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**The Theandric and missionary Constitution of
the Church.**

A contemporary perspective on mission.

- PHD abstract –

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The Holy Grace, Mission, Theandria, Church, the Kingdom of the Heavens, Preaching, Gospel.

THE THEANDRIC AND MISSIONARY CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

1. INTRODUCTION. THE ACTUALITY OF THE THEME

1.1. The condition and the missionary vocation of the humanity's

The starting point in analyzing this subject is the notion of *mission* itself, in the way it is understood nowadays by the orthodox theologians, from the meaning granted to this divine and human work, in which it can clearly be noticed the work of the holy grace in order to acquire the resemblance with God, but without overlooking the meaning of *mission* from the catholic and protestant perspective.

The man, as a *representation of God*, has the mission of advancing more and more into the knowledge of his Creator. His mission is to square the creation with the divine reasons and to enter the Kingdom of God „*at the complete transformation of the world, like the Body of Christ from the depth of His divine Logos*”.

From an orthodox point of view, the Christian mission is more than heralding the word of God - it is focused on assimilating and raising people as members of the Church, understood as the body of Christ, until *the age of His fulfillment*. (Efes. 4,13).

One could state that the human individual can obtain the deification through communion only. In communion with the divine Persons, but in communion with his neighbours as well. The specific environment for the manifestation of the communion with the divine Persons is the Holy Church and therefore the cooperation with the uncreated divine grace shared through the Holy Mysteries and Hierurgies.

2. THE TEANDRIC AND MISSIONARY STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH. CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

2.1 The embodiment of the Son of God - condition and foundation of the Church's theandry:

2.1.1 *The beginning of the trinitary mission in creation*

In order to identify and clarify the elements of the teandric and missionary structure of the Church we depart from what St. Apostle Paul called „Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone”,

from the One who fulfilled the law, our Savior Jesus Christ who passed all the stages required to re-create the broken connexion between God and human. These stages can be identified in marvelous and supernatural works - the embodiment, the birth, the baptise, the passions, the crucification, the death on the cross, the descent to hell, the resurrection of the third day and the ascension of the Lord, all these known by the Holy Fathers as *The Divine Economy*.

The Economy represents, in fact, the embodiment of God, the history of His love and revelation both on the horizontal and vertical axis. The Economy is the holiness, the justice and the order of God, as the Apostles and the Holy Fathers exemplify. The economy also involves the inner anticipation of God's Kingdom. Here are integrated the human's liberty and responsibility.¹

The Divine Economy is God's way of accomplishing the ontological restauration of humans. The Old Testament is the basis of theology and mission as they are presented in the New Testament because it presents a prototype of faith by highlighting the divine revelation and by promoting the monotheism, but only among the chosen people.

The hermeneutical key of the Old Testament is that of messianism, of God's continuous waiting, and of the materialiyation of His presence in humans.

2.1.2 God speaking through the Son into the Holy Grace (Evr. 1,1-2)

In this context it is presented the Son's relationship with the Holy Grace related to God the Father.

In the beginning of the Epsitle to the Hebrews, the Son is presented not only as a fulfiller of the supernatural revelation through which God spoke to the world during the final days - meaning that the right time has arrived.

Before the arrival of the Son, God revealed Himself in several times and in various ways, especially through the prophets. After the arrival of the Son, God revealed Himslef by speaking through his Son, whose action goes beyond that of being just co-author of the creation, as He is also the heir of everything that has been created. Therefore, the Son is the ultimate purpose of the entire creation.²

¹Pr. prof. dr. Ion Bria, *Spre plinirea Evangheliei, Dincolo de apărarea Ortodoxiei: exegeza și transmiterea Tradiției*, Ed. Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2002, pp. 12-13.

² Pr. Dr. Stelian Tofană, *Iisus Hristos Arhiereu veșnic după Epistola către Evrei*, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 1996, pp. 81-82.

There is an inseparable connection between the Son's economy and mission and the Holy Grace's economy and mission³. For example, the One is the ointed one, while the Other one is the anointment: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted*" (Lc. 4, 18). Jesus was hallowed as Messiah in his trinitary ministration as Prophet, Bishop and Lord, by the anointment of the Grace at the embodiment (Is. 61,1; Lc. 4,1; Iez. 37, 1-7).

At the public manifestation (*epiphany*) of Jesus as Messiah (when he was baptized in Jordan), the Grace comes over Him from the sky, as a dove(In. 1, 32). Through the Holy Grace's work over the Virgin Mary, the Father prepares the arrival and gives Emanuel to the world (Mt. 1, 23)⁴.

The Church has got two ways of actualizing the redemption's economy: a pastoral one, with its internal, eucharistic discipline, and the missionary one, with its apostolic project of outspreading the Gospel. To do the Eucharisty in order to feed the people of God and to outspread the Gospel in order to religionize the people are two of the recquests that act like holy commandaments (Efes, 3, 6-7). In the orthodox practice and mission, these two aspects are inseparable. In the curch's altar, on the Holy altar's table the Gospel and the Eucharisty are kept, meant to stay together for always like two arms of the same body. The orthodox Liturgy is one of the most authentic forms of christian confession because it implies every aspect of the church life: prayer, cult, mysteries, mission, spirituality, ministration⁵.

2.1.3 „The coming to His own people” and the misapprehension of the divine research. The image of the Son from the perspective of the faith- the beginning of the Son's universal mission.

God's will has been transmitted to the chosen people through Moses' Law. This Law coordinated the entire judaic life, being, in the same time, a moral and juridic norm. The fulfillment of this Law, also known as Tora, was considered to be the supreme goal of the judaic people⁶.

³ Valer Bel, *Teologie și Biserică*, p. 335.

⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Tratat de teologie dogmatică și ecumenică*, vol. 1, p. 285.

⁵ Î.P.S. Prof. dr. Nifon Mihăiță, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

⁶ Pr. prof. D. Abrudan, *Religia Evreilor: Iudaismul*, în rev. M. A., nr. 5/1986, p. 12.

The believe in the final judgement and in the right reward were important parts of the judaic theology⁷. Although their faith was unitary, some religious-nationalist formations⁸ were created inside of the judaism, such as those of the Scribes and the Pharisees. Even though Jesus Christ admitted their religious authority, He would not use them as an example for a moral life: „*The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not*” (Mt 23, 2-3). He often accepted their invitation: „*And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him.*” (Lc 7, 36); another Pharisee „*And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.*” (Lc 11, 37-38); „*And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread*” (Lc 14, 1). Nicodim was one of Jesus's admireres. He defended Him in front of the bishops, and buried Him⁹.

The judaic people, where the first christian communities were formed, as well as the greek-roman polytheist world were ready and they were expecting for the great change brought by the Church of Jesus¹⁰.

The Gospel appeared in a judaic environment, marked by the political messianism, but it got beyond the borders of Palestina where "*it might have sunk in the paragraphaes of the judaic ritualism*"¹¹. It was percieved, in the beginning, as a "*judaic sect*"¹² but it took advantage of the illicit status of the judaism in order to broaden. The christianism brings a spiritual refreshment while the ancient religions and philosophies become gradually inactive and Jesus Christ rules over the christian souls united in Church¹³.

Jesus Christ, by fulfilling the Old Law(Mt. 5, 1 7-1 9) proved the moral value of the sacrifice asking from the one who brings his gift to the altar to come with a pure heart, to make peace with his brother and then only to bring his gift (Mat 5,23-24). Therefore, the Savior shows

⁷ Pr. prof. D. Abrudan, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

⁸ Pr. Prof. Ioan Rămureanu și colaboratorii, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁹ Ion Bria, *Iisus Hristos*, p. 32.

¹⁰ Daniel Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, *Teologie și spiritualitate*, Ed. Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2010, p. 211.

¹¹ Prof. Teodor M. Popescu, *art. cit.*, p. 354.

¹² Pr. conf. dr. Emanoil Băbuș, *Diversități și divergențe în creștinism până la 1054*, în rev. B.O.R., nr. 9-12/2004, p. 617.

¹³ Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Ortodoxia și problemele lumii contemporane*, traducere de drd. Gabriel Mândrilă și Pr. prof. dr. Constantin Coman, Ed. Bizantină, București, 2003, p. 33.

that He is not satisfied with the way jews fulfill the Law, because they only attend to their cult without an inner purity.¹⁴

The moral and religious value of the sacrifice in the Old Testament is relative. Only the sacrifice of the New Covenant is perfect, because it is brought by the Son of God Himself, so that it has a unique value. For christians, the mosaic sacrifices stopped with the death of the Savior as this represents the perfect sacrifice according to those predicted about „*God's servant*”, who gives His life as an offering for saving everyone (Is.53).¹⁵

2.2 The Preaching of the Gospel as the beginning of the mission of word.

2.2.1 Repentance - the first imperative component of the mission

The main call of the Apostles is preaching the Gospel and this is more important than any other apostolic work: "*or Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel*"(I Cor. 1, 17).

