

## HEART, THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS IN THE PREACHING OF THE LOGOS

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Ioan Chirilă, *Scara Cuvântului. Eseuri omiletice*  
[The Ladder of the Word. Homiletic Essays]  
(Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2017).

Father Ioan Chirilă needs no introduction before the people of Cluj-Napoca. Minister of the Metropolitan Cathedral, professor of the Faculty of Theology, a well-known personality of the academic world and a voice of authority of the Orthodox Church, through his book *The Ladder of the Word. Homiletic Essays*, Father Chirilă offers a piece of his heart, of his thoughts and prayers to all those who, having listened to one of his sermons, either at the Cathedral or over the airwaves, would have liked to keep the Logos close a while longer through the words of their beloved preacher.

Preaching seems easy, but it is not. Not because mastering the skill of public speaking or the structuring of ideas might be impossible, but because, once in the pulpit, the preacher can no longer stand for his voice alone, but for the voice of Christ. The fact that the sermon is part of the Holy Liturgy and concludes the Liturgy of the Word, preparing the mind and soul for the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not a random arrangement. It is intended to stress the importance of preparation through the sharing of the words of the Gospel for the unification with Christ, the Eucharistic Logos, body and blood, to attain the promised salvation.

Publishing a book of sermons seems easy as well, but it is not. Not because drafting was difficult, especially for someone with the present author's experience, but because, once uttered, a sermon is like a bird enjoying the freedom of flight; laying it on the page bears the risk of caging it. Nevertheless, the text offered in *The Ladder of the Word* exhibits a characteristic freedom and dynamic, thanks to the author's style, which, as one goes through the pages, makes one feel as if one were in the midst of the crowd listening intently to every word uttered by this descendant of the Apostles.

The texts contained in the present volume consist of sermons given from the pulpit of the Cathedral between 2007 and 2015. The title, *Homiletic Essays*, is eminently fitting, as the author does not aim to follow a homiletic pattern, whether it be that of the thematic sermon, the exegetic homily, the panegyric, etc. The free spirit that he is known to be, Father Ioan Chirilă is at his best when he is not constrained by structures, forms, and rusty paradigms. The power of words in this volume resides in the intertwining of message and style. Metaphors are a constant presence, while epithets, similes, inversions, and rhetorical questions add a poetic touch to the theologically dense text.

Without any intention to use excerpts to convince the reader, we wish to highlight the distinct manner in which Father Chirilă makes his words sound fresh. The message that underlies them all is the invitation to prayer and to having a loving heart, to which purpose he often employs another figure of speech specific to church language, namely the invocation: 'our strength has left us, our understanding has left us, and the labours of disheartenment and despair are upon us. And so, we ask You, Who are the source of the joy and happiness of all, to rest upon us, strengthen us, guide us, so that, together with You, we may step into eternal life; having understood the grace and mercy of God and gained strength, let us cry onto all: *Come and see how wonderful the Lord in Trinity is*' (p. 135).