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LITURGICAL CONCERNS IN THE WORK AND THE ACTIVITY OF THE PATRIARCHS OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Iași 2012

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STATEMENT

SUMMARY

Beyond our will, God chooses His people, at the right time and place. Let us state from the onset that this paper is not meant to be a tribute to the Romanian Orthodox Church; however, the research - primarily into the Archives of the Holy Synod of our Church, of the Metropolitan of Moldova and Bucovina Archives, into the works of the Romanian Patriarchs and secondly into secondary literature, corroborated with various socio-political contexts of our patriarchs – has led us to the conclusion that the Orthodox Romanian Church was a privileged one, feeling constantly God's consistent presence, its history and ordained leaders.

We shall not initiate a discourse on the relationship between dogma and cult - the subject having already been treated on several occasions in the research of liturgical theology - but dwell upon a major idea of this relationship – the persistence in time of the Church. Of course, at the foundation of the persistence of the salvation ark, lies the word of Christ, who assured us that nothing will destroy the Church, which His blood has painfully gained. However, an important role has been played by the prose or verse form of the doctrine of faith - the worship.

The true encounter between God and the faithful – like the one between God and Adam in the coolness of the evening, among the trees of Eden -

the cult provides to the faithful a great number of opportunities of listening and contemplating the life-giving word, of worshipping, of praying and receiving the saving grace, of expressing their faith, of acknowledging their sins and receiving forgiveness, of receiving the gift of life, of contemplating and of loving, of hoping and waiting for the Kingdom in communion with our brothers, the whole Church, on earth and in heaven.¹

Moreover, when the doctrine of faith is listened to, put into mind and heart, then materialized through word and deed, it becomes unshakeable rock in the tumultuous flow of time, being better preserved than if it were lain and enclosed in a book, guarded in the most fearfully guarded repository of this world.

It has also been said that the persistence of a religion does not lie in the dogma and their perfection, but ferments in its cult life. "The Church enters the history as a worshipping institution, having as center of its prayer and all liturgical events, the Holy Eucharist" 2, because "the holy place

¹ Dictionnaire de Spiritualiteé, Tome IX, Beauchesne, Paris, 1976, p. 926.

² Prof. PhD Viorel SAVA, *În Biserica Slavei Tale. Studii de teologie și spiritualitate liturgică*, vol. I, Ed. Erota, Iași, 2003, p. 8.

of worship becomes the door opened through the Holy Sacraments to the Kingdom of God, that is among us³.

The Church was founded through sacrifice, after a prayer. At the same time, the Church persists in history through this Sacrifice (this time, bloodless) because - in this way - it is watered from the life-giving stream - Christ.

In the difficult times of the tumultuous history that our country has gone through, the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchs proved to be providential, through knowledge, common sense, diplomacy and ecclesiastical politics, but also through the propensity towards prayer and Liturgy. A community without Liturgy is devoid of God's presence and His blessing, doomed to spiritual mutilation, if not to ruin. In the history of our Church, this was amply proved. "Our church has resisted and has kept its treasures of faith, and our faithful have not remained without priests and without the Holy Mass".

The motivation for choosing this topic consists precisely in this aspect of the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church – the persistence through Liturgy and through what is related to the public divine worship. Therefore, we have identified and analyzed the presence of the liturgical coordinates in the interest of the Romanian Patriarchs, from Miron Cristea to Teoctist Arăpaşu.

On the other hand, this time aiming to a rather practical end, being a pioneering research paper within Romanian theology, this paper is intended to be as a teaching tool, offering, to those who wish to study Liturgical Theology, information on its evolution and development, between 1925-2007, especially in the writings of the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchs and the Decisions of the Holy Synod of our Church.

The method we have employed is a descriptive-analytical one, we researched primarily the works of the above-mentioned patriarchs – that means more than 50 volumes of sermons, speeches, treaties and occasional speeches – as well as the decision of the Holy Synod of our Church by consultation of the summaries of the meetings, Office archives from the Antim Monastery in Bucharest.

The structure of this paper is a template one – that guided us in approaching each patriarch, obviously, with slight modifications, where applicable.

The paper is structured in 8 chapters. The first 5 have the same framework, structured, in turn, into 5 subchapters, entitled as follows:

³ Prof. PhD, Nicolae D. NECULA, *Tradiție și înnoire în slujirea liturgică*, vol. 1, Ed. Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 1996, p. 6.