The preaching of the Gospel is a constant obligation of the (I Cor. 9, 16), because preaching the word of God aims at the conversion through faith „*Repent and believe the gospel!*” (Mc 1, 15)¹⁶.

Starting from the Apostles' mission of preaching the god news, we arrive to the acquiring of faith, concept we present in this paper. True faith can only be achieved in the missionary context of the apostolic succession which takes place inside the true Church and which works, with and without time, through the Holy Mysteries and Hierurgies. In its mission, the Church does not invent the Gospel, but it recreates in every place and time „*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” (Iuda, 3).

Repentance from Bishop Irineu Pop-Bistriteanul's point of view, means "*a virtue through which the Baptise is renewed, through which man sets himself free from sin, clearing his consciousness*"¹⁷, differentiating between repentance as a mystery and repentance as a constant work of the soul.

¹⁴ Drd.Gheorghe Burtan, *Rolul îndrumător al Vechiului Testament*, în S. T., nr.9-10/1973, p. 165.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Pr. conf. univ. dr. Valer Bel, *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană*, vol. 1, pp. 16-18.

¹⁷ Irineu Pop-Bistrițeanul, *Chipul lui Hristos în viața morală a creștinului*, Ed. Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, p. 257;

The true meaning and importance of the repentance is revealed only when this is understood as a way of recreating the Christians' connexion with God and neighbours.¹⁸

This is the reason due to which repentance is considered to be a second baptise and it always precedes the Holy Eucharist, as a stage of the highest communion with God and the Church. Repentance is the Mystery of Reconciliation with God and the neighbours because it brings God's harmony in the believers' souls.¹⁹

2.2.2 Obstacles and opposition in Jesus' mission (Mt. 11,2-13,53)

The Savior Himself faced obstacles in His mission: „*If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they obeyed my word, they will obey yours too.*” (In 15,20).

The mission of the Church, according to Matthew is best depicted in the opposition created among the religious leaders that have seen Jesus (12,1-8;9-14). The healing of the Dumb and Deaf possessed individual (12,22-32), the Tree and its fruits (33-32) and the Sign of Jona Iona (38-42)- all these are reflections of Matthew and obstacles to Jesus' mission. While they were defending the laws of the Sabbath, Matthew uses this opportunity to depict Jesus as the reinterpreter of the law in the halakhic context. To Matthew, Jesus has authority over the laws. He presents the way in which Jesus continues His mission, referring to the denunciation of the rigidity imposed by the Pharisees and of the way in which this suppressed the men of God, therefore the Phariseism is condemned.

The Church's mission from evangelist Matthew's perspective prongs new ways of serving God, others than the Jewish rituals and customs. His Gospel has a pastoral and missionary purpose; pastoral, because the author struggles to render faith to a community which suffers from a certain identity crisis, and missionary because he wants to encourage the community members, the Church's members, to serve the humans in love as well following Jesus' example.

The Pharisees show themselves to be outraged by the fact that Jesus breaks the stipulations of the Law, especially when it comes to the one regarding the work on the Sabbath day or the contact with persons considered to be impure. Jesus highlights the danger of the lack

¹⁸ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Radu, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303.

¹⁹ Pr. Asist. Dumitru Popescu, *Pocăința ca refacere a legăturii credinciosului cu Dumnezeu și cu semenii*, în rev. S.T., nr. 9-10, 1971, pp. 1022-1028.

of spiritual depth and the danger of living exclusively the formal aspects, meant to hide the inner emptiness. The holy priests, as well as the Pharisees were sure that they knew everything they had to know and that is why they distanced themselves from Jesus and did everything to make sure that He is tortured and crucified.

2.3 The Apostles' instauration and mission - paradigm of the mission of Church.

The word "*apostle*" comes from the Greek αποστολος, derived from the verb αποστέλλειν, which, in classical Greek means *to send* persons or objects. As opposed to πέμπω which is focused on the fact of sending, αποστέλλω is focused on the sending and its task is to announce the will of the sender and to explain and work accordingly to this will.²⁰ (III Reg 14, 6; In 13, 16; Filip 2, 25).

In the Old Testament, the messengers of God are the prophets, but in the New Testament are the twelve Apostles sent by the Savior to preach the Gospel²¹.

All the Apostles received call, choice and mission from God the Father or from the Savior Jesus Christ²² (Mc 3, 13-20; In 17, 18; Acts 9, 16; Rom 1, 1; I Cor 1, 1; Gal 1, 15).

About the missionary work of the Holy Apostles and about the constant divine assistance that the Apostles receive, and which manifests itself, in general, through the power of doing miracles, speaks the Holy Apostle Paul when he asks the Christians found among the Jews not to stay indifferent to the redemption²³ offered to them through Jesus Christ: „*How will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first communicated through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, while God confirmed their witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*” (Evr 2, 3-4). The Holy Grace is the one who acknowledges Christ as the embodied Son of God. This was the fundamental truth which the Apostles were meant to spread in the world, any other teaching about Christ is not from the Grace of truth, but from a spirit alien to Christ²⁴ (I In 4, 1-3; 12-15).

²⁰ Ioannis Zizioulas, *Ființa eclezială*, traducere Aurel Nae, Ed. Bizantină, București, 1996, p. 195.

²¹ Pr. Dr. Teodor M. Popescu, *Biserica și cultura*, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1996, p. 86.

²² Ilarion V. Felea, *Religia iubirii...*, p. 432.

²³ Pr. Petru Gheorghe, *Misiologie Ortodoxă. I. Revelația divină și misiunea Bisericii*, p. 153.

²⁴ Pr. Adrian Niculcea, *Sfânta Treime în Ființa și Viața Bisericii*, Ed. Arhetip, 2001, p. 277.

Each Church had as a founder a kerygmatic missionary, but it could also have more teaching missionaries who, through their word, enriched and fathomed the words of the Gospel²⁵.

What differentiates the Holy Apostles from the other missionaries is their special mission to the entire Church from all over the world, to which they can speak to in the name of God²⁶. But the sending of the Apostles toward the entire Church must not be understood only from a spatial perspective, as if their mission, although universal, would be limited to the entire Church only during their lifetime, without referring to time that would come afterwards. The mission of the Holy Apostles is universal from a temporal perspective as well²⁷.

2.4 The relation between the Word's mission, the Apostles' mission, and the Church's mission

2.4.1 Defining the apostolic mission in relation to the relegation of the Son: “Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.” (In. 20,21)

The Apostles have received a special mission from the Savior, a mission they must perform in the world, among all: *make disciples of all nations* (Mt. 28, 19). The Twelve have also received the promise of the Savior. This promise has been gradually made by the Lord Christ and it means, in fact, the preparation of the Apostles in order to receive the Holy Grace.

“Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.” (In. 20,21); One of the points of this command focuses on the Holy Apostles' duty of spreading the word of the Gospel among all races²⁸: *„Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Mt 28, 19-10). The expression *„all nations”* (Mt 24, 9,14; 28, 19; Mc 13, 10; Lc 24, 47; Acts 15, 17; Rom 1, 15,16,26) as well as the word *„nations”* (Acts 9, 15; 10, 45; 11, 1,18; 13, 40; 15, 3,7,19; Rom 9, 30; 11, 11; Galatani 1, 16; 2, 2,8) often appear in the New Testament in order to indicate the ones that will be searched by the christian missionaries²⁹.

²⁵ Pr. Drd. Nicolae Rădulescu, *Ideea de unitate și comuniune în Noul Testament*, în rev. S. T., nr. 7-8 / 1975, p. 541.

²⁶ Idem, *Ecceologia Noului Testament*, în rev. S.T., nr. 3-4 /1977, p. 247.

²⁷ Pr. Conf. Ion Bria, *Introducere în ecceologia Ortodoxă*, în rev. S.T., nr. 7-10 /1976, p. 702.

²⁸ Pr. Lect. Univ. Dr. Mihai Himcinschi, *Misiune și dialog...*, p. 63.

²⁹ Ioan Bria, *Iisus Hristos...*, p. 46.

The second formulation of Jesus Christ's command is addressed to the Apostles and asks them to go preaching, and it refers to the geographical compass of the earth³⁰, where Jerusalem is the departure point and the centre of instruction of this work, and the limit is „*the end of the age*”: „*He told them, “You are not permitted to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.”*”(Acts 1, 7-8).

A third enunciation of the command of preaching the Gospel highlights the universality of the evangelic message, both from a geographical and ethnic perspective³¹: „*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth as a testimony to all the nations* ” (Mt 24, 14).

Beyond any doubt was the fact that the twelve had a solemn call through God's command³² (Mt 28, 19; Acts 1,8), but, the Holy Apostles were less familiarized with the reality of the pagan environment, with the history, culture and customs of the people called to redemption³³. Therefore, the appearance due to the care of the twelve Apostles, of the missionaries from the Jerusalem's school, came from among the Hellenists, great knowers of the Greek language and of the pagan environment.

