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## Contemporary Virtuous Romanians - Father Sofian Boghiu

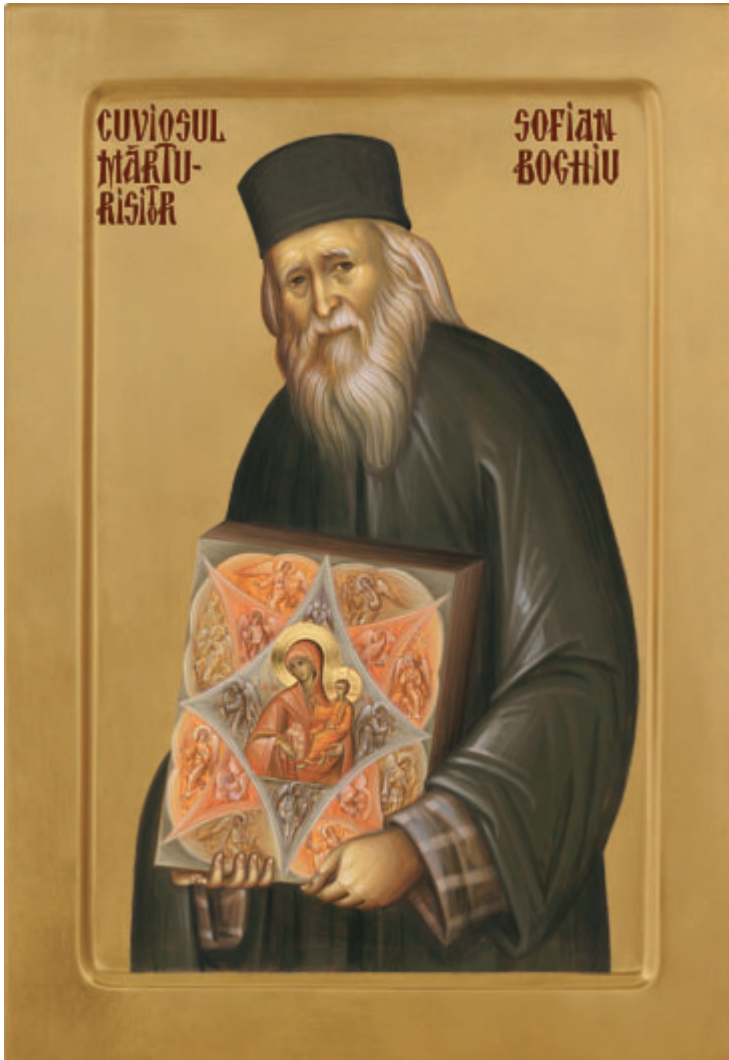
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**Father Sofian Boghiu (7 October 1912 - 14 September 2002)**

*Blessed are the blameless in the way who walk in the law of the Lord (Psalm 118:1).*



**Father Sofian Bogiu was chosen by God from an early age to serve His Church with a triple blessing of gifts: the gift of singing, the gift of icon painting, and the gift of speaking. Using his talents with humility during his luminous ninety-year sojourn on earth, he fulfilled the sacramental words of the Divine Liturgy, “Let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.”**

Born in Bessarabia and entering the monastic life as a child, Serghie (his baptismal name) eagerly learned church singing at the Dobruşa Monastery’s school. Later he studied Scripture at the Cernica Seminary, painting at the Art Academy in Bucharest, and finally the highest mysteries of the Divine Economy at the School of Theology in Bucharest.

Tonsured a monk at the Dobruşa Monastery in Bessarabia, he took refuge in the Antim Monastery in Bucharest in 1940 when the Russians took the land between the Dniester and Prut Rivers from Romania. Here, he enthusiastically took part in the *Rugul Aprins* (The Burning Bush) movement—the spark meant to rekindle the Jesus Prayer. The spiritual experiences he had at that time forever sealed in Father Sofian’s heart the love for this hesychastic practice, which he later recommended to his spiritual children, saying that “The Jesus Prayer seems to have been made by God especially for today’s modern life. No matter how rushed we are, we can say from time to time for as long as we can, ‘Jesus, have mercy on me!’ This way, despite the hustle and bustle of our lives, despite all our unrest, we can gain a most satisfactory nourishment from this prayer.”

Father Sofian’s participation to the *Rugul Aprins* meetings was the main charge for his 1958 arrest and the sixteen-year sentence to forced labor due to “hostile mystical activities.” The years spent in prison—in Aiud, Jilava, and the Salcia Labor Camp—until his release in 1964 were for him, as he himself confessed, composed of days “happier than those on the outside, because happiness comes from within, not from outside.” He further recalled, “In the labor camp, just as it had been in our prison cells, besides the unforgiving eyes of the guards spying on us with hatred, the Heavenly Father’s all-seeing eye and benevolent heart guarded us day and night. It was from Him that we received the patience and peace we felt throughout our imprisonment.”

Three years after his release, Father Sofian returned to the Antim Monastery, and the light of his spiritual wisdom and experience came out from under the basket to guide the Romanian people through the atheist darkness. For over thirty years, with kindness, patience, and endless love, Father Sofian completed here the last

and most meticulous work that God had reserved for him—the former accomplished painter was now imprinting Christ’s image into people’s hearts with the pen of Grace and the colors of the divine teachings. He bore a bloodless martyrdom in the long hours of hearing confessions until his repose on the Feast Day of Elevation of the Holy Cross in the year 2002.