⁴ Boris BUZILĂ, *Un Patriarh în oglinda vremii sale*, Ed. Timpul, Iași, 2009, p. 78.

- Patriarch X. Biographical benchmarks. In this segment, we have highlighted of the life of the Primate we analyzed, aiming to create a broad image of the character and of the socio-political context in which he led our Church.
- Liturgical concerns in the work of Patriarch X. This is a background chapter, in which we analyzed the writings and liturgical issues we identified, placed and discussed in context.
- Liturgical concerns in the activity of Patriarch X. Here, we first highlighted some general guidelines of the pastoral missionary activity of the patriarch; secondly, we analyzed the printing and the books of worship of his time, underlining the editing, re-editing, the distortions and changes in the contents of these books
- The 4th chapter entitled "The Liturgical Concerns in the decisions of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church" is still a background one, which following the research of these decisions we have highlighted the ones with liturgical content, grouping them on several topics: The Easter date, the calendar, the holidays and birthdays, the public divine worship (modifications, adaptations, uniformity etc.), decisions related to the worshipping book, the sanctification of the Great Myrrh and the canonization of saints etc.
- Going through our Patriarchs' works, we have identified valuable texts, either stylistically or theologically and philosophically, as well as works of meditation, which we grouped in the last subchapter "*Chosen words* thoughts, maxims, proverbs and useful words". Even if it is not a segment specific to the liturgical field, we believe that quoting the *chosen words* for reading and why not for learning is of good omen.

Once this structure was applied to every patriarch, in part, the work continues with some final considerations in which, in terms of liturgy, specifics of each role and Primate were revealed.

The bibliography is also structured in five parts, each dedicated to the five patriarchs that are the subject of this research while the paper ends with 5 appendices. These replicate, in facsimile, title papers of volumes published by the Patriarchs, paper titles of the editted or re-editted cult books as well as the minutes of some important synod proceedings.

The detailed study of the writings of the first five Patriarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church as well as of the decisions of the Holy Synod of our Church is a great priviledge since it provides a rare image – an overview of many years, better of worse, that our Church spent together with its sacred Head, Christ – as well as a detailed image of the crucial times when, due to God's care, to the skill and boldness of the Patriarchs chosen by the divine providence, the Romanian Orthodox Church became a Patriarchy, overcame the communist opression and led its people to God's path and to spiritual values.

In the light of our approach, Patriarch Miron Cristea's leading period is marked by several milestones, some of which are the subject of our research, having a liturgical approach, others just with such implications: the unification of the Church in the new Unitary Romanian State; the organization of our Church as Patriarchy, the status of the organization and functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church from 1925; the appearance of the conciliar edition of the Bible in 1936 as well as the printing of religious and other religious books at Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune. Also at the meeting on October 23, 1931, in section 3 on the agenda, the Report on proposals of the Diocese of Arad, Oradea and Cluj was read so as to determine the canonization of the martyrs of the Romanian people and the proposal of Patriarch Miron Cristea, to celebrate the canonization of ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu.⁵

Since the first pages of the first volume of speeches, Miron Cristea speaks about the importance of worship and the mission of our church. He mentions that the worship includes sermons, readings, hymns, prayers and mysteries. "Christian worship is all the more sublime and more perfect - says Miron - as the Christian idea of God is more perfect than the other non-Christian religious doctrine".

There are a few references to Church activity during the pastoring of the first Patriarch, but enough to create a clear picture of it. It was a prodigious activity, an activity that had a consistent liturgical aspect.

The second patriarch of our Church, Nicodemus Munteanu, had a short pastorate from 1939 to 1948, but one rich in academic terms, he was a renowned scholar. Continuing the tradition and scholarship of the Metropolitans of Moldova - Varlaam, Dosoftei and Veniamin Costachi, we must mention any of the statements made by Nicodemus related to writing.

For me, the Patriarch said, writing is a passion, a necessity, a delight and recreation of mind at the same time. Writing for 60 years. I have written a lot and I still have power to write and not get tired. Writing seems to strengthen me, it relaxes me. I have been writing since I was a seminary student in Iasi.⁷

As a defining element for Patriarch Nicodemus, we can say that he is one of Romanian translators of the Bible, being a Bible scholar, like Patriarch lustin Moisescu, but being also concerned with the practical aspect of religion. For him, the liturgical movement and gesture needed

⁵ The Archives of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *File no.*. 312, fila 107.