The Church as a keeper and infallible transmitter of the apostolic announcement³⁴, „*the support and bulwark of the truth*” (I Tim 3, 15), offers concrete evidence regarding the fulfillment of this command.

2.4.2 The priesthood and the repentance, a paschal redefinition of the apostolic mission

The Holy Mysteries are defined in the teaching of faith as sensitive ways of communicating the divine grace to the faithful man.

The priest is the bearer of Jesus's cross "*that redeems the others too*", according to Blessed Augustine, and, in the same time, he is the beneficiary of the power of grace that ends well the endeavour of redeeming those assigned to him³⁵.

³⁰ Ioannis Zizioulas, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

³¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Isidor Todoran, *Apostolicitatea Bisericii*, în rev. M. A., nr. 3-6/1962, p. 316.

³² Constantin Preda, *art. cit.*, p. 67.

³³ Magistrand Mihail-Gabriel Popescu, *Mântuitorul ca învățător al Sfinților Apostoli*, în rev. S.T., nr. 1-2 /1962, p. 36.

³⁴ Pr. Prof. Liviu Stan, *Succesiunea apostolică*, în rev. S. T, nr. 5-6 /1955, p. 308.

The priest³⁶ and the bishop are representatives of the community, its spokespersons in front of God, but they are not separated from the community.³⁷ They are those whose voices raise the community's prayers to God and in the same time God effuses his grace over the community through them. They are the bearers of the same mission the Savior had on earth, that of bringing a blood sacrifice in the name of the community and of acquiring the gifts of the Holy Grace, gifts that they offer to the community. Therefore, the importance and the outstanding value of the mystery of the Ordination, and of the sacrificer.

The confession or the acknowledgement of the sins presents an extraordinary importance from the perspective of the paschal work. *"Through confession, the priest opens the gates of the kingdom of heaven and multiplies the tabernacles in which the Saint Trinity lives"*³⁸.

The Mystery of the Repentance, or the Confession has received many definitions. Saint Jhon of Damascus tells us that: „*The repentance is the homecoming through ascetic practices and pains, from the against of nature state to the natural state, and from the devil to God*”.³⁹

An important role in the work of the redemption belongs to the priest as *Econom*, *Enricher* or “*stewards of the mysteries of God*.” (I Cor. 4, 1).

Spirituality is closely connected to the Holy Mystery of the Ordination, therefore the priest and the bishop with a valid ordination accomplish what God only can accomplish, the mystery of forgiving the sins: „*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” (Marcu 2, 7). The Son of God has this power as well: „*But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*” (Marcu 2, 10) and the apostles received this power after the Passions, Death, and Resurrection: *Take the Holy Grace* (In 20, 22-23) . This power has been given to people that commit sins and not to the angels, because the one who ties and unties has to know the weaknesses that are part of the human nature as a consequence of committing the sin⁴⁰.

³⁵ Fericitul Augustin, *Confessiones – mărturisiri*, V, XIII, 23, trad. de Prof. Dr. Docent Nicolae Barbu, introducere și note de Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan Rămureanu, ediția a II-a, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1994, pp. 175-176.

³⁶ ÎPS Prof. Dr. Teodosie Petrescu, Arhiepiscopul Tomisului, *Cântarea de Cult și Sfânta Scriptură*, Edit. Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, Constanța, 2008, p. 188.

³⁷ Arhid. Prof. Dr. Ioan N. Floca, *Drept canonic ortodox, vol. II*, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1990, pp. 49-57.

³⁸ Irineu Pop Bistrițeanul, *Preoția și arta pastorală*, p. 47.

³⁹ Sfântul Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, Ed. Scripta, București, 1993, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Anthony M. Coniaris, *Introducere în credința și viața Bisericii Ortodoxe*, trad. rom. Constantin Făgețean, Ed. Sofia, București, 2001, p. 193.

III. THE PENTECOST – CONDITION AND BASE OF THE THEANDRY AND MISSION OF CHURCH

3.1. Aspects of the mission in the primary Church

The presence and the activity of the Savior in Church through the work of the Holy Grace, entrusted to the Apostles and to their descendants, the bishops gives Church the character of a theandric organism, which has, as Jesus has, two natures, two wills, and two works, inseparable and distinct in the same time⁴¹. Having this christological structure, the Church is entrusted with the permanent and objective work of the Holy Grace in all its acts⁴². This work encompasses the power and the Grace of Christ, which Himself gave to *the* twelve, both in the Resurrection Day when He said: *Take the Holy Grace* and especially in the Pentecost day, when He actually covered them with *power from above*.

The Holy Grace with its gifts is the priceless thesaurus of the Church, from which the Christians encompassed in the Church receive through the Holy Mysteries the power of receiving the fruit of the Holy Grace, the deification of their life⁴³.

The Holy Liturgy offers us, in a most obvious way, the communion with the entire sanctifying treasure of the Holy Grace that works in the Church's life⁴⁴. This explains why, near the end of the Holy Liturgy, after the Christians have communicated with "the divine, holy, pure, immortal, heavenly and life giving mysteries"⁴⁵ sing: „*We've seen the true light, we have received the heavenly grace*”⁴⁶, given the fact that under the seen form of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, they have communicated with the unseen heavenly Grace, through the power of which has been accomplished the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist⁴⁷.

After the resurrection and the ascension into heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Christianity starts spreading in the Roman empire. The missionary testament of its Founder is quite clear: „*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age*” (Mt 28, 19-20).

⁴¹ Pr. Prof. Ion Bria, *op. cit.*, p. 493.

⁴² Pr. Ilie Moldovan, *Învățătura despre Duhul Sfânt.*, p. 785.

⁴³ Prot. Dr. Gheorghe Lițiu, *Glossolalia ca dar al Duhului Sfânt*, în rev. O., nr. 4/1984, p. 501.

⁴⁴ Pr. Prof. Ion Bria, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

⁴⁵ ****Liturghier*, p. 183.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Boris Bobrinskoy, *Taina Bisericii...*, p. 43.

The Saint Apostles, aware of their call, have traveled to the farthest lands of the Roman empire, even beyond its borders. The new religion was not anymore a geographically and historically localized religion, belonging only to the chosen people. It became a religion accesible to everyone, without any discrimination . A new religious situation was created, the christian religion was spreading in the world and its missionaries were everywhere, spreading the good news to all the people.

Their mission has been inaugurated on the Pentecost, when the promise made by the Savior Jesus Christ was fulfilled, through the descent of the Holy Grace.⁴⁸

The descent of the Holy Grace as tongues of fire on the Pentecost reveals not only our Savior Jesus Christ's intention of encompassing in the Church, in his Love, the entire world, unified in this love, but His intention was, as well, that each person should maintain his/her own identity in this unity.

Regarding the contemporary movements of the sects' activities, we propose an overall presentation of the pentecostal movement. The pentecostals generalize the Pentecost, and they regard all the other teachings of Jesus Christ as being relative. The Church's Pentecost cannot be equaled to the Pentecost of the Pentecostals. The Church's Pentecost is, from a historic perspective, the birth moment of the Church and this moment is a consequence of the work of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Grace, of the entire divine Trinity, after all. The Pentecostals' Pentecost is an attempt to legitimize a sect founded in the first part of the 20th century, sect that pretends to take christianity back to the basis of christianity, from a historic perspective. After all, this idea is not absurd, but extremely injudicious because it attributes virtues or divine gifts to a sect in the name of the primary Church, and in the name of the entire christian Church.

3.1.1. Peter's preaching - kerigmatic elements of the christian mission

The missionary sermon told by the Saint Apostle Peter is addressed to the Hebrews from Jerusalem (Acts 2, 14, 22), but, in the end of his missionary preaching, he states that the promise of the Gospel belongs not only to the Hebrews, but that is „*for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.*” (Acts 2, 39)⁴⁹. The expression „*all who are far away*” refers to the entire human race (Is 49, 1; 57, 19; Zah 6,15; Efes 2, 13, 17). If the Saint Apostle Peter would have considered only the Hebrew diaspora, he would not have added the expression

⁴⁸ Pr. Prof. Ioan Rămureanu și colaboratorii *op cit.*, p. 62.

⁴⁹ Pr. Prof. Liviu Stan, *Structura primară a comunităților creștine...* , p. 677.

„as many as the Lord our God will call to himself” because the Hebrews were obviously called to the messianic kingdom, and the promises are meant for them in front of all the people (Acts 3, 25- 26; 13, 46; Rom 9, 4).

The first mass conversion to the new faith happened on the Pentecost⁵⁰: „So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added.” (Acts 2, 41), coming from the entire Hebrew diaspora, this thing being very important in spreading of the Gospel.

