# THE ROLE OF SAINT ANTHIMOS THE IVIRITE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN CULTURE

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Abstract. The study presents the life and works of Saint Anthimos the Ivirite interpreting the events of his life and structuring his works into relevant categories and indicating the impressive achievements as priest, moral teacher, typographer, and polyglot. This interpretation emphasizes the role of Saint Anthimos the Ivirite in the development of the Romanian language and Romanian culture. The Didaches (The Teachings) of Anthimos the Ivirite, were extremely valuable in their content, and had also an obvious social character. Through these writings certain mores of society were condemned, such as the injustice to which the peasants were subjected because of their boyars, along with the condemnation of the sins which he determinedly criticized: the dishonoring of the parents by the children, the dishonoring of the Church figures by the members of the "flock", the frequent presence in the drinking houses, the curses, the failure to comply to the respect for Sundays and holidays. The Didaches of Saint Anthimos represent the moral attitude stand that the author infuses in the homily or expresses instead of the usual homily, obtaining a lively sermon, related to everyday life. The name of Saint Anthimos the Ivirite remained inscribed in the Romanian consciousness as a founder of the Romanian Church. This way, Saint Anthimos contributed to the deep foundations of the Romanian culture, not only in what concerns his exceptional discourse, nor solely through the development of a beautiful and expressive Romanian language, but mainly due to the profoundly moral and patriotic contents that he sustained and infused into the religious and cultural activities of the time.

**Keywords**: Saint Anthimos the Ivirite, Romanian language, Romanian Church, publications, Romanian culture.

Saint Anthimos the Ivirite was probably born in 1650 in Georgia (Ude town, Meskheti region, Iviria).

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Baptizing him with the name of the Saint Apostle Andrew, his parents, John and Mary, brought him up in godliness and true belief.

He was taken at an early age into slavery by the Turks, at Constantinople, young Andrew has proven very soon the sharpness of mind, learning easily Greek, Turkish, old Church Slavonic, Arabic and, later, Romanian language.

When he escaped from the Turkish slavery, he lived by the Ecumenical Patriarchy studying numerous disciplines among which the art of wood carving, the art of painting, the art of embroidery and calligraphy. Around the years 1690, the true believer voyvod Constantin Brâncoveanu<sup>1</sup> brought him into Wallachia, and there he became an apprentice typographer former bishop of Huşi Mitrofan in Snagov Monastery, where he became a monk and then ordained priest in 1691.

The first book printed by Anthimos the Ivirite was *The Teachings of Vasile Macedoneanu to His Son Leon*, and it was followed by *The Holy Service of Saint Paraschiva and Saint Grigore of Decapole* (1692) and also *The Romanian Psalter* (1694).

Afterwards, he was nominated as abbot of Snagov Monastery in the summer of 1694 by the elder Metropolitan Theodosies, and as an abbot, in the first five years in function he printed 15 works: seven in Greek, five in Romanian, one in Old Church Slavonic, one in Slavonic and Romanian and one in Greek and Arab. Amongst the most important apprentices whom he formed there are Mihail Ştefan and Gheorghe Radovici.

The most fruitful period as a typographer he enjoyed in Bucharest among 1701 and 1705, where he printed as well 15 books: 11 in Greek, two in Romanian, one in Slavonic and Romanian and one in Greek and Arab.

During this period, in order to accomplish his cultural plans, Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu gathered under his patronage, brilliant Italian and Greek men of culture, next to renamed Romanian Orthodox scholars and hierarchs, reputed in the entire South-Eastern part of the continent and in the Near East. Among these personalities was also Sevastos Kiminites, former Professor and Rector at the Great School of the Ecumenical Patriarchy, Ioan Cariofil, he too former Professor at the same Great School of the Patriarchy, Ion Comnen, medical doctor and philosopher, Iacob Pylarino, medical doctor, Count Bartolomeo Ferrati, an excellent practicing medical doctor, vested with an amazing and pleasing elegance for the eyes of the Bucharest dwellers, Manu Apostol, businessman preoccupied to invest in the printing of the books, Ion Românul, a pseudonym under which was disguised the Italian Secretary Giovanni Candido Romano, Antonio Maria de Chiaro, the astute Secretary brought after 1709 all the way from Florence, the physicians Evanghelista Marignazzi, a good practicing medical doctor, who became later the doctor of the Tsar and Mihail Schendos van der Beck, an Aromanian despite his name, preoccupied with medicine and the riches of the Oltenia region, in Wallachia.

