



Doctoral School of Theology

Doctoral Field: Theology

DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

**INCLUSION OF PARISHIONERS WITH
PHYSICAL DISABILITIES WITHIN THE
ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
COMMUNITIES.**

ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL.

PHD STUDENT:

MIHAI, LUNGU

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR:

ASSOC. PROF. PHD HABIL. CIPRIAN IULIAN, TOROCZKAI



CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	5
1. Argument.....	5
2. Definitions	6
3. Presentation of the research topic	8
4. The stage of scientific research.....	8
5. The purpose of the research.....	12
6. Research objectives	12
7. Methodology.....	13
8. Brief presentation of the work's chapters.....	14
CHAPTER I. Moral-Christian guidelines for the assumption of disability/illness and Christian life by parishioners with disabilities/illness.	16
I.1. Acceptance of disability/illness, suffering, hardship by parishioners with disabilities/illnesses.	17
I.2. Knowledge of God and knowledge of self by parishioners with disabilities/diseases.	23
I.3. Improving the lives of parishioners with disabilities/diseases by reading religious books, praying and fasting.	29
Conclusions Chapter I	35
Chapter II. The special inclusion needs of parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Case Study.	38
II.1 Research presentation	39
II. Results of the case study	47
II. 2.1 Relating parishioners with physical disabilities to the local Orthodox Christian community (parish).	47
II.2.2 The relationship of physically disabled parishioners with Orthodox clergy.	59
II.2.3 The relationship of parishioners with physical disabilities with their peers, in general.	69
II.2.4 The relationship of parishioners with physical disabilities with God.....	76

II.2.5 Making churches accessible to the individual needs of parishioners with physical disabilities.	89
Conclusions Chapter II	94
Chapter III. Accessibility to the individual needs of parishioners with physical disabilities of the churches belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Archpriestship of Câmpulung Muscel, within the Archdiocese of Argeş and Muscel, Metropolis of Muntenia and Dobrogea. Case Study....	98
III.2.1 Individual analysis of the fulfillment of accessibility criteria to the individual needs of parishioners with physical disabilities of the churches belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Câmpulung Muscel Archpriestship.	105
III.2.2 General analysis of the fulfillment of accessibility criteria to the individual needs of parishioners with physical disabilities of the churches belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Câmpulung Muscel Archpriestship.	123
Conclusions Chapter III.....	134
Chapter IV. Measures for the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities, within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church.	136
IV.1 Making churches, administrative and social-cultural buildings of the Romanian Orthodox Church accessible for parishioners with physical disabilities.	137
IV.2 The participation of parishioners with physical disabilities in the services of the Romanian Orthodox Church.	158
IV.3 Activities in parishes / dioceses together with parishioners with physical disabilities.	163
IV.4 Organization of conferences / seminars / courses for the information and training of clergy and members of the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the special needs of parishioners with physical disabilities.	170
IV.5 Elaboration of a multi-year strategy of the Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities, within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church.....	175
IV.6 Good practices regarding the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities within religious communities.	186
Conclusions Chapter IV.....	194
FINAL CONCLUSIONS	199
BIBLIOGRAPHY	205
APPENDIX 1.....	217
APPENDIX 2.....	221
APPENDIX 3.....	225
APPENDIX 4.....	233

ARGUMENT

This scientific approach aims to make a contribution to improve the knowledge of the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church of the needs of parishioners with physical disabilities in Romania, so that they can be more easily integrated into their communities.

Mister. Assoc. Prof. Phd Habil. Ciprian Iulian TOROCZKAI, the scientific coordinator of the work, was involved in several projects aimed at the inclusion of people with disabilities in communities/society and wanted to continue these efforts by supporting this research project as well.

The undersigned, the author of the work, because of an accident in 1998, I use a wheelchair to get around. As a parishioner with physical disabilities, I faced many difficulties in the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but also in Romanian society. Having a long experience as a parishioner with physical disabilities, knowing very well the problems faced by parishioners with physical disabilities in their communities, I will deal in this work with certain aspects of the disability issue, which will help to understand and solve some problems that parishioners with physical disabilities face in the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

— „I give you a new commandment: that you love one another! Just as I have loved you, love also one another. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another” (*Jn 13, 34-35*)

— „Be kind to one another, tenderhearted” (*Eph 4, 32*)

— „a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan that torments me, so that I would not be too exalted. Yes, I should not be too exalted! Concerning this thing, I begged the Lord three times that it might depart from me, but he replied to me, «My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.» And so, it is with joy that I would rather (find) glory in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me” (*2 Co 12, 7-10*).

KEYWORDS: PARISHES, PHYSICAL DISABILITIES, INCLUSION, ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, COMMUNITIES.

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH THEME

Parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church are very little active in their communities. This phenomenon is not only found in parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but it is also found in the entire contemporary Romanian society¹. The social inactivity of these people resides in the fact that they encounter numerous physical and attitudinal barriers. This trend of social exclusion of people with disabilities does not happen only in Romania, but many problems that these people encounter are caused by local factors. In order to solve the issues in Romania, we need, first of all, a national approach².

