Apuseni Mountains. On the occasion of the September 17, 1933, demonstration, all the priests from the Orthodox Archdiocese of Aiud were invited to participate. This time, F.O.R. activity was also artistically embellished by the evolution and musical performance of the Aiud Orthodox Parish choir members. The vocal formation offered the answers to the Holy Liturgy, and in the evening, they will perform a special religious concert and a cultural session<sup>37</sup>. The cultural-religious events started by the Aiud branch of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood continued in the spring of 1934. On March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, the section of the Archdiocese Aiud organized a cultural-religious conference and a musical-religious concert in the hall celebrating the military command of Aiud. An extraordinary moment was the lecture by priest Prof. Dr. Liviu Galaction Munteanu, a teacher at the Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj, who held the conference entitled "Christianity and modern culture."<sup>38</sup>

During his lecture, Father PhD Professor Liviu Galaction Munteanu emphasised the importance of religion and culture in the Christian's life, at the same time highlighting the danger of disregarding faith in exchange for cultural values<sup>39</sup>. The lecture by Father PhD Professor Liviu Galaction Munteanu was appreciated for a long time by the large audience in the festive hall of the military headquarters in Aiud. The conference, of high quality in terms of substance and form, represented the clergy and believers presenting a genuine course in spirituality and culture,

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> \*\*\* "F.O.R. La Aiud", in *Reașterea*, 14-15/1934, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.



taught in the context of the confessional-national affirmation and (re)definition of the Romanians of Aiuden. In the last part of the event, there was a special concert of religious music, an artistic moment that crowned the conference of Father PhD Professor Liviu Galaction Munteanu on a high note<sup>40</sup>.

A culminating moment of the events held by the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood in the Archdiocese of Aiud is represented by the organization of the first annual diocesan congress in Aiud. The general meeting, held on November 18, 1934, had the purpose of highlighting the activity of all the archdiocese branches, presenting the experiences acquired and the achievements achieved, as well as analysing the proposals regarding the intensification and coordination of future local meetings<sup>41</sup>.

A few days after the meeting of the diocesan section of the F.O.R. at Aiud, the first reactions and words of thanks were made public due to the excellent organization enjoyed by the event. Prime Minister Gheorghe Tătărescu expressed his appreciation to the organisers, assuring the parish community of Aiud of all support in building the new Orthodox Church in the locality. Also, Minister Alexandru Lapedatu, in a similar note of gratitude, affirmed the fact that he will permanently campaign for the promotion and dynamism of the activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> \*\*\* "F.O.R. Secția Cluj. Comunicat", in *Renașterea*, 31-32/1934, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> \*\*\* "F.O.R. Guvernul și Frăția ort. rom.", in *Renașterea*, 48/1934, p. 3.

## **5 The evolution and cultural-missionary role of the Orthodox Parish Choir of Aiud**

The choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish has carried out a remarkable musical-artistic activity since its establishment, representing an "ambassador" of Orthodoxy and Church tradition both during the developments within the local meetings of the Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood and on other occasions. Unfortunately, there have also been periods of inactivity in the history of the vocal formation. Thus, in the spring of 1938, in the Minutes drawn up at the end of a meeting of the Parish Council, the intention to re-establish the parish choir was announced at the insistence of Archpriest Iosif Pop. Archpriest of Aiud, alongside Colonel Ioanițescu and Sp. Cialăcu, the head of the Aiud Station, was committed to identifying solutions and interceding for the urgent re-establishment of the choral formation<sup>43</sup>.

The Aiud Orthodox Parish Choir immediately resumed its missionary activity shortly after the call of Archpriest Iosif Pop. The re-establishment of the ensemble is confirmed by the presence of the vocal formation at the consecration ceremony of the Orthodox Church in the town of Rimetea on June 18, 1939. Here, the choir offered the liturgical responses during the Holy Hierarchal Liturgy officiated by Bishop Nicolae Colan of Vad, Feleacul and Cluj<sup>44</sup>. A year later, the Orthodox choir of Aiud is mentioned on the occasion of the funeral service of Colonel Mihail

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<sup>43</sup> APOA2, Register of Minutes from the Assembly and the Parish Council meetings, 1927-1963, Minutes, March 20, 1938, unregistered document, p. 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> N. RADU, "Sfințirea bisericei din Rimetea-Alba", in *România*, 379/1939, p. 8.

Georgescu, the chief mayor of the city. The vocal formation offered the liturgical responses during the ceremony, this time being mentioned as conductor the priest V. Ștefănescu<sup>45</sup>.

An essential mention regarding the activity of the choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish dates back to the spring of 1947. On February 16, on a Sunday, Bishop Nicolae Colan of Cluj officiated the Holy Hierarchal Liturgy and delivered the homily in the chapel on the premises of the High School from Aiud. The liturgical responses were given by the Parish choral formation in a "beautiful, neat" way<sup>46</sup>, according to the description in the diocesan magazine "Renașterea". The choir continued its musical-church activity in the following years. In 1958, we identified a mention of the reorganization in a new form of vocal formation. The choral ensemble was under the coordination of the conductor Dr Mețu and began its activity under the new formula, most likely in December of 1958, with the beginning of the celebration of holy services in the new Church<sup>47</sup>.

## Conclusions

During the nine centuries of Hungarian rule, the Orthodox Romanians of Aiuden professed true faith without pretence. The historical context, however, was unfavourable to the support of the ancestral Church. The right-wing community here was deprived of the possibility of administrative organization and the building of its place of worship. The national-state unification from 1918

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<sup>45</sup> \*\*\* "Moartea colonelului dr. Mihail Georgescu, primarul orașului Aiud", in *România*, 774/1940, p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> \*\*\* "Vizitație canonică la Aiud", in *Renașterea*, 9/1947, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ioan BOGDAN, *Corul în istoria Parohiei "Sfinții Trei Ierarhi"*, May 14, 2022, unregistered document, p. 1.

generated a favourable climate for establishing the first Parish and the first Orthodox Archdiocese of Aiud.

In the interwar period, church life in the sphere of the Aiud Archdiocese saw an intense revitalisation, with priest Iosif Pop managing to translate into action the enthusiasm of the 16 believers who formed the parish community of Aiud at the beginning. An essential missionary vector in terms of dynamising pastoral-missionary activities within the new Archdiocese is represented by the lay organization "Romanian Orthodox Brotherhood".

The movement of Transylvanian intellectuals, which appeared at the initiative of Professor Sextil Pușcariu, increased and intensified the cultural-religious actions in the Aiud Archdiocese, carried out under the careful coordination of Archpriest Iosif Pop. The activities constituted an impetus for fraternal cooperation between clerics and believers to cultivate religious consciousness and the spirit of national tradition.

A vital role in church activity from 1922 to 1940 belonged to the choir of the Aiud Orthodox Parish. Established shortly after the organization of the local branch of the F.O.R., the vocal ensemble represented a cultural-missionary propaganda tool through the extraordinary choral-artistic evolution supported in numerous localities.

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