In 1705, abbot Anthimos of Snagov was elected Bishop of Râmnic, and he was ordained by the Metropolitan Theodosies of Hungary-Wallachia. As well, in this quality he proved the best qualities for that position in term of organizational abilities, and also cultural competences, for in only three years, he printed at the typography of Govora Monastery, nine books: three in Greek, three in Slavonic and Romanian and three in Romanian. By these three books in Romanian starts a series of Romanian prints which were to lead to the definitive triumph of the Romanian language in Church. Among the books printed under the coordination of Anthimos the Ivirite, we are mentioning here the most important ones:

- *The Teachings of Vasile Macedoneanul to His Son Leon* (1691, in Greek);
- The Holy Service of Saint Paraschiva and of Saint Grigore of Decapole (1692, in Romanian);
- *The Greek and Romanian Gospels* (1693);
- *The Psalter* (1694, in Romanian);
- *Anthologion* (1697);
- The Orthodox Confession of Petru Movilă (1699);
- The Iconostasis of Saint Mount Athos (1701, in Greek);
- *The Greek and Arab Liturgical Works* (1701, the first book published with Arabic characters in the world);
- *The Gospel* (1697);
- *The Akathist of the Mother of God* (1698);
- *Book or Light* (1699);
- *Christian Teachings* (1700);
- *The Flower of Gifts* (1701);
- *The Greek and Arab Breviary* (1702);
- *The New Testament* (1703):
- The Tome of Joy (1705, in Greek);
- *The Liturgical and the Euchologion* (1706);
- The Brief Teaching for the Mystery of Repentance (1705, original work);
- The Church Teaching for the Most Necessary and the Most Useful Things for the Learning of the Priests (1710, original work);
- Main Orders for the Entire Church Crowd, So That Each Priest and Each Deacon Would Keep Totally and Honorably the Duty of His Domain (1714, original work);
- *The Psalter* (1710);
- *Old Church Chants/ Oktoihos* (1712);

- *The Liturgical* (1713);
- *The Euchologion* (1713);
- *The Katabasia* (1714).

Through the 63 prints, which he worked for himself, which he coordinated and conducted, in different languages of a great diversity, through the numerous apprentices he formed, Anthimos the Ivirite is considered – next to the Deacon Coresi – the greatest typographer of the Romanian medieval culture. He had a distinct role in the complete and definitive introduction of the Romanian language at liturgy. Although Romanian language was not his native language, he succeeded to create a limpid liturgical Romanian language, which was understood by his contemporary fellow men and which is still in use nowadays.

Through his typographical activity, he sustained as well other Orthodox peoples, as he imprinted book in Slavonic for the Slavs, Greeks and Arabs (from the Patriarchy of Antioch). He was as well the author of a remarkable typographical multi-language book, The Greek and Arab Liturgical Works in 1701, which was one of the first books printed with mobile letters in the world and with Arabic characters<sup>2</sup>.

In 1699, Anthimos the Ivirite sent one of his best apprentices, the hypodeacon Mihail Ștefan, at Alba Iulia, where he printed a *Bucoavnă*, that is, an old Church book in Cyrillic, or a spelling book in Cyrillic and a Chiriacodromian, which is, a Book of Sermons, a Homiliary. Mihail Ştefan was sent by Anthimos, as well in his country of origin, Georgia, where, at Tbilisi, the hypodeacon set the bases of the first printer with Georgian characters in Anthimos' natal country.