3.1.2 The sacramental and cult life of the primary Church - paradigmatic space of Church's mission

On the Pentecost day, the effusion of the divine grace and the descent of the Holy Grace as tongues of fire over the Apostles, the Church is being inaugurated as a concrete communion of people with God, with the inherent priesthood, in the apostolic succession „Peter said to them, “Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.... So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people⁹¹ were added.” (Acts 2, 38 și 41). De acum creștinii „devin hristofori, pentru că sunt în prealabil pnevmatofori și în sensul acesta fiecare credincios poartă în sine Biserica, chipul autentic al Duhului și deci al Sfintei Treimi”⁵¹.

The Church is the anticipated and sacramental realization of God's kingdom in the world, and a way of achieving this kingdom. That is why every activity of the Church must have an eschatological orientation, praying for the coming of God's kingdom.⁵²

3.2 Christ – Head of the Church – base of the orthodox mission

3.2.1 The "Body of Christ" (Efes. 1,22-23) - christological characteristic of the mission.

„And God put all things under Christ's feet, and he gave him to the church as head over all things. Now the church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” (Efes. 1,22-23).

⁵⁰ Pr. Ioan Mircea, *Cei șaptezeci de ucenici...* , p. 695.

⁵¹ Pr. Dorel Pogan, *Constituția teandrică a Bisericii*, p. 107.

⁵² Pr. Prof. Dr. Valer Bel, *Misiunea socială a Bisericii în contextul globalizării*, în *Biserică și multiculturalitate în Europa sfârșitului de mileniu*, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, p. 65; vezi mai pe larg și Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Belu, *Împărăția lui Dumnezeu și Biserica*, în S.T., 9-10/1956, pp. 539 - 553.

Namig Christ as the Head of Church, apostle Paul reveals the way in which God is present and the way in which he works in the humankind's life. The Church is compared to a live organism, whose members are articulated and harmonized in Christ. The entire body, revised and committed to the Father, grows from Him and towards Him.⁵³

The Church's unity is in Christ, through the Grace, with God the Trinity. The Church is the body of Christ, and, as there is just one body, the Church is this deep mystery, in which Christ unifies in Himself, through the Holy Grace, all those chosen by God.⁵⁴

The presence of Christ in every suffering being will be discovered at the judgement time (Mt. 25,40-44), but in this moment too it makes us all members of Christ. The Saint Apostle Paul describes the Church using the following image: “*Now the church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*” (Efes 1,23), therefore the body can exist only conditioned by the unity of its members, and each and every members contains the entire Body. In order to correspond to this structure, Christ is not just a member among others, but He is the Head, in the most powerful meaning of the word. His members integrate in an organism through which God's life flows into humans.

The Church is fulfillment when it reaches its vocation, and its vocation is *the fulfillment of Christ*. “Christ in his entirety, head and body”⁵⁵, He is us, as well, says the Blessed Augustine, and the Church is one and it is Christ, lived in the Eucharist. The Christians, in the mystery of the faith, have become united and they have also become united with Christ. Only in the community of the Christians can the Son of God be found, because He only lives inside of a united community.

3.2. Jesus Christ – Head of Church. The Church, Christ's body extended in the christian humankind.

According to its being or its constitution, the Church is not an institution that contains the redemption and shares it among the faithful that become its members, neither it is an institution that serves as a tool for the human redemption. The Church is identical with the achievement of the redemption as far as this is achieved in the world and in history. The Church is part of God's redemption plan by the revision of everyone inside the body of Christ (In 11,52; I Cor 15,28).

⁵³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, p. 212.

⁵⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Boris Bobrinskoy, *Taina Bisericii*, pp. 156-157.

⁵⁵ Fer. Augustin, *Homelie sur l'Evangile de Saint Jean*, P. L. 35, 1622.

The Church is the community of the christians in communion with Christ's Grace, which is the Way, the Truth and the Life⁵⁶. The believers are fully integrated in God's truth and love into Christ, and their evidence is the visualization, the materialization of this truth of life and redemption from the perspective of the eternity. The arm of the Father on which they stand with adamant faith and absolut loyalty is like a solid rock on which a house is built, and when it comes to faith, the house of the humankind has its roots in the sky, where the fadeless treasure is (Mt 7, 24;6, 19-21; Ps 70,3). "The Church is mre than just a conglomerate of individualities held together, warmed by love, but it is a retrievable paradise of inner transformations, a holy place where the Son of God lives in the souls of the believers; a recreation in the Holy Grace of all those who distance themselves from the old self, and receive Christ as Emperor of life."⁵⁷

3.3 Intra-murus and extra-murus Ecclesiae mission. „Vitezda” – the paradigm of such a mission

3.3.1 Charismata or the dynamical factors of the Church's mission. A pauline perspective on the christian mission.

The charismata are ways offered by the Holy Grace to the Apostles from the beginning, in order to start, with divine power, to spread the Gospel⁵⁸. In this extraordinary manifestation, the listeners could see that the christianity has an universal destination, that the Church and the redemption belong to all the people and that its origin is divine. The Apostles preached to the people in languages as a consequence of this gift only once, in Jerusalem on the Pentecost day, and they did not ask the others to speak in languages⁵⁹.

Nowadays, the spiritual gifts are not possible without personal effort, because they do not belong just to the work of Grace, but they also include the human's creative determination.

If the human feelings are not transformed by the divine grace, they become obsolete, cut off from their originar and potential plenitude. The reality of the human love is found in the communion between mand and God, as this is the only complete love.

⁵⁶ Pr. Dr. Gheorghe Petraru, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁵⁷ Pr. Drd. Nicu Dumitrașcu, *Unele aspecte eclesiologice în scrierile Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*, p. 55.

⁵⁸ Pr. Dr. Gheorghe Petraru, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

3.3.2 The ecclesiological aspect of the orthodox mission.

The structure of the Church is a theandric one⁶⁰. Due to its theandric structure, Christ stays united, according to His divine nature, with Father and the Holy Grace, and according to His human nature, Christ is united with the humankind⁶¹.

The Church is Christ prolonged with His divine body in the humankind, therefore, the humankind has Christ and His divine body in it⁶². Due to its theandric structure, Christ is the Head of the Church, which opens up the entire human race to God⁶³.

The communion of the Church with Christ in the Holy Grace has to manifest itself in the relations between bishops, priests, deacons and believers, because only through order, discipline, and self abnegation generated by the love of Christ can the Church fulfill its apostolic mission. As descendants of the Apostles, the bishops form the episcopal communion, but this communion is part of the synodal communion of the Church.

Beyond the doctrines, the traditions and the specific structures, Churches must keep alive the believe in Christ's unifying power, by adding to this their own efforts in order to achieve the true life in Christ, lived in a united Church that may reflect the mystery of the divine unity.

The image of this Church can be no other but the one offered by the Orthodox Church, built on the patristic foundation and on the foundation of the seven Ecumenical Synods, the Church that kept unaltered the thesaurus of the divine Revelation, of the cult and organization of the primary Church.

3.4 The triple ministration of the Savior, reflected in the missionary activity of the Church

3.4.1 Jesus - The supreme Teacher in the Church's mission.

The redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ is the man's absolution from the chains of sin and death and the offering of the eternal life in ocmunion with God. The evil in which Adam had fallen consisted in the alteration of the human nature, the confusion regarding the religious truth, the decline of the will causing the man's inclination for the evil, instead of good,

⁶⁰ Paul Evdokimov, *Ortodoxia*, traducere din limba franceză Dr. Irineu Ioan Popa, arhiereu vicar, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1996, p. 138.

⁶¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, p. 215.

⁶² Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, p. 215.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

and in breaking the connection with God, in the guilt and the punishment for sin. In order to reestablish the human nature, to guide and restore it, were necessary the enlightenment of the man through the true teaching, and the rebuilt of the connection with God, the consolidation and the support of this connection⁶⁴.

In these three directions was supposed to head the redemption work of Jesus Christ, therefore He performs His work in a triple aspect: as prophet, bishop and emperor, continuing this work even after His ascension to heaven, in the Church, through the Holy Grace. As prophet, he brings the complete Revelation of the being and of God's will and of the redemption work: „*For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does, and will show him greater deeds than these, so that you will be amazed.*” (Ioan 5, 20); as bishop, he recreates the connection between man and God, bringing man and God together through sacrifice „*But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God,*” (Evr. 10, 12); as emperor, he defeats the evil forces and guides the man to his true destination „*Then Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*” (Mt 28, 18). The triple work of the Savior is based on the redemption work itself. The Savior literally fulfilled these three ministrations, and these are the highest dignities one can perform in this life⁶⁵.

Jesus Christ is the Teacher and the Prophet and He reveals to the human race, through the power received from God, the final truth about God, humankind, creation, about the redemption and the consecration of the man, supporting His teaching with His actions. He is identified with His teaching: „*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*” (In 14, 6) or „*I am the light of the world*” (Ioan 8, 12). He is the teacher and the supreme Prophet through His own Being, because He is not just human, but He is also God. Therefore, the true teaching about God and His work irradiates from Him, as well as the teaching about the true man, the way he is achieved in Christ, and how everyone must become. His teaching is the final revelation about God and humankind, as He is Himself this revelation⁶⁶.

