

## **Viorel Rusu: The Maramureş Diocese of the Romanian Church United with Rome during the pastorate of Bishop Alexandru Rusu (1931-1948)**

Viorel Rusu is currently the director of the Maramureş County Museum of History and Archaeology, a position he has held since 2007, before being the director of the Maramureş County Directorate of National Archives, during 1998-2007, as well as archivist during 1996-1998. Viorel Rusu's fields of interest focus on political and religious life after the First World War until the 1970s, with an even more pronounced emphasis on the 4-6 decades of the twentieth century. Analyzing the geographical area on which the historian turns his attention, it can be seen the fact that Maramureş County is most often targeted in the studies published by him. Therefore, Viorel Rusu's doctoral thesis, the work entitled "The Maramureş diocese of the Romanian church united with Rome during the pastorate of Bishop Alexandru Rusu (1931-1948)" is part of the author's long-standing concerns, being a topic of interest his. Due to his experience as an archivist, but also as director of the National Archives, along with numerous studies related to political and religious life in Maramureş, the author is qualified to complete the proposed research.

The book covers the evolution of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Maramureş from its establishment in 1931 (with all the premises and details of the foundation) to the dissolution of the diocese in 1948, as a result of the forced conversion of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Community to Orthodoxy, a measure implemented by force by the communists.

The author's aim is to present the history of the almost two decades of existence of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Northern Transylvania, under the patronage of Alexandru Rusu, the historian stating that he chose this subject due to the fact that no thematic research had been conducted on the Diocese of Maramureş between the years 1930-1940. In order to achieve his goal, the author chose four objectives for the research, each of them being achieved in a distinct chapter.

An important reference point in the analysis of each scientific paper is represented by the number of research sources. Viorel Rusu's book totals a number of 1710 footnotes and a wide range of bibliographic sources, the author using only textual sources for his research. Starting with the original sources, Viorel Rusu researched numerous collections of documents, such as: *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, C.C. of the Romanian Communist Party*, these being found in Bucharest, the funds of the Communist Party and of the *SUBB – Historia, Volume 65, Number 2, December 2020*

Baia Mare mayor's office, the funds of the archdioceses, etc., in an attempt to outline the image of the church life in the Maramureş County. Viorel Rusu also uses a number of edited primary sources, such as *Almanacs*, *Diplomas*, *Bulletins*, *Censuses*, *Schematics*, *Periodicals*, or even *Memoirs* and *Journals*. Regarding the specialized literature, even if strictly related to the subject of the author's research there are not many studies, as he himself states this aspect, the number of over 100 papers consulted (books, doctoral theses, studies), demonstrates the extensive approach made by the author to offer a representation of the course of the diocese on as many levels as possible: organizational, social, economic, diplomatic, demographic, educational, etc.

The research methodology used by the author involves the reconstruction of the past based on sources: both primary and secondary. Viorel Rusu uses mainly analysis, both quantitative and statistical analysis, this aspect being best outlined when detailing the situation of the diocese, with the related parishes. Also, another method used by the researcher is the comparison, it being used in the presentation of the internal situation of the Romanian Church United with Rome, between the parishes for example, but also for a comparative presentation of the Greek Catholic Church with the Orthodox Romanian Church.

Structurally, the book contains four chapters, following a chronological thread, being preceded by a section which reviews the Historiography of the researched subject, and succeeded by Conclusions, Bibliography and Appendices. The author doubles the chronological structure of the chapters, adding a thematic one, each of them having in itself a distinct objective that helps to achieve the broader purpose of the research.

Therefore, in order to see whether the purpose of the book it has been achieved and the author's expertise has been accomplished, I consider it necessary to analyze the quality of the demonstration in all four chapters. The first chapter is an introductory one, acquainting the reader with the situation of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Community from Maramureş since the 17th century, exposing the premises for the foundation of the diocese in Northern Transylvania. The second chapter is the most extensive in the research, following both the reconstruction of the diocese in its first decade of existence and the relationship with the Orthodox Community from the territory, and last but not least the very detailed presentation of the situation of the archpriestship in the diocese. We are therefore talking about a very large volume of information, but which the author manages to integrate in an organic way in the content of his research. Chapter three surprises the diocese between 1940-1944, exposing the difficulties that the Church went through in the years of the

Second World War, being under Hungarian occupation, dealing with a wide range of aspects: legal, educational, demographic and political. The last chapter captures a short chronological interval, 1945-1948, but abundant in events. And within this thematic unit of the book, Viorel Rusu makes all the necessary steps to offer an accurate reconstruction of the past through the scientific methods used. The purpose of the research is achieved through a broad exposition of specific, concrete problems, all included in a general framework, the latter having a straight line during the The Maramureş Diocese of the Romanian Church United with Rome.

Therefore, this book is a monograph that captures almost two decades of life of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Maramures, from its inception until 1948. Framing the work in a certain genre is not an easy task due to the complexity of research. We are talking first of all about a monograph on ecclesiastical history, but we also find elements related to the history of religious, social or even cultural life. The research undertaken by Viorel Rusu changes the local historiographical landscape, leading to the completion of the first monograph on the United Diocese of Northern Transylvania. The intended audience of the book consists primarily of specialists of the subject, researchers who have addressed this topic in certain studies, but at the same time, I believe that the Vasile Rusu's book can be attractive to a wider audience, such as students, or people interested in the subject.

The aspect that ensures the attractiveness of the book to a wider audience is the author's style of approach. Beyond the orthographic and grammatical accuracy, Viorel Rusu uses an accessible language, this aspect not affecting the scientificity of the book, managing to combine these two elements very well.

In conclusion, I encourage you to read this book because it is an important step forward for the historiography of the ecclesiastical history of the Romanian Church United with Rome. The work is very complex, dealing with various aspects, of course related to the main topic, going from the general to the particular and offering a lot of details, but still managing to remain easily readable and comprehensible.

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