Besides the printed works, we have from Anthimos the Ivirite also several manuscripts:

• The Versions of the Old and New Testament, that is "the faces of the famous men from the Holy Scripture, Bible and Liturgical Works and a short gathering of the histories that were taking place in their times...", with 22 sheets of paper, to which were added 503 portraits in medallion, 3 sketches and 8 drawings (in medallion, too), with characters from the Old Testament (Târgovişte, 1709)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In 1706, the same typographical installation with Arabic characters was gifted to the Patriarch Atanasie Dabas, who set it up and running at Alep.

The original manuscript is at Kiev, and in Romani there is also a copy, realized to the middle of

the 18<sup>th</sup> century by psalm reader Popa Flor.

- Didaches his homiletics work –, including 28 homilies (for various holidays) and 7 occasional speeches, a work which places Anthimos the Ivirite, without any doubt, amongst the greatest Christian preachers of all times.
- 2. The Didaches (The Teachings) of Anthimos the Ivirite, were not only extremely valuable by their theological content, but they had also an obvious social character, and through these writings certain mores of society were condemned, such as the injustice to which the peasants were subjected because of their boyars, along with the condemnation of the sins which he determinedly criticized: the dishonoring of the parents by the children, the dishonoring of the Church figures by the members of the "flock", the frequent presence in the drinking houses, the curses, the failure to comply to the respect for Sundays and holydays.

The Didaches of Saint Anthimos represent a moral attitude stand, which is still relevant nowadays. The author infused moral teachings in the homily or expressed those instead of the usual homily, obtaining a lively sermon, related to everyday life, meant to whip and correct the state of affairs that contravenes to the Christian morals and social ethics<sup>4</sup>. We are presenting as following a few of the remarkable teachings of Anthimos the Ivirite.

#### Thus:

- Saint Anthimos confesses that his **purpose was to teach everyone from the small ones to the big ones**<sup>5</sup> and "listen all the good advice and all the useful advice for this obedience is not to me, but to Christ..."
- In proclaiming the word of the Liturgical Work each shepherd has the duty to tend to the salvation of each believer, according to the age, social state and moral state of each man. "With wisdom to rule men, offering teachings to all after their age and state, for as the diseases are of many kinds and they are not to be cured all with the same kind of medicine, so also one cannot teach all, appease and strengthen all, with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See G. Strempel, *Introducere* in *Antim Ivireanul*. *Opere*, Bucharest, Ed. Minerva, 1972, p. VI.

The mission to teach and guide the others on the path of redemption, all the believers disregarding their age, was confessed by the Saint Hierarch when he was ordained as Metropolitan of Hungary-Wallachia: "If you did not know so far and there was no one to teach you, now you shall know that I have this business with all the people from Wallachia, from the smallest one to the biggest one and until the babies except the pagans and those who are not of the same law as us..." (A. Ivireanul, *Didahiile*, Chiṣinău, Ed. Litera, 1998, p. 31).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

the same kind of teachings: a different teaching is necessary for a man and another for a woman; one for the old and one for the young; one for the rich and one for the poor ...."<sup>7</sup>. The "soul shepherd is responsible for the salvation of all believers entrusted to him"... as "sheep hang on my throat your souls and from me are all to be reclaimed"<sup>8</sup>;

- We are all call to salvation, indifferently of age, but we have to fulfill the will of God for the acquiring of the eternal life: "And we all have the duty small and big, man and woman, children and girls, old and young, married and unmarried, to do three things: to confess ourselves...to fast and to give alms..."<sup>9</sup>;
- The shepherds have the duty to teach and to scold, always with love, in order to strengthen the ones who have lost their way: "Anyone after their age and after custom... must be rested with the teachings, with the rod he holds in his hand, that is, the mastery and the gift of the Holy Spirit...";
- The presence in the Holy Church brings many benefits to these who come in Sundays and feasts at the meeting with Christ the Savior during Holy Liturgy. If we cannot succeed to bring our children to Church at least when we come from the Holy Liturgy we should "not come out empty, but we should do as the hedgehog, which, after going to the vineyard first he makes his fill with grapes and then he shakes the vine and grapes fall on the ground and he is wallowing in them and they stick in his thorns so that he can take them to his offspring. So we should us take all to our children and to all who did not come to Church the words we have heard from the Holy Scriptures...so that we could feed them too with the nourishment for the soul"<sup>11</sup>, and thus be "diligent and not lazy to His commands"12;
- Saint Anthimos praises and cherishes in his homilies virginity which "is more honest than all the riches hidden under the mountains or than all that go around the whole world",13;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 133.