Due to the mission it has to accomplish among every people, the Church has two main goals. It has to spread the Gospel of Christ, showing, in the same time, the deceitfulness of the

⁶⁴ Prof. N. Chițescu, Pr. Prof. Isidor Todoran, Pr. Prof. I. Petreună *Teologie Dogmatică și Simbolică*, manual pentru Facultățile Teologice, vol. II, Ed. Renașterea, Cluj Napoca, 2005, p. 38.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

⁶⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

ideologies, currents and philosophical and religious systems that alienate the man from the revealed truth, manifest in the person of Jesus Christ; the other goal is to stand as a living proof, as an anticipation and as a mean of achieving the eschatological communion of the world with its Maker⁶⁷.

In the contemporary society, the Church must fight against secularism and pantheism. Secularism usually substitutes man instead of God, so that the man would dominate instead of the Maker. Despite the technological progress, this anthropocentric tendency led to the profound ecological crisis; this crisis gradually undermines the human's chances of surviving on this planet. In the same time, this tendency caused a spiritual crisis which turns the human into a slave of technology and of irrational and demonic forces, mutilating him from a spiritual point of view.

There are two dangers that threaten the Church:

- The gnostic danger : the teaching might replace the knowledge and become more important than faith.

The Savior's prophetic call blends harmoniously with the teaching dignity of the embodied Logos. The prophetic call is the foundation of the Church's prophetism - its role being that of consolidating the primary Christian Church - the teaching dignity of the Savior represents the basis of the Church's dogma. Therefore, two serious dangers emerge from this last aspect threatening the Christian-orthodox life and mission:

1. There is a positivist and a syncretist speech that depreciate the entire structure of the Church, by reducing everything to a human teaching, in no way different from other human teachings. This danger is very serious because, in a reductionist approach, the complex structure of the Church is reduced to its dogmatic dimension, although this dimension is a very important one. The truth confessed by the Church is a clear one; the teaching of the Church is part of the Church's life - like an extension of the Logos Itself in the history of the redemption - a divine and human life as part from the Savior's theandry. This means that the Church does not pay special importance to the human's mind only, through the teaching aspect, but it is focused on the entire being of the human, mind and body as well.

2. We can call the second danger „the gnostic danger”; it is an extension and an exacerbation of the first reductionist danger. This "gnostic danger" is actual in a post-modern society which values the knowledge - in a positivistic scientific manner - in a mostly materialist

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

context. Therefore, the teaching aspect becomes a goal and it is exacerbated to the detriment of the moral values and becomes part of an autonomous knowledge that denies and rejects God in the name of contemporary human's "freedom" and "independance". "The gnostic danger" is an update of the ancient gnosis that represented a test for the primary Church. For gnostics „to know” is more important than „to believe”, meaning that knowledge is more important than faith, and this supremacy imposed by the contemporary autonomous man has at least two harmful consequences:

a) It opens wide the gates of esoterism and post-modern occultism, with all the serious consequences supported by the contemporary christian;

b) It opens wide the gates of the New Age type of syncretism, which highlights the knowledge based on no revelational foundation, to the detriment of faith, which acquires a soteriological character. Regarding this second danger, the Church teaches us that in order to achieve redemption, the knowledge is important, but it is not absolute; the knowledge is a way to, not a purpose, because faith is more important in our relationship with God and with humans, but also in achieving redemption.

The prophetism of the Church refers to an essential dimension of the Church – of the primary Church, but also of the work done by God in the Old Testament to build the Church. Therefore, the prophetism of the Church is focused on a part of the Holy Grace’s work through the Old Testament’s prophets, work that anticipated and that prepared the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ, but it is also focused on God’s prophetic work from the beginning of the Church, as fulfillment and consolidation of the primary Church. The prophetic dimension had been withdrawn by God; the Saint Apostle Paul states in his epistles about the fact that the gift of the prophecy will cease. In Saint Apostle Paul’s second epistle to the Corinthians it is stated that at the beginning of the fifth century the gift of the prophecy does not exist anymore in the Church, showing that what was to be discovered in the Church by God was already achieved.

3.4.2 The Savior’s Sacrifice – premise of mysterious embodiment in the Church as ultimate goal of the orthodox mission.

Jesus Christ’s bishopric work resides in the self sacrifice, in the sufferings endured from the embodiment to His death on the cross, especially His death because He died for us and for our redemption, taking away the man’s blame and guilt and reestablishing the communion

between God and the human race. God, in His wisdom, has decided that the man's redemption will be achieved through His Son's embodiment and sacrifice. The embodiment of the Son and the Word of God have as purpose the sacrifice. He is like us in every way, and His appearance is that of a true man „*but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men*” (Filip. 2, 7); it is a sacrifice for His grandness, and the passions, the death on the cross of the pure One, the mediation between us and the Father are actions performed by Christ the Bishop⁶⁸.

Through His ministration as Bishop in the Church, Christ constantly reveals His sacrificed body, but in the same time He presents us as pure and voluntary sacrifices. But Christ does not sacrifice us as objects, but he determines us to willingly sacrifice ourselves. In this way we become ourselves not just sacrifices, but also priests of our sacrifice in this limited meaning⁶⁹.

Jesus Christ the Savior fulfills the real priesthood and the real sacrifice, making us part of this sacrifice. From this point of view, the sacramental priesthood of the Church is an extension of Jesus Christ's priesthood and it is also an extension of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. Therefore, the Christians are part of this sacrifice. The Church's priesthood originates in Jesus Christ's bishopry and sacrifice⁷⁰.

In the constitution of the Church one can distinguish between:

a) The spiritual state of the believers, received through the initiation mysteries: Baptism, Eucharist, and Eucharist. It refers to the general priesthood which belongs to all those baptised; they have personal divine gifts and responsibilities.

b) The ministration instituted by Jesus Christ and granted through the Ordination Mystery, in apostolic succession. This ministration has specific sacramental, didactical and pastoral functions and it has a representative role⁷¹.

These ministrations are not interchangeable, because they differ in nature and in authority, and they participate in different ways to Christ's priesthood. Each has its own place, function and role in the Church's structure. In the same time, these ministrations are necessary and they are inseparable, because the Church is not a clerical institution and because no

⁶⁸ *** *Îndrumări misionare*, p. 348.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

⁷⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. Stelian Tofană, *Iisus Hristos Arhiereu Veșnic*, p. 478.

⁷¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Dicționar de teologie ortodoxă*, 1981, p. 304.

ministration is self-sufficient. Each christian has a "priestly dignity" and has direct access to the object of the priesthood. The ministrations received through ordination have a representative function, as they are more than a personal responsibility⁷².

Laic christians participate at Christ's ministration by defeating their temptations and sins, by organizing the christian communion and through the christian deacony in the secular society. Christ's Gospel helps people to escape from the dominion of sin and death, and places them on the path of justice, liberty and communion in the eternal life: „*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” (In. 14, 6) „*I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” (In. 8, 12)⁷³.

IV. THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AS SPACE OF THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY COMMUNITY

The contemporary mission of the contemporary theology and of the Orthodox Church must begin from the clear image of the world we live in. This world faces an unprecedented social phenomenon that triggers an important transformation of the civilization, and understanding this phenomenon is essential for the Church's existence and mission. Priest Professor Ioan Ică jr. indicates a triple mutation in the contemporary society, affecting the social dimension, the human and the religion.

The spreading of the Gospel, as well as the missionary transmission of the christian tradition by the laics is extremely important in the family.⁷⁴ From its beginning, the christian Church was built on the family model, as a community based on love: „*Do not address an older man harshly but appeal to him as a father. Speak to younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters – with complete purity. Honor widows who are truly in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to fulfill their duty toward their own household and so repay their parents what is owed them. For this is what pleases God.*” (I Tim. 5, 1-4).

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 305.

⁷³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Valer Bel, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁷⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Tratat de Teologie dogmatică și ecumenică*, Ed. România creștină, București 1999, p. 162.

4.1 The Apostolate of the Church's Sacramental Priesthood

There are knowers of the spiritual life who believe and state that the most fulfilling and efficient form of pastoration is the individual pastoration. The Church should use nowadays this type of pastoration⁷⁵.

The Holy Mysteries, Hierurgies, the services, and the prayers connect the priest with the christians; the priest has, therefore, the opportunity to find out about the believers' joys and pains, and their wishes. The contemporary priest has acces to uncountable ways of performing the individual pastoration in a form as close to perfection as possible⁷⁶.

The priest's presence in various committees can exceed some prejudices, and it can help us grow closer to one another. This is a hidded door through whcih our ideas can enter environments closed before to any christian message.

4.1.1. The Instauration and the Vocation of the Sacramental Priesthood, the pauline teaching

The priesthood is the extension and the perpetuation of the apostles' mission in the world; it is a mission given by the Savior to His servants. The priesthood is part of the Christ's work, power driven from the power of Christ, word of Christ's word. The priesthood has been always honored in all the religions.