Over the past 15 years, in Romania, people with disabilities have started to receive more attention from the public authorities and several laws have been adopted to support these people³. Unfortunately, due to the law-abiding mentality of the majority of the population, these laws are very little respected, both by public officials and other citizens. For the inclusion of people with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church and in contemporary Romanian society, people have to change their mindset through concrete measures taken by the Romanian Orthodox Church, public authorities, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, mass media, etc. In this paper we will focus on the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which we will analyze in detail.

¹ World Bank, *Diagnoza situației persoanelor cu dizabilități în România, Diagnoza situației persoanelor cu dizabilități în România – 2020*, Disponibilă: <http://anpd.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Diagnoza-situatiei-persoanelor-cu-dizabilitati-in-Romania.pdf>, accessed: 17.09.2022.

² *Ibidem*.

³ See Law 448/2006, Law 221/2010 and others.

THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Considering that in Romania no thorough research has been done up to this point on how parishioners with physical disabilities are integrated into the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church, it is necessary to develop more studies that reflect the real situation regarding the integration of these people in the life of the communities of which I am part. Through this work, we aim to discover, on the one hand, a series of aspects that generate social exclusion and, on the other hand, to come up with solutions for those situations that prevent parishioners with physical disabilities from being active in the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church..

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective no. 1 (O1): Identification and analysis of the inclusion needs of parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Objective no. 2 (O2): Proposing measures for the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE WORK

CHAPTER I

In Chapter 1 we present moral-Christian benchmarks for the assumption of disability/illness and Christian life by parishioners with disabilities/illness. For this chapter, we used general terms such as: "disabilities/diseases", respectively the phrase "parishioners with disabilities/diseases", since the term "disability" was introduced in the vocabulary only in the XX century AC and was not known by the holy fathers who lived until then. A large part of the chapter is based on the teachings of the holy fathers, who lived up to the XX AC century and they used terms such as: "disease", "bodily infirmity" etc., but these terms can also be applied to parishioners with disabilities. A first moral-Christian benchmark for the assumption of disability/illness is the acceptance of disability/illness, suffering and trouble by parishioners with disabilities/illness. A second Christian moral landmark is knowing God and knowing oneself. Another moral-Christian benchmark for assuming disability/illness is improving the lives of parishioners with disabilities, by reading religious books, praying and fasting.

CHAPTER II

In Chapter 2 we present a case study regarding the special needs of inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In this case study, a series of aspects regarding the special needs of inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities were investigated through the interview. A first aspect analyzed was the relationship of parishioners with physical disabilities with the local Orthodox Christian community (parish). By researching this relationship between parishioners with physical disabilities and members of the parish they belong to, several issues of interaction were highlighted. A second aspect analyzed was the relationship of parishioners with physical

disabilities with Orthodox clergy. Researching this aspect has highlighted a number of expectations of parishioners with physical disabilities towards Orthodox clergy. A third aspect analyzed was the relationship of parishioners with physical disabilities with peers in general. Considering that parishioners with physical disabilities do not live only in the local communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but experience relationships with the entire Romanian society, where there are citizens who also have other religious denominations or are atheists, we wanted to research this interaction as well, therefore we identified a number of positive and negative interactions. A fourth aspect analyzed was the relationship of parishioners with physical disabilities with God. This aspect is very important, because, as the Savior Jesus Christ said: "your Father knows what you need before you ask Him" (*Mt 6, 8*). Knowing this, many parishioners with physical disabilities that were interviewed confessed that they have a fairly close relationship with God, but naturally, the expectations of parishioners with physical disabilities are different and they were presented in the study. A fifth aspect analyzed was the accessibility of churches to the individual needs of parishioners with physical disabilities. A big problem facing parishioners with physical disabilities is making churches accessible to their individual needs, so research into this aspect has brought to light many of the problems these people face.

CHAPTER III

In Chapter 3, we present a case study that aims to identify the degree of accessibility to the individual needs of parishioners with physical disabilities of the churches belonging to the Romanian Orthodox Church in a Archpriestship, namely the Archpriestship of Câmpulung Muscel within the Archdiocese of Argeş and Muscel, Metropolis of Muntenia and Dobrogea. The access to the church for parishioners with physical disabilities, the accessibility of church spaces for parishioners with physical disabilities and the existence or non-existence of the sanitary group accessible to churches for parishioners with physical disabilities in the Câmpulung Muscel Archpriestship were analyzed in detail. Through this case study in the Archpriestship of Câmpulung Muscel within the Archdiocese of Argeş and Muscel, the Metropolitanate of Muntenia and Dobrogea, a series of inaccessibility, but also accessibility that the churches of this archdiocese have, has been identified. The case study was not only limited to the identification of access problems, but measures were also proposed to remedy the identified deficiencies.

CHAPTER IV

In Chapter 4 we present measures for the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church. These measures aim ways of making the churches, administrative and social-cultural buildings of the Romanian Orthodox Church accessible to parishioners with physical disabilities and the participation of these people in the services of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In addition to these, activities are proposed in parishes/diocese that can be organized including parishioners with physical disabilities. It is also proposed to organize conferences/seminars/courses for the information and training of clergy and members of the communities of the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the special needs of parishioners with physical disabilities and the development of a multi-year strategy of the Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities within the communities Romanian Orthodox Church. In addition, some good practices are presented regarding the inclusion of parishioners with physical disabilities, within some religious communities.