Ibidem, p. 32.

Ibidem, p. 102.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 133.

Ibidem, p. 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53.

- The honoring of the parents in body and soul is often emphasized by Saint Anthimos. "Let us honor our parents, as well those who gave life to us, as those of the soul, who are the pious, the monks, and the devoted priests." Sin and lawlessness were whipped by the power of the word of Saint Anthimos. "...Our parents we scold and beat up; the elderly we disgrace, the lords and the boyars we curse, the hierarchs of the Church we do not respect, we gossip against the monks and the priests we revile...." 15:
- Saint Hierarch **urges that the parents**, regardless of their material or social status, to **dedicate a child from their own families to the worship of God**, for that the servants of God to be more numerous and well prepared for the preaching of the Scripture of the Gospels of Our Savior Christ. "See thus, now, willing and Christian love, see the warmth in the heart, see the zeal. Whoever lives now, in these times, either among the rich ones or among the poor, even if he has 100 sons, is called to give one to God." The priesthood mission is "to make worthy all from the people to live a honest clean and sinless life" 17;
- The sermon of Saint Anthimos, uttered from the height of the metropolitan pulpit and addressed to all from the boyar to the simple men from the people, answered to a stage when the good measure, the common sense, the correctness, were cast away from the souls of the people by the suspect robberies, moral decay, and by endless intrigues and calumnies. For this reason, he pities the people, the country, for the "troubles that come from abroad, the thefts, the robberies, the slavery, the heavy and unbearable dues." In almost every sermon he talks about the "loathers and the needs surrounding us", "all suffer, all are rascals, all moan under the heavy yoke of the need"! Anthimos cries most painfully when he notices, in awe, that the very being of the whole nation was in danger "we are the ones who suffer all such unbearable loathing and stay in dare situations almost ready to perish in need and misfortunes" 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Augustin Pănoiu, *Geniul limbii române, descoperit în predica mitropolitului Antim*, "Lumina", newspaper, September 26, 2011.

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- 3. Besides his main work (The Didaches), Saint Anthimos the Ivirite remained inscribed as author of some remarkable achievements of the Church due to the series of encouragements, admonishments and instructions present in his thought and emphasized sermons not only in his works. A few examples:
  - "Let us not taint our holy baptism with the sins", that is, "let us not slide with our being toward the vain things of this world, for all is temporary and all is deceitful. Let us defend ourselves of killing, fornication and lechery, going on the binge or taking up bad habits. Let us defend ourselves from keeping grudge to one another, selling our people by tales on one another, with the cruelty of heart and with the lack of mercifulness, in order to encroach upon one another and to impoverish one another", 19;
  - **Before we pray,** "it is appropriate first to leave aside the malignancy, the thefts, the wrong doings, the hatred, the dissension, the strife and only then pray, for then we are going to find out that the ears of God are listening",<sup>20</sup>;
  - Let us defend from pride. "Let us not gloat in our hearts, for the good we have done, for this way we are going to lose the rewards for our trouble and all in all let us defend ourselves from all the bad and inappropriate things that rot our souls and please our enemy, the devil, but we should only let ourselves desire always the good deeds, the deeds that please God, for only these are immortal and enable us be rewarded in heavens",<sup>21</sup>;
  - The true believer, even when he sins, "should never lose faith in the gift from God", but come and repent and be saved<sup>22</sup>;
  - Bereaved by the low moral and spiritual state of some of the Romanians, Saint Anthimos scolds some of his contemporary living peers: "Which is the people that curses like us, of law, of cross, of Eucharist, of the dead, of candle, of burial feast, of soul, of tomb, of boiled wheat memorial cake, of prosphoras, of the holy confession, of