⁶ Miron CRISTEA, Cuvântări și predici ale unui tânăr teolog, mai târziu cleric român în țară sub stăpânire străină, 1889-1909, vol. I, București, Tip. Cărților Bisericești, 1928, p. 5.

⁷ Teodor N. MANOLACHE, *Bibliografia I. P. S. Nicodim*, *Patriarhul României*, 1947, Secției Culturale a Arhiepiscopiei Bucureștilor, p. 5.

to be explained, not performed mechanically. Everything has a logic and a symbolism behind. In this respect, Nicodemus publishes the famous *Cuvântări liturgice*⁸, where the Divine Liturgy is explained step by step.

In the preface to this work, Nicodemus explains why he resorted to the publication of these liturgical sermons. Firstly, because in the literature, they were only ones missing, but on the other hand,

The necessity of such speeches is felt due to the fact that both the educated ones and the less educated ones, both the people form the cities and those from the countryside, coming to church, witness the representation of a play whose meaning and structure cannot be penetrated with the mind and heart; but being too used to it, they do not even try to make sense of it; moreover, they do not even suspect that what goes on before their eyes would have any sense or explanation. [...] Every word, every act, every movement and every thing from the church has its specific meaning and explanation. 9

Furthermore, the Romanian Orthodox Church has at its helm another pillar of hope, whose pastoring was not only long (1948-1977) but also difficult, yet with significant accomplishments.

Should we only mention The Statute of Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church¹⁰, The Canonization of Saints and The Uniformization of the Cult, it would be enough to underline the concerns and the efficiency of the Patriarch and, implicitly, of our church; the law by which worship is to operate, the uniformity of the cult, so that the whole country would have the same worship, the reading and the singing from the same ritual books, and finally, the official recognition of the fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church is a living church through the proclamation of Romanian saints or the wide spreading worship of others.

We cannot forget that Patriarch Justinian served during a difficult period, from the sociopolitical point of view, in a period of transformation, of creating a "new man", but one without God. In addition to words that praise *peace*, *disarmament* and love for the Motherland, not infrequently did the Patriarch sneak ideas, invitations, even urges to balance and keeping the faith in God in his speeches.

In his speeches, the Patriarch agreed with the creation of the "new man", but between the lines, he stated that this new man must be in perfect harmony with God. Although he praised, not infrequently, the internal situation of the Romanian state, especially in terms of church-state relations

⁸ IDEM, *Cuvântări liturgice*, "Gutenberg" Josef Göble, București, 1906, 114 p.; see also: Bishop NICODEM, Semințe pentru Ogorul Domnului, vol. VIII, Cuvântări Liturgice...

9 IDEM, Cuvântări liturgice, "Gutenberg" Josef Göble, București, 1906, p. 6.

¹⁰ Voted by the Holy Synod, in the meetings from 19 – 20th October 1948.

and of its visible progress towards a better society, one of peace and cordiality, Patriarch Justinian clearly underlined the incompatibility of such materialist state with the Church, a divine-human institution, whose speech is a spiritual one.

Patriarch Justinian was aware of the times in which he served and those that would come during his patriarchate. Therefore, not infrequently, he would call on his clergy to be prepared to successfully face these times of "social transformation". He also calls for training, wisdom, and work values that the priest, the pastor of the faithful, of the common people needed to show, in his attempt to guide his parishioners to God. Patriarch Justinian also likens the priest with the helmsman a Christ ship that the Church is.

Another quite important aspect in Patriarch Justinian's speeches that is worthy of remembering in these conclusions, is of the ecumenical relations and approaches. He is the originator of the phrase unity in diversity in which the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and various Christian denominations must be initiated, supported and enhanced, since only through a consistent dialogue between the Christian denominations can peaceful, lasting and harmonious coexistence occur.