Messia said to His Apostles: „*“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its flavor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people. You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven.”* (Mt 5, 13-16). In this divine words are compressed all the Apostles and priests' missions.

⁷⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Al. Moisiu, *Mântuitorul și pastorația individuală*, în rev M. B., nr. 10-12./1979 p. 663.

⁷⁶ Anton Frunză, *art. cit.*, p. 116.

4.1.2 The liturgical dimension of the orthodox mission. Cult and sacramental priesthood.

The priest does not have to measure his rights and his duties with those of the world. The most rewarding action is not to be able to do anything, but to be able to redeem the humans. This is what makes the priest's work so extraordinary. The priest has to suffer together with the one who suffers. His soul has a special sensibility, because he is going to answer in front of God for each of his Christians. Preotul trebuie să sufere cu orice suferind, cu orice neputincios, să pătimească împreună cu cei care pătimesc. He is the apostle, he is the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and he is better than us all because he can do what the rest of us cannot: he serves with the angels in front of God and helps the believers to achieve redemption.

Regarding the creation, the man has been created in the image of God and His Logos

4.1.3 The universality of the Church's mission centered on the sacramental priesthood.

The power of the priest's ministration derives from the triple work accomplished by the Saint Apostles. Later, in different churches from the apostolic period, the work of sanctification and the work of preaching were performed by the Church's ministrants from the three hierarchical steps. The notion of Church included the notions of clergy, hierarchy and faithful people.

Except from heralding God to everyone, the priest is also a leader, a guide, this part of his responsibilities corresponding to Christ's work as emperor. This position of spiritual leadership has been granted by Jesus to His disciples: „*The one who listens to you listens to me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects the one who sent me.*” (Lc. 10, 16).

The extension of Jesus Christ's priesthood into the Church's sacramental priesthood is the perpetuation of the sacrifice inside His own body. The priest participates at this sacrifice through the confession of his life. The sacramentality of the Church, as well as the priesthood originate from the divine power of Jesus Christ's eternal priesthood. The Church is a community of sacrifice, centered on the constant love of Christ. The sacrificial and the sacerdotal aspect of the Church are constant.

4.1.4. The Role of the Holy Mysteries in the missionary-pastoral activity of the priest - the mission of the „spiritual conception” and of the "rebirth"

The divine cult is the one that forms the experience of our faith. Due to it, all those that recognise Christ as God the Creator and the Ransomer form one spiritual body. By preaching and through the Holy Mysteries, the Orthodox Church calls all its sons to take part and to benefit from the work of redemption.⁷⁷

The Mystery of the Baptism seeds in our souls a certain feeling and knowledge of God, as a consequence of the cancellation of the original sin: the eyes of the soul are wide open and we receive the power of living our lives accordingly to Christ⁷⁸.

The serving priesthood's mission is to rebirth the humans into Christ through the Holy Mystery of the Baptism. The priest is born again, and he has the power of spiritually shaping us and of turning us into members of Christ's Body.

The repentance is the cure for the wound caused by sins to our soul, and the grace present here does not allow any scar on our soul, so it cures and beautifies it.⁷⁹

The Holy Eucharist is the fire that purifies our soul, it is the fulfillment of all the other mysteries, accomplishing what the other mysteries are not able to - it makes everything to shine even brighter the gift of the other mysteries, shadowed by sin.⁸⁰

The Mystery of the Holy Matrimony⁸¹ is based on the relationship between our Savior Jesus Christ and His Church. The connection between man and woman is in this way situated beyond egoism, individualism, and self-love. It is the basis of the smallest social cell, and, from a theological perspective, it is continued and extended through the spiritual communion created by the Church.

Together with the Holy Mysteries, the Hierurgies are part of the sacred means of the Church, and their purpose is the sanctification of the creation. In the same time, they are favourable ways of pastoration and mission, although they are not fully exploited by the contemporary priests. They are connected with Christ's desire to work „*whether it is convenient or not*” (II Tim. 4, 2) for the redemption of the souls.

⁷⁷ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Din aspectul sacramental al Bisericii*, p. 558.

⁷⁸ N. Cabasila, *op. cit.*, p. 56-69.

⁷⁹ Sf. Ioan Hrisostom, *Predici despre pocăință și despre Sf. Vavila*, 1938, p. 88.

⁸⁰ Nicolae Cabasila, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁸¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Isidor Todoran; Arhid. Prof. Dr. Ioan Zăgrean, *Teologie Dogmatică, manual pentru Seminariile Teologice*, p. 323.

4.1.5. The exertion of the mission through sermons and catechisms

The religious education based on the Holy Gospel had always had as an objective the building of noble, pure, and holy characters, able to represent the Savior's life model. Educația religioasă fundamentată pe învățătura Sfintei Evanghelii a avut întotdeauna ca obiectiv prioritar formarea de caractere creștine nobile, sfinte, curate, capabile să întrupeze modelul divin de viață al Mântuitorului.

The ideal of the christian education is to educate the christian soul and to cultivate it accordingly to the evangelical precepts, established by our Savior. Practicing the moral and religious virtues in a healthy, moral climate, the cultivation of the man's dignity and unic value are the factors that concur to the formation of the religious and moral character, of the awareness of fulfilling one's destiny in the world⁸².

The Church's mission, the catechism and the christian pedagogy are our chances of remaining attached to Christ; it is our chance to stand out as living missionary members of Jesus's Church.

4.2 The apostolate of the Church's universal priesthood

4.2.1 The role and the mission of the christian in the ecclesiastical Body of the Savior

Laic believers are keepers of the Church's sanctifying grace, together with the clergy: then, they are protectors of this grace and they use it in the Church's work for redemption, together with the clergy.

Laic believers that have the gift and the necessary preparation are called to concur at the moral and religious education and at the defence of the christian orthodox religion in congregations, in schools and using the social communication means.⁸³

4.2.2. The restoration of the family - an acute necessity for a true mission

In the christian family, through the Baptise, the children have access to Christ and to the christian education that is part of God's family, the Church. This responsibility manifests itself through actions that happen in the society, because one's own family cannot be served without fulfilling some duties in society and in Church. As long as we consider marriage only in

⁸² Nichifor Crainic, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁸³ *Pr. Prof. Dr. Al. Moisiu, art. cit.*, p. 668.

connection with those that get married, without comparing it to the entire Church, and, therefore, to the entire world, one could never understand its sacramental character, that Mystery Saint Apostle Paul talks about: *"And I speak into Christ and into the Church"*. In this respect, the Mystery of the Matrimony is broader than the family. It is the Mystery of the divine love, the Mystery that encompasses the entire existence and it is the reason why it concerns the Church and the world. A healthy family is a healthy cell in the edifice of the Church and of the society.

Tradition has an important role in education for the Romanian orthodox Christians, because the family *"is the most adequate environment for the oral conveyance of the faith"*⁸⁴, because the parents are those who develop their children's religious consciousness".

The expression „family is the fundamental cell of the society” is often used without one being aware of its true meaning. Father Ilie Moldovan is one of those who enrich the meaning of this expression, highlighting the following aspect: „The real family that conserves the ethnogenesis' spiritual valences, institution created by God and offered through a holy mystery a divine dimension, is more than a cell of the society. As formative force of our nation, it is the creative source and the sacred laboratory where the nation and its land are created and maintained.

4.2.3. Concrete possibilities of involving the laic in the Church's mission.

Laic also have a mission like that of a priest, they are as well sent to a ministration in Church, therefore they are also responsible for Church, in solidarity with the sacramental priesthood. Their work encompasses rights, as well as obligations, and the subject of these can only be the laic Christian who received the general priesthood through Baptism and Holy Unction. Laic Christians are summoned to a work and to a mission higher than that of the Old Testament's priests and prophets (Lc 7, 28). Laic priesthood, as well as deacon's priesthood does not grant these the right to use, fully or partially, the sacramental power, but in the way the deacons help the priests and the bishops to fulfill the sacramental functions, therefore the laic receive a smaller amount of this power.⁸⁵

Saint John Chrysostom states that serving our neighbours is the same with serving to ourselves: *„Moving all your riches into the heaven through the hands of the poor, you also move*

⁸⁴ Pr. Prof. Ion Bria, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, p. 307.

⁸⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Valer Bel, *Misiunea...*, p. 174.

*and deposit these in the benefit of your soul... Such a thesaurus possessed Tavita, therefore not her house voiced her actions, nor the walls, the rocks or the poles, but the bodies of the widows she dressed, the tears she cried, the death she ran from and the life she found*⁸⁶.

Each orthodox christian assuming the values he believes in also has the duty of confessing his faith, becoming responsible for the way he spreads these values around him.

4.2.4. The religious education in schools - acute demand in the accomplishment of an activ laic apostolate

The religious education starts during the childhood, inside the family. Religious experiences from this stage can turn to be decisive for one's entire life.