<sup>20</sup> In *Teachings* at October 26, in the day of the Saint and great Martyr Dimitrie Fountainhead of secular holiness on the earthquake. <sup>21</sup> In *Teachings at Blessing*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>In Teachings at Blessing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> In Teachings at the Custom Officer's Sunday.

baptism, of marriage and of the mysteries of the holy Church and we curse each other and we dishonor our law, ourselves?! Who of the pagans does that, or who smuts their law as we do? I am wondering, are we not, by all that, cursing at God? Are we not, by all that, cursing at His commands?(...) The Churches we keep dirty as stables and we are going there, instead of listening to the mess and pray to God to forgive our sins, we laugh and wink at each other, worse than in the pub"<sup>23</sup>;

- Also, Saint Anthimos emphasizes and condemns the two-faced superficiality of the Christians: "here, [in Church,] hastily confess our wrong doings and we haste to communicate and then again we go about the usual sins and we take comfort in them, and joy and we sin as if we won a treasure and something very good and we vaunt, as David says: 'The sinner vaunts with the lusts of his soul and the one who does wrong well praises himself'. (...) Some arrive at confession only out the fear of some happenings, other only out of habit, others out of the shame of those around them, others out of the fear of their masters, others have two confessors, one in the countryside and one in town; and to the one in the county side confesses only the big sins, because he depreciates that one more, and to the confessor in town only the smaller ones for he is a trader and craftsman of the mystery of confession. And in other words none of us goes to confession freely, for devoutness and with decent thought, to leave our sins behind, but only for the eyes of the other people, for the reasons I have mentioned already before, until we communicate and then we return, forgive me, as the dog to his vomit, and as the sow to her filth and litter. (...) And when we are going to the confession we do not tell the confessor that we are eating the flesh and the work of our brother, the Christian, and we are drinking his blood and the sweat of his face with the rapacity and the greed we have, but we say that we have eaten at the prince's table, on Wednesdays and on Fridays, fish and crab and lobster and oil and that we drank wine" <sup>24</sup>
- 4. The scholar Florentin Del Chiaro, who had lived at the Court of the Princes Constantin Brâncoveanu and Ștefan Cantacuzino, tells us that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Ibidem

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> In the first *Teachings for the Palms Sunday*.

Metropolitan Anthimos the Ivirite founded in Bucharest "a great monastery with an exquisite Church with the All Saints feast". It is the Church from Anthimos Monastery as the believers called it during the ages. In the testament through which it ordered the administration of the monastic goods, the metropolitan shows the usual humility in his work and hopes: "We did not miss, after our powers, the teaching of the flock everything necessary and compulsory for salvation, as well we erected, added and adorned the holy Churches with devotion and holy diligence for we intended that after the numerous efforts, from the printing of the books and the alms of the good hearted Christians to found from the foundations a beautiful Church here at Bucharest. We have built around it ample hermitage and other places for the rest of the bishop and all those who would like to retreat to this holy sanctuary".

On account of the revenues generated by this monastery, Anthimos succeeded to put together a financing plan for a Testament, entitled *Teachings for the sanctuary of the holy monastery of all saints, heads 32*, envisioning the organization of an impressive social assistance work.