Also, during Patriarch Justinian's pastoring, through his "unceasing support and guidance and care", several religious books were edited and reedited, some of them being with the direct care of the Patriarch or even by adapting the text himself. We recall in this respect the 1956 Missal¹¹, whose text was edited by Patriarch Justinian, together with Prof. Peter Vintilescu. About this edition, Prof. Ene Braniste would say:

From the happy collaboration of the two editions, the best edition of the Romanian Missal came and maybe the best Missal of those used in various autocephalous Orthodox Churches. 12

The Missal of 1956 has been appreciated not only by servants from the country, but also by the "experts" from other Orthodox Churches, standing out due to its quality and accuracy of the Typicon indications provided by Prof. Peter Vintilescu. Moreover, this edition of the Missal benefited from the first involvement of a professor of theology and a consecrated liturgist.

To conclude this brief picture of the work of the third Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, in the liturgical realm, let us recall the canonization of 1950-1955, in which a number of Romanian Saints were brought among the Saints, while the worship widespread to the others in all

¹¹ Liturghier, București, 1956, 466 p.

¹² Pr. Prof. Ene Branişte, *Tiparul și cartea bisericească în cei cincizeci de ani de patriarhat (1925-1975)*, in BOR, XCIII (1975), no. 11-12, p. 1438.

regions. "The canonization of the Romanian Saints is also a union and and an increase of faith, piety and virtue". 13

Constantly preoccupied with the cult of the Romanian saints, Patriarch Justinian played an important role in canonization. At the hearing on 25 February 1950 when, celebrating 25 years since the beginning of the Romanian Patriarchate, in a word tribute, Patriarch Justinian praised the holiness and piety of the ancestors, addressing the Romanian people with the name "Saints", even though this was not yet officially proclaimed.

Later, in five years' time, during the hearing from September 26, 1955, in the agenda set out for debating, agenda for the anniversary of 70 years of autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the canonization of Romanian saints and generalization of the others' worship was discussed. In this regard, the solemn proclamation ceremony for the canonization of the Romanian saints, Calinic of Cernica, Iosif cel Nou from Parto, Sava Brancovici, Ilie Iorest, Visarion Sarai, Sofronie de la Cioara and Oprea Miclăuş and the generalization of the worship of Saints : Parascheva, Filofteia, Grigorie Decapolitul, Dimitrie Basarabov, Nicodim the Holy One and Ioan Valahul were proposed for debating. After presenting the report on this ceremonial, the Synod Commission proposed for approval and, therefore, the Holy Synod approved it.

Thus, in 1955, on a day of great celebration, in the solemn meeting of 10 October, the Holy Synod officially proclaimed "the worship throughout the Romanian Orthodox Church of Holy Martyrs and saints, with local honor and whose relics are in our country" and "the canonization, for local veneration of some saints who have shone on Romanian land, through faith and great labors, written in the calendar by the decision of the Holy Synod in 1950"¹⁵.

The canonization from 1950 till 1955 was perhaps a natural thing in the history of our Church, but the involvement of Patriarch Justinian was a decisive one. He was a man of attitude, a man of deed; in fact he too recognized his handiness not with words, but with deeds.

The second last Patriarch we have researched in this paper, Justin Moisescu is complex and complete person, academically speaking. Bible scholar, but his work, that is not extended, but consistent, covers almost all parts of theology. The biblical verse, perceived through the specialist in Greek, was argued and supported in divine worship from the patristic perspective. He intertwined his speeches with fragments of choir chants in order to provide fragrance and elegance to his speech and

¹³ REDACȚIA, 1948-1963, Cincisprezece ani de la înscăunarea Prea fericitului Patriarh Justinian, in "BOR", LXXXI (1963), no. 5-6, p. 397, on the significance of canonization, see Pr. Prof. Isidor TODORAN, În legătură cu canonizarea sfinților români, în BOR, LXXVI (1958), nr. 5-6, pp. 465-472.

¹⁴ †JUSTINIAN, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Uniti în slujire arhierească și în rugăciune (Scrisoare trimisă Întâistătorilor unor Biserici Ortodoxe Autocefale), in "Apostolat social", vol. VI, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 1958, p. 51.

15 *Ibidem*, p. 52.

to facilitate the understanding of the transmitted message. It is obvious that a stylistic analysis of his speeches is not subject to our research, but we cannot overlook this.

In terms of liturgy, we must emphasize that Patriarch Justin considered church worship, as much as his predecessors, not only commemorative moments, but moments in which the faithful must experience the relationship and dialogue with God, living and reliving the feelings, emotions and joy of those who participated in the celebrated events. At the Feast of the Nativity, the joy of the Three Wise Men needed to be felt, at the Feast of the Resurrection, the joy of the disciples. Patriarch Justin invites the faithful to acknowledge and emphasize the sacramental aspect of the holiday. Through holidays one can experience the kingdom of God, through sacrament with the Holy Spirit that is communicated.