Between faith and education there is a very close connection. "Faith needs the support of education, of a cultivating exercise, through a good formation and information. Uninformed faith can turn into credulity and blind submission in front of any source that attributes itself dignities beyond its reach."⁸⁷

„Religious education is the creation and the development of a superior feeling that connects the man to what is beyond humanity, and beyond the superficial interests.⁸⁸ The purpose of the religion classes is more than transmitting knowledge - it is the building of moral characters, as the mission of religion is not only to exercise the children's intelligence, but to develop their religious convictions, to enhance the feeling of duty toward God and themselves.

The participation of the young as members of a christian association, charity organization, or nongovernmental organization can help youngsters form their religious consciousness and behaviour. The unification of the educational factors might lead to an authentic spiritual transformation of the man and community.

“Church proposes, not imposes, values”, states Patriarch Daniel, highlighting the fact that the presence of religion in the public educational system is not "a Romanian innovation or model", but an action of justice, based on the European Romanian culture and it is a constant necessity in the noble process of the students' moral and religious formation.⁸⁹ Religion classes can not miss from the curriculum or from the Romanian school's program, because studying

⁸⁶ www.sfantulioanguradeaur.ro

⁸⁷ Constantin Cucoş, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁸⁹ <http://www.ieseanul.ro/ultima-ora/patriarhul-daniel>.

religion is a need of the Romanian regional and national communities, as it helps preserving the spiritual identity and transmitting our values to the younger generations.

4.2.5. Philanthropy - means of involving the laic in the mission of Church

The term "philanthropy" comes from the greek word *fileo-* which means "to love" and *antropos* whcih means "human". "Philanthropy" is a christian term, and its first meaning is the love of God towards humans. But as God is loves the humans, the humans as well is summoned to emulate God's "philanthropy". Love can only be discussed only after God's embodiment, as the embodiment itself is an act of philanthropy.

The „deaconhood” or the christian philanthropy is a "concrete expression of God's love: faith and ministration must be seen as unitary, not distinct. From this perspective, philanthropy is part of Church's mission and work."⁹⁰

The christian, through his work, becomes God's co-worker. Philanthropy does not exhaust its content on the material action. It is some more important: it is love. It asnwers man's need of love. Loving his neighbour, man can discover the love of God and of the Saint Trinity's persons. Therefore, the mssion is an evangelical imperative and a sacred call of the Church, and it constitutes the responsability of the entire people of God, both clergy and laic.

V. CHURCH AND MISSION IN A SECULAR WORLD

5.1 The secularization of the contemporary world

Either one considers the Occidental societies that state they have no democratic performances, or the societies that have recently gave up communism, one nthat there is a consumer society, where "the disease of the secularization has modified the European nations' mentality and traditions."⁹¹ The legislation that promotes the „*Occidental model*” based on the market economy. This led to the development of a society that owns a magic recipe for progress and efficacy.

Secularism is the construction of one's private and social life with a clear connection with the fundamental principles of the chrsitian spirituality. The phenomenon of secularism imposes a

⁹⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. Valer Bel, *Misiune, parohie, pastorație*, pp. 120-121.

⁹¹ Ioan Bizău, *Viața în Hristos și maladia secularizării*, Ed. Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 28.

general perspective on the world, and, in consequence, a life model in which the primary aspects of the human existence , family, education, science, profession, art - are in no way connected to the religious belief, and the necessity or the possibility of such a connection is denied.

5.2. The implications of secularism in the christian religion

The secular society is a society dominated by silence when it comes to God. Speaking about God has become, in several environments, improper or even "obscene". It has been said that the impudence of speaking about sex, has become the impudence of speaking about God, in fact, this is more than an impudence, it is an inhibition or what our ascetics call "forgetfulness", a spiritual slumber that can be disturbed and which media fills with pre-made dreams.

God's absence from the secular world's consciousness cancels any life truth, except for those of degradation and death. Such an absence clearly defines the modern nihilism and the indifference concerning religion as mass phenomena, phenomena that bear tragic consequences.⁹²

5.3 The missionary demandings in a pluralist world, lacking sacrality and faith

There are two dimension of the mission, an internal and an external one.

The internal mission's subject are those who "*formally belong to the Church*", but who actually distanced themselves from the life of Church. Here are included the memebbers of different confession, as well, especially those somehow connected to the Orthodox Church, but have estranged themselves from the first christian millenium's tradition. In the same time, here are included those who have no understanding whatsoever of the chrstian faith. They can be in different stages that vary from *an innocent misapprehension* to open hostility.⁹³

Concerning the external mission of the Church, it has as subject those "who have never lived the chrisitan life model"; the Church must question why "has it not been able to win these individuals' hearts, but for short and fragmented periods of time." And here is the question concerning the relation between the primary Church and the one that followed it: how come the

⁹² Christos Yannaras, *Heidegger și Areopagitul*, Ed. Anastasia, București, 1996, p. 79.

⁹³ Aurel Pavel, Iulian Ciprian Toroczka, *Adevăratul și falsul ecumenism*, Ed. Universității „Lucian Blaga” Ed. Andreiana, Sibiu. 2010, pp. 167-168.

primary Church's mission was so successful among the first unchristians, and how come that the second christian millenium was not able anymore to reach to the hearts of the unchristians?

The modern man is fascinated by technology able to satisfy all his needs, as well as his material pleasure, and this caused the man to be disinterested in the spiritual matters. This phenomenon led to the apparition of two types of people; due to the domination of technology over their lives, those from the first category became interested in spiritual matters that would satisfy their spiritual hunger; those who have achieved the rebirth of their religious feelings are few. A different and wider category is that of those who tried to satisfy their spiritual needs using substitutions like drugs, alcohol, or sex. On a long term, this is a destructive attitude, and it can only temporary diminish the boredom caused by the apparently satisfying technologic and material existence⁹⁴.

The most important value of the Orthodoxy is the possibility of sanctification, united with the Church as a "communion in Christ".

5.4 The globalization and the autonomy of the contemporary society - challenges faced by the Church's mission

The phenomenon of globalization encompasses each and every domain of the existence, from science, ideology, and religion to cultural, social, political and economical aspects. Many of these together with the infrastrucutre created by their materialization have profound implications in the christian moral and religious life, especially from the orthodoxy's perspective.

In order to satisfy people come from all the religious traditions, the global world offers a unique religious alternative - the impersonal god of hinduism, named according to the necessities. In "Orthodoxy and the religion of the future", father Serafim Rose discovers this thing by analyzing the religious phenomena of the Occident, after the 60s. The universal religion of the global world is going to be (and it already is in the Occident and not only) a strange amalgam of oriental religions and a new christianism.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

⁹⁵ Ieromonah Serafim Rose, *Ortodoxia și „religia” viitorului*, Mănăstirea Slătioara, 1996 , p. 54.

5.5 The actuality of the missionary post-paschal mandate

There are authorized and competent voices from inside the orthodoxy stating that the eschatological perspective brought to the world by the Orthodox Church might not be completely exploited, unless it is autocratically and penitently promoted.⁹⁶

In the human being's aware and voluntary relation with God, the basis of this special connection is God's image in human. The Revelation teaches us that the man has been created in the image of God. The Holy Fathers all see this as an order established from the beginning, reflecting some sort of matching between the human being and the divine Being. The patristic literature offers various definitions of this connection, but none can encompass the entire content of the image.

One must rediscover Church as a social place of the word that speaks about the plenitude of the existence when this glorifies God. The word must be received and experienced in communion with the Church, society of agreements and synods. An open clergy will know how to surprise the germs of faith developing in our society, and then, in communion of the entire people with God, it will transform the word into a form of liberation and fulfillment, participating at the conservation of the faith that survived milleniums.

VI. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE THEANDRIC STRUCTURE AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH. A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

6.1 The priority of the sacramental aspect of the Church against the institutional one

The eucharistic ecclesiology interprets the word *ecclesia* as the people of God, summoned to unite not in the Temple of the Old Covenant, but in a center localized in the Body of Christ. The completeness of His Body is shared through the Eucharist, and this means that any eucharistic gathering, having the bishop as its leader, possesses the completeness of God's Church. God's Church from Corinth or from any other place is the Church in the completeness of its theandric content. The plurality of Lord's suppers cannot reach the same unicity of that one Supper, because the plurality of places is not able to reach the unique and the same Church in its

⁹⁶ Georgios Mantzaridis, *Globalizare și universalitate*, traducere de Pr. Prof. Dr. Vasile Răducă, Ed. Bizantină, București, 2002, p. 188.

entirety. The numerical quantity of places and their phenomenology are variable, and the numeral reality manifested is invariable, it is the completeness of Christ.

