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## **Romania: five-a-side football championship for priests in Timisoara. 230 athletes from 16 countries. Mgr Pál, “opportunity for communion through sport”**

From 13 to 16 February, some 230 Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic priests from 16 European countries will compete in a five-a-side football European championship for Catholic priests. Participating in the event held in Timișoara, Romania, are national teams of priests from Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, and Romania. Matches will be played on 14 and 16 February, and the awards ceremony will be held on Thursday evening, 16 February. On Thursday afternoon, there will also be an “ecumenical match” between the team of Orthodox priests from Timișoara and the Catholic “Old Boys”, that is, some senior Catholic priests present. The programme also features cultural visits and a daily Mass presided over by a Romanian Bishop: Mgr Iosif Csaba Pál of Timișoara (13 February); Mgr László Böcskei of Oradea (14 February); Mgr Gergely Kovács of Alba Iulia (15 February); and Mgr Aurel Percu of Bucharest (16 February). In a message to the participants, Mgr Csaba Pál recalled that Timișoara is also the capital of European culture this year, and expressed the hope that the championship may be “an opportunity for true communion in Christ, including through sport”. Moreover, the Bishop encouraged priests to learn from team sports how to better cooperate in their dioceses, “for a Church growing in communion, truly synodal, able to increasingly become the light of Christ in today’s world”.

Valentina Bombelli