



**Restoration, conservation and valorisation
of the historical monument
“Brâncovan Settlements - Lady Bălașa Church”**



**BRÂNCOVAN SETTLEMENTS
LADY BĂLAȘA CHURCH
PATRIARCHAL METOCHION**



The Journey continues!

The project's general objective was to capitalise on its cultural heritage and identity to stimulate local development and integrate the church into the cultural-historical and religious tourist circuit by increasing with 10% the annual number of visitors.

The Project "Restoration, conservation and valorisation of the historical monument Brâncovan Settlements - Lady Bălașa Church" was co-financed under the European Regional Development Fund, through the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020, priority axis 5 - Improvement of the urban environment and preservation, protection and sustainable valorisation of cultural heritage.

The project had the consistent support of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, as ephor-supervisor of the "Brâncovan Settlements - Lady Bălașa Church". His Beatitude closely oversaw every stage of the work.



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Between 2018 and 2022, the church was repaired and embellished to minor details - from the foundation to the roof.



The foundation and masonry were strengthened, while the roof and framework have been restored to their original shape. So was the church fence. On the inside, the architecture and painting, the sculptures and the stained-glass windows were restored, as well as the stucco decorations, which have been repainted as they were in the original church.

Besides the very detailed finishings from the inside and the outside of the church, the project also included the restoration of the sidewalks, exterior stairs, pedestrian alleys, roadways, and green spaces.

The entire ensemble, entitled "Brâncovan Settlements - Lady Bălașa Church", was illuminated to be better highlighted and was endowed with an annexe building that fits in with the church's architectural style.

From now on, Lady Bălașa Church can be visited in the best conditions by people with disabilities thanks to an access ramp for wheelchairs and information plaques in the Braille alphabet for visually impaired people.

"Lady Bălașa" Church

By the will of the Father, with the work of the Son and the accomplishment of the Holy Spirit, this holy church was built between 1881 and 1885 in honour of the Ascension of the Lord. It is the fourth place of worship built on the site of an old domain of Lady Bălașa, a daughter of the Holy Prince Constantine Brâncoveanu. The church was designed by the architect Alexandru Orăscu, assisted by Dobre Nicolau and Beneș, in eclectic style, combining elements of neo-Byzantine and neo-Romantic styles. The church has the shape of a cross, having a polygonal apse next to the Holy Altar and four side apses with stairs allowing access from the outside. The church's height is distinguished by the majesty of the five octagonal towers, a large one and four smaller ones. Their roof is decorated with carved and gilded copper crosses and curbs made at the Gauthier Gage factory in Paris. The oil painting was made by the Viennese artists Kott and Rihosky in neo-renaissance style, and the carvings on the iconostasis and the church furniture are the work of brothers Mihai and Petre Babic. Master Franz Ferdinand later gilded the carvings. The facades have a parament with pressed yellow and red brick registers, made in Budapest.

Founder Lady Bălașa's will appoints the metropolitans of Wallachia and later the Romanian Patriarchs as ephor-supervisors, each contributing to the preservation, restoration and integrity of this missionary and cultural-philanthropic foundation. The consecration ceremony of the fourth church was performed on September 29, 1885, by the Primate Metropolitan of Wallachia, Calinic Miclescu, together with the assistant bishops Silvestru and Inocențiu. King Carol I, the new founder, was present, along with Queen Elisabeth, as well as many personalities of the time. An earthquake in 1940 damaged the church. Repairs started in 1959 under the stewardship of Patriarch Justinian of blessed memory. On this occasion, sexton Emanoil Hagi Mosco donated to the church a silver reliquary containing a fragment of the holy relics of Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.

“Lady Bălașa” Church

The church was reconsecrated by Patriarchs Justinian of Romania and German of Serbia of blessed memory on October 27, 1962, the feast day of Bucharest's Patron Saint Demetrius the New. Following the consequences of the earthquake of 1977, the fourth Romanian Patriarch, Justin, ephor of the Brâncovan Settlements, initiated a financial collection, which contributed to the repair of the severely affected place of worship. The consolidation works took place between 1977 and 1982. After the canonisation of the Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs (1992), they became patrons of the holy church, and their commemoration date (August 16) became the parish's second patronal feast, with the blessing of the Patriarch Teoctist of blessed memory.

On January 10, 2010, on the commemoration of Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, in his capacity of ephor-supervisor, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, surrounded by an assembly of priests and deacons, reconsecrated the church painting, which had been partially cleaned. Six years later, in 2016, His Beatitude blessed the iconostasis, restored with the financial support of the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs and of the parishioners. With the blessing of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel and by the care of the current parish priest Ștefan Ababei, patriarchal counsellor, in 2018, the order to start the project “Restoration, conservation and valorisation of the historical monument Brâncovan Settlements - Lady Bălașa Church” was signed, being financed by the Bucharest - Ilfov Regional Development Agency (ADRBI), through the Regional Operational Program (ROP), axis 5.1.

The following works were carried out:

- Construction of a new roof.
- Restoration of the exterior facades and the church's painting by iconographers and restoration experts Dana Postolache and Ion Darida.
- Re-arrangement of the porch and the interior balcony.
- Installation of new, high-performance heating, ventilation, lighting, sound, fire and smoke detection systems;
- Window insulation;
- Refurbishing the historic stained-glass windows by restoration experts Victor Săraru and Marian Vochin.

“Lady Bălașa” Church

Under the guidance of the Very Reverend Archimandrite Dionisie Constantin, coordinating patriarchal counsellor at the Romanian Patriarchate's Workshops, all the liturgical items in the parish patrimony (holy vessels, gospels, candlesticks, chandeliers, vigil lamps, reliquary) were restored, regaining their former splendour. Also, the place of worship was adorned with two additional icons made by iconographer Daniel Codrescu in the mosaic technique.

A new holy table, made of Greek marble, was placed in the Holy Altar, the Prothesis (Table of Preparation) was rearranged, and the furniture was reconditioned. At the same time, the statues representing Lady Bălașa and Zoe Bibescu - Brâncoveanu were restored at the parish's expense. The church courtyard was systematised entirely. An annexe including a museum, liturgical and technical spaces was built in the courtyard. At the expense of the parish, in the basement of the annexe, the historical religious artifacts discovered on this occasion were exhibited in a new museum, being highlighted by a glass ceiling and an ambient lighting system.

The following works were carried out in the church's courtyard:

- Re-arrangement of the surrounding fence;
- Paving of granite alleys;
- Construction of an outdoor altar and a votive candles area;
- Construction of new architectural lighting and exterior sound systems.

The large-scale project was permanently supervised by the Reverend Parish Priest Ștefan Ababei, patriarchal counsellor, and was coordinated, as regards the technical-economic expertise, by the representatives of the design company (Viorica Frunză) and consulting company (Ionuț Bursuc), as well as by the technical-economic manager Petre Chiuță, and priest Cezar Matei as secretary. The financier's representatives included the general manager Dan Nicula, deputy director Emilia Balalau, Carmen Negru (ADRBI), Simona Banaru and Cristina Ursan.

Bless, O Lord, those who love the beauty of Your house!