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## Contemporary Virtuous Romanians - Father Gheorghe Calciu

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**Father Gheorghe Calciu (November 23, 1925 - November 21, 2006)**

*I spoke of Your testimonies before kings, and I was not ashamed (Psalm 118:46).*



Father Gheorghe Calciu was born in the Danube Delta, in Mahmudia, where the propitious blend between the land's richness and the sky's beauty reflected into the pious hearts of the countrymen. That blessed place, which Father loved tenderly until the end of his life, fostered the love for God and nation in his soul —a love which later brought him as far as the confession of martyrdom.

Since the time he was in school and while yet a student at the Spiru Haret High School in Tulcea, Father chose to serve the suffering; exceptionally gifted in literature, famous among colleagues and teachers, who were predicting a bright career in literature for him, he decided, to everyone's amazement, to go to medical school to help those in pain.

Yet his calling was a different one: he was to become a physician of souls after a spiritual "internship" of twenty-one years in the communist prisons.

Arrested in 1948 when he was a third year student at Bucharest University's School of Medicine, he was interrogated in the Security's basements and then sent to the

Pitești Prison, where the Christian youth was put through the dehumanizing experiment of re-education. Under the devastating realm of torture and fear, his soul was broken, but only for a while. At the so-called re-education trial of 1956, with a martyr's courage, Gheorghe Calciu rejected the Security's frame-up, pointing at the real authors. The punishment was detention in the *casimca*, a sort of an underground vault meant for extermination. But God saved him, and after his release in 1964, he attended the Literature and Theology Schools in Bucharest, becoming a priest and a professor at the Theological Seminary.

In 1978, when the atheist authorities ordered the demolition of the Enei Church in Bucharest, Father Gheorghe Calciu's voice rose with the strength of that of the prophets of old, reproaching the wrong-doing and calling people to faith. His "Seven words for the youth" uttered then on the porch of the Radu-Vodă Monastery became the indictment counts for a new conviction. Pulled from the midst of his students and family, he was again sent down into the hell of communist prisons with a ten-year sentence.

Through pressure from the Romanian Diaspora in the West, he was released in 1984 and sent into exile in America. After a few years of difficulty and deprivation, Father managed to set up an Orthodox community in Washington DC akin to those in which the first Christians lived, when "those who believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4: 32).

Father Calciu's attempt to return to Romania for good after 1989 did not succeed. Perhaps because "no prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24). But his last wish of being buried in his native land was fulfilled. His much-tried body rests now in the cemetery of the Petru-Vodă Monastery, and his soul rejoices together with the Romanian martyrs in the ineffable light of Christ's Kingdom.