
Romania: “With you at home”, the Catholic Church on the Internet. The creation of Maria TV

An image from the "Catholic Hour" broadcast and, below, a snapshot of the Mass celebrated last week in the courtyard of St. Joseph's Cathedral in Bucharest. "Caritas Christi urget nos" says St. Paul in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: the Catholic Church in Romania was driven by the love of Christ to find solutions during the pandemic to meet the needs - spiritual needs in particular - of the faithful, to remain close to the people and to preserve the unity of the ecclesial community. Thus a Catholic television channel and a video program on social networks were launched, Sunday Mass appeared on national television, priests learned to use new technologies, bishops were more present on social networks and Chrism Mass was celebrated online. In addition, catechesis, meetings and formation courses continued on the Internet. **Not even at the time of Ceausescu...** The lockdown imposed by Romania's government authorities, as has happened in other countries, prevented the faithful from participating in the Eucharist in places of worship for more than two months, a painful experience that had spared the Romanians even under Ceausescu's dictatorship. This brought the Church into a dramatic situation: without a Catholic TV and without Sunday Mass on national TV, Mass attendance could take place only through the only Catholic radio, Radio Maria, with limited coverage in the territory, and online. Moreover, in Romania, although 70% of all households have internet connection, only half the population aged 55 and over accesses the web. *But the public television station TVR immediately accepted to broadcast Mass from St. Josef Roman Catholic cathedral in the capital, on feast days and Sundays, using the TV studio of the archdiocese of Bucharest.* Now, TVR3 also offers the opportunity to follow Sunday Mass celebrated according to the Byzantine rite, from the Greek-Catholic cathedral of Blaj, seat of the major archbishopric of the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania. **Inauguration for Easter.** Despite the cooperation of public television, a Catholic TV channel proved to be ever more indispensable. Thus, on April 11, Easter Eve,

the first Catholic television in Romania, Maria TV, started cable transmission,

an initiative of the Radio Maria Romania Association. "The Catholic TV broadcasting project was already on the agenda, but when the pandemic broke out things evolved in what I would define a providential manner. We thus started broadcasting on Easter Eve in the Latin rite, from the Roman-Catholic cathedral of Iasi", Father **Doru Popovici**, President of the organization, told SIR. In cooperation with various dioceses and eparchies in Romania, Maria TV now broadcasts Mass in the Latin and Byzantine rite every day from various cathedrals and churches in the country. It transmitted also the live broadcasts of the special moments of prayer led by Pope Francis, which reached world countries, with simultaneous translation. "We are still at the beginning, in the future we wish to develop our own productions and collaborate with other Catholic television channels", said Fr. Popovici, pointing out that Maria TV and Radio Maria Romania depend on the donations of listeners and viewers.



Immagine non disponibile

Catechesis, virtual pilgrimages. A further initiative in the media sector launched in response to the widespread confinement imposed by the pandemic is "The Catholic Hour": a video project inspired by the "Hour" of Venerable Fulton Sheen and promoted on social media by the Signis Romania Association, now at three "Hours" per day. Catechesis, virtual pilgrimages, broadcasts from the Romanian missions in Africa and the communities of the Romanian "diaspora", dialogues with the bishops, testimonies and stories of faith from families, young people, religious and priests, news from the world of culture, art and entertainment: all designed as an accompaniment in time of isolation, characterized by the motto "with you at home." "During his visit to Romania a year ago, Pope Francis encouraged the faith community in the country to walk together, which is what Catholic Hour does for us. Catholics and Orthodox, lay people, priests, consecrated men and women, bishops, Romanians and Catholics of various ethnic groups and languages, people of all ages," said **Adriana Racasan**, producer of the program "Catholic Hour" and coordinator of Pope Francis' visit to Bucharest in May 2019. **Celebrations and prayers.** The Catholic Church in Romania also lived powerful moments of prayer and communion. In fact, at the request of the Romanian Episcopal Conference, Romania was consecrated at the shrine of Fatima, along with other countries. This historical event was broadcast live on various TV networks, with support from the Archdiocese of Bucharest. On the eve of the Feast of the Annunciation, a triduum prayer of the whole rosary was promoted throughout the Romanian Church, with the participation of the Roman and Greek-Catholic bishops of Bucharest, Iasi and Cluj-Napoca. Furthermore, in response to the Holy Father's invitation, during the month of May, the bishops and priests of St. Joseph's Cathedral in Bucharest led the daily prayer of the rosary, transmitted on the cathedral's website. In addition, since the beginning of the pandemic, the Archbishop of Bucharest, Msgr. Aurel Perca, celebrated Mass in the cathedral every Friday at noon for all those who were in the front line against Covid-19, and prayed for those who lost their lives to the coronavirus. **Life goes back to normal.** Religious services in open spaces in Romania were resumed almost a month ago, with an increasing number of faithful attending Mass and the sacraments, using all the necessary medical precautions required. In a few days the state of alert will end and it is yet unclear whether it will be extended by civil authorities. Nonetheless,

the Catholic Church is slowly returning to her ordinary life:

[the bishops visit congregations, in Bucharest Archbishop Percha administered Confirmation in the Spanish-speaking Catholic community, and the Greek-Catholic Church announced the consecration, on June 21, of two bishops elected by the Synod and confirmed by Pope Francis: Msgr. Calin Ioan Bot, Auxiliary Bishop of the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Lugoj, and Msgr. Cristian Dumitru Crisan, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia and Fagaras.](#)

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