- 5. Aside a protector of the interests of the Church, Metropolitan Anthimos had proven to be also an enlightened patriot. He had defended Wallachian rights as a Metropolitan of Hungary and Wallachia, the rights on the manuscripts dedicated to the Holy Grave against the Greek hermits, who did not mention in their liturgies the metropolitan of the place. Even more, **Anthimos fought against the Turkish oppression** militating for the closeness to Peter the Great's Russia. When Constantin Brâncoveanu wanted him removed from the metropolitan chair, he defended himself in writing twice, in 1712 remaining hierarch until the martyrdom death of Brâncoveanu (1714) and under Ştefan Cantacuzino (1714-1715), too.
- 6. **Metropolitan Anthimos ended his life under tragic circumstances**, during the fall, in the year 1716. In December 1715, Mavrocordat, the first Phanariot governor arrived at the Throne of Wallachia. At Călugăreni, August 18, 1716, after a heated discussion with the Phanariot ruler, Saint Anthimos was accused of relations with the Austrians and of conspiracy against the Turks and the Phanariot ruler (suspected of preference for Pătrașcu Brezoianu as Prince).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Istoria Bisericii Române, vol. II, Bucharest, 1958, p. 167.

Thus, Anthimos was arrested and locked up in the dungeon of the palace. At the request of the Prince, the **ecumenical patriarchate and its synod** defrocked him, under the accusation that he became guilty in front of the Ottoman Empire and the Prince<sup>26</sup>. He was condemned to exile for life – to Saint Ekaterina Monastery in Sinai Mountain, where, unfortunately, he did not ever arrive. In order to preclude any upheaval of believers, Anthimos was seized and taken in the middle of the night in galore, under the guard of Turkish soldiers. He had never gotten to serve his sentence, for the Turkish soldiers accompanying him to the place of exile killed him, threw his body in Maritza river (or Tuncea river), next to Adrianople; at September 27, 1716, a date that remained among the most important ones in the calendar of our Church.

- 7. A series of **conclusions** are in order, eventually, after all the aspects presented here. Thus:
  - Saint Anthimos is considered the most important metropolitan of Wallachia in its entire history;
  - Through his entire pastoral, typographic, priesthood activity as bishop and metropolitan, Saint Anthimos embodied the **true shepherd** sets out his soul for the believers he guides: through the example of his life, through the moral and spiritual teachings and, especially, through his Final Will and Testament, through which he left his entire fortune for charity;
  - Although born in other lands, he identified with the people he served, for which he printed many books, contributing at the completion of the process of conducting the sermons in Romanian, for teaching Romanian and learning Romanian at the level of perfection, Anthimos left in his translations, his explanations, his didaches, devotion and confessional advice the most beautiful Romanian tongue.
  - Anthimos the Ivirite's *Didaches* emphasize his important **contribution** to **the development of the Romanian language.**

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> This unjust sentence was corrected, at the request of the Romanian Patriarchy, by Patriarch Athenagoras I, as late as March 8, 1966.

George Călinescu noticed that "Anthimos is an excellent orator and a complete stylist, with the gift to surprise the imagination, with suavity and lyrical exultation".

In a similar perspective, in the treaty to *The History of Romanian Literature*<sup>28</sup> Călinescu showed that "until then it was never delivered to the listeners, to the Prince, boyars, bishop and priests, a warmer or a more enlightening, a more poetic and a more eloquent word than that which the Georgian Anthimos pronounced in Romanian. His stylistic procedures, his comparisons and metaphors, his plastic images and the epithets place him among the great writers of our medieval literature". Mihail Sadoveanu considers the language spoken by Anthimos "maybe the most beautiful of among all the literary writings of the scholars of the time"<sup>29</sup>.

- Another exceptional work of the great hierarch was **the establishing of schools for the poor people,** where education was free of charge.
- Enlightened patriot and defender of the Christians in the Eastern Patriarchies, Metropolitan Anthimos paid with his life the audacity to stand against the Turks and against the first Phanariot Prince.
- All these considerations determined the **Saint Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church** to canonize him in 1992<sup>30</sup>. He is **commemorated** each year at the 27<sup>th</sup> of September.

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<sup>29</sup> Mihai Săsăujan, "Sfântul Ierarh Antim Ivireanul cu suflet de român", in *Lumina* newspaper, 27 September 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române*, Editura pentru literatură, Bucharest, 1968, p. 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Bucharest, 1962, p. 419.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Synod Act, 20 June. The official proclamation of the canonization. June 21, 1992.

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