Patriarch Justin was a convinced ecumenical man. In all his speeches, uttered on these ecumenical occasions, he would address major and common to all participants issues, seeking to highlight and encourage what unites. Every time he held speeches on the scriptural texts, emphasizing the unity which Christ instilled, recreating one new man by crushing barriers that separate the Hebrew and the unfaithful, and by the destruction of hatred, through His body (Eph . 2.14).

At the end of a speech, On the Anniversary of the Ecumenism, he concludes: "When each of us: dares say, with St. Paul, that yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal 2, 20), the unity of the Church in Jesus Christ will become a reality."¹⁶

But often, in these ecumenical meetings, Patriarch Justin emphasized the role of the Divine Liturgy as cosmic worship during which we pray for peace in the world, for the unity of all, for those who travel on water, on land and in air, for peaceful times ... in a word, for the entire nature and its inhabitants (of faith), Patriarch Justin emphasizes the role of the peace with which the prayer begins. (In peace, let us pray to God!) peace at the root of which there is love, which casts away all that is individual, not in the sense of the destruction of what is individual, but of the communion with the others and with God.

The last Patriarch we have studied, Arăpaşu Teoctist, was a perfect servant of God. Going through volumes of sermons and speeches, one can easily find his appeal to roots, to the sources of faith and authentic living of Christianity – the Holy Mass and the Sacraments. They occupy a very important place in the life of the Church.¹⁷

¹⁶ Integrala Iustin, 7, p. 66.

TEOCTIST, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, speech held the "Baselius College" Church, Kottayam, India, 12th February 1976, in "Pe treptele slujirii creștine", vol. II, 2nd ed., EIBMBOR, București, 1995, p. 143.

For all the faithful, the Divine Liturgy and the Holy Sacraments are a "saving treasure of faith." We must all "water our spiritual thirst from the fountain of the living water of the holy and purest Sacraments of the Church."¹⁸.

In the view of Patriarch Teoctist, the Liturgy and the Sacraments are the very life of the Christian, because in them we find Christ, who is Life Itself, in the Mass and Sacraments, we come to know Him as Savior whereas the eternal life is precisely this 'theological knowledge" in Litrughie and Sacraments, we ourselves experience the work of salvation accomplished by Christ, by living - with Him - the passion, death and resurrection.

The priestly mission, both the universal one, gained by receiving the sacrament of the Holy Baptism and the priestly one, after ordination, feeds itself and gains consistency and fruitful precisely due to this mergence, living with Christ in the Holy Mass and Sacraments.

In the view of Patriarch Teoctist, sharing God's grace, channeled through the Holy Sacraments, guarantee the connection with the Triumphant Church, the communion with the saints and those of true faith.

Through the Holy Sacraments of the Church, we share God's grace and we are in communion with all the saints, with all of our people, who had confessed Christ.¹⁹

Also, for the period of Patriarch Teoctist Arăpaşu, we must underline the canonization of saints, which occurred several times:

On June, 20th 1992, "the Sunday of the Romanian Saints" was established, which will be placed in our church calendar every year, on the second Sunday after Pentecost.²⁰ Other canonizations were carried out in the same period.

Then, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, during Patriarch Teoctist, carried out several canonizations of Romanian saints, in the following years: 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

At the end of these few items, we must also point out that, firstly, the Romanian Orthodox Church patriarchs that were the subject of our study in this research paper were men of attitude and, in their turn, they sent the message and their parishioners. Regarding the subject of the research paper, we underline the fact that the liturgical aspect is common in the works of the Primate of our

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

¹⁹ IDEM, *Cuvânt*, held in The Metropolitan Church from Iaşi, on Sunday, 17th May 1981, with the occasion of the visit of pastor Glen Garfield Williams and the Bishop Antonie of Buzău, in vol. "Pe treptele slujirii creştine", vol. III, Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Sucevei, Mănăstirea Neamt, 1985, p. 18.

²⁰ ct Paper of the Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church on the canonization of some Romanian saints, 20th June, 1992.

Church, either expressly or incidentally approached, but never absent. Thus, we are shown that one of the vital elements of persistence of the Church is its worship.

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