The Apostles have received the power of founding and organizing churches and the power of transmitting the grace of the priesthood through apostolic succession. In this way the seven Holy Mysteries instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ are performed. As a consequence of Pentecost when the Holy Grace descended over the apostles, they have become brave and willing to sacrifice their life for God and for our Lord Jesus Christ. They become preachers of the divine word, and following Saint Apostle Peter's speech in Jerusalem, 3.000 souls are baptised, becoming part of the Christian Church⁹⁷: „So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added.”. Acts 2, 41). After this baptism, when the Church was founded due to the huge number of members, Jacob was hallowed bishop of the first Church from Jerusalem, creating the complete hierarchy of the Church. The hierarchy of the Church was a necessity, and although the functions had no name, they existed. The first Christian Church is founded in Jerusalem where also appears the hierarchy of the Church established by the Apostles. The life of this Christian community develops two dimensions: a spiritual and religious one (Acts 2, 42, 46, 47), and a social one.⁹⁸

According to the Orthodox doctrine, the unity of the Church is not a sociological, but an ontological one, and it works together with the unity of faith. The unity of the Church as God's gift surpasses any human notion and it includes the entire divine and human being. That is why its perspective is not limited by history, but it is extended to eternity. The Church's place of manifestation and action is the history, but the place of its definitive synaxis is God's kingdom.

The Church is theandric, it has an objective and divine dimension that does not rely on people, and it is from above, but it also has a subjective, human dimension, that relies on us; it is founded by Jesus Christ, but it is constituted out of the people's consent of believing in Christ: "The Church is a divine and human organism, that can be described as a historical community seen in space and time, the Church of those who are still in this time, but it can also be seen as an eschatological unity, as it is united with God into Christ for eternity, beyond space and time, the Church of those who are with Christ"⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ Magistrand Ioan Mircea, *Organizarea Bisericii și viața primilor creștini...*, p. 66.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

⁹⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, pp. 121-122.

The Church is not just an association of believers or an organization with an hierarchical structure - the key element is God's call followed by the gathering. "The Church is not a human society, but a divine one which although it is place in the world, it is not from the world and it cannot be compared to other groups. It is an organism born and structured starting by Christ, not by its members."¹⁰⁰

Blessed Augustine states that Christ and the believers are "unus homo", "una persona", "una eademque persona". I. Karmiris states too that according to the Holy Fathers, Christ and the Church form in a way one "person", Christ is the Ego of the Church which does not have its own "person" or its own "hypostasis" of Christ and the members of His body¹⁰¹. In this context, Saint John Chrysostom repeatedly highlights the unity of the Church with Christ, but he avoid to give this unity the name of a person: "In the same way the head and the body form one man, the Church and the Christ are one. That is why he named Christ instead of Church, naming his body in this way. Because as our body is one, although it is composed from many parts, inside the Church we are all one"¹⁰².

The Church's activity of deacony is a continuation of our Savior's work. This is, in fact, the christianism. Our Savior did more than preaching His Gospel to everyone, He also "cured all the disease and the infirmity". He cure the sick ones, fed the hungry ones in the desert, and He forgave sins. His disciples did the same. Pentecost is the Church's birth day, and it also is the birth day of what cannot be separated from it: the mercy.¹⁰³

Although the apostolic mission literally ended with the death of the last of the Apostles, the twelve Apostles did leave a heritage to the world, a continuation of their mission. Although the personal apostolic dignity could not be passed on, they offered gifts to their descendants, either individual gifts, or gifts belonging to the Church as a society. Each member of Jesus's Church is summoned to become a herald of God's word, to take part of the mission of redemption of the Church. Fulfilling this mission, the laic accomplish their apostolate in the Church, as well as in the world, in the spiritual dimension, as well as in the temporal one.

¹⁰⁰ G. Florovsky, *Le Corps du Christ vivant. Une interprétation orthodoxe de l'Église* în vol. La Sainte Église Universelle. Confrontation oecuménique, Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel-Paris, 1948, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 364.

¹⁰² Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilia la Cor. I*, 30, 1 P. G., t. LXI, col. 250.

¹⁰³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Constantin Coman, *Prin fereastra Bisericii*, Ed. Bizantină, București, 2007, p. 252.

6.2 The contemporary context of the mission of Church. Dangers and challenges

Orthodoxy has been accused of dealing too much with the inner aspect of the man, neglecting the social and political factors. The mission of the Church is not to make politics or to dividing people in groups¹⁰⁴, but to unite everyone into Christ, as the only way of preserving the unity of the faith and of the nation is by distancing itself from the temporary political options. The inner experience that the Church grants to its believers is addressed not only to the soul, but it also has the purpose of protecting the body from the passions that have consequences which might affect the social life and the life of the parish.¹⁰⁵

Contemporary christians are summoned to perform brave spiritual actions in order to stand the challenges of the secular world, a world lacking faith, an autonomous world that lives its existence following the trend of the era, without following the word from the Gospel of Christ.

The speech about the modern process of secularization presupposes the awareness of a clear fracture in the relation between faith, Church, and society. Due to the evolution of the process of secularization, the economical, political and social structures are formed outside the ecclesiastical environment, they express themselves outside this environment and often against it. More and more people live their private lives in a secular manner, without any connection to the religious and moral model of life, as present in christianism. Olivier Clement, a contemporary theologian, states that: "the secular society is a society that keeps an absolute silence regarding God. Speaking about God has become, in several environments, improper or even "obscene". It has been said that the impudence of speaking about sex, has become the impudence of speaking about God, in fact, this is more than an impudence, it is an inhibition"¹⁰⁶.

The mission of the Church is to help society rediscover the fundamental values, forgotten or ignored, and to prepare the future on a different foundation. The ideology of the past political system highlighted the idea that the society did not need any religious values, and that the human history was an atheist, unspiritual reality. The Church did not analyze from a missionary

¹⁰⁴ Valer Bel, *Misiunea socială a Bisericii în contextul globalizării*, în vol. Biserică și multiculturalitate în Europa, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, pp. 51-71.

¹⁰⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Tratat de Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică*, Ed. „România Creștină”, București, 1999, pp. 215-220.

¹⁰⁶ Olivier Clement, *Viața din inima noastră*, Ed. Pandora, Targoviște, 2001, p. 47.

perspective the impact of this ideology on the society, in general, and on each member of our parishes in particular¹⁰⁷.

Because the present situation of the world differs from the past one, the Church must bring God's love into the world, by a commitment to serve the welfare of the entire community. The Church is called to show that it is a permanently open community aiming to serve the world and for the world, by an active commitment, and a selfless work. The Church must follow Jesus Christ, and the new relation of the Church with the world must be one totally dedicated to the great causes of the humankind.

CONCLUSIONS

What brings new the *serving Church* in the orthodox ecclesiology? First of all, it brings the reactualization of gospel and patristic tradition and secondly, a reevaluation of the mankind as an ecclesiological coordinate. But before that, Orthodoxy tried to redefine, in modern terms, a serving theology, in order to find out in which stage it is in serving the world. Defining the work and the "serving Church", orthodox theology maintained a balance between serving God and serving the humankind.

Beginning with Pentecost, in Church and through Church it accomplishes the mystery of recapitulation in Christ of those who are chosen by God. This mystery of recapitulation is The Eucharist. Christ, the head of Church, is commemorated and celebrated in each Eucharist. And where Christ is, there is also the universal Church¹⁰⁸. The whole Church, in its complexity, is seen in the Eucharistic Liturgy celebrated by Bishop, in the local community. That is why, the universal Church is not formed out of small communities, but the local Church is the universal Church set in a specific place. Local Churches are in a perfect symphony creating a unique conciliating reality.

The nowadays mission of theology and of the Orthodox Church has to start from a conscient and total knowledge of the world in which we live. This world is dealing with an unprecedented social phenomenon which engenders a huge mutation of the civilization whose

¹⁰⁷ Ioan Tulcan, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁸ Ignatie al Antiohiei, *Către Smirneni* 8, 2 în *Scrierile Părinților Apostolici*, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1995, p. 222.

understanding is vital for Church and for the future mission of Church: the social, human and religious one.

In the action of building the body of Christ, the Apostles, the Disciples, and by extension, all Christians worked together „*We are coworkers belonging to God.*” (I Cor. 3, 9). They are not the ones who make the body of Christ grow, but God; nevertheless, each participates with his own work that grows on the foundation established by Christ.

The ecclesiastical services are part of the life and needs of the modern Christian society. The Christian pastoration fulfills the wishes, the needs and the feelings of the religious man, and its purpose is the redemption of the Christians and the sanctification of the main moments of this earthly life.

The mission of Church, the catechism and the Christian pedagogy are our chances of remaining attached to Christ; it is our chance to stand out as living missionary members of Jesus's Church. The catechism and the pedagogy are our only chances of forming, guiding and saving souls.

„Philanthropy” or the „love for one's neighbours” was a proof of the appartenance of a certain person or of a certain community to the Church of Christ; the love for one's neighbour and the mercy that accompanies it is one of the main characteristics of the Church.

The parish stays the spiritual, liturgical and social center around which the human community is built. The parish that gathers around the Holy Liturgy must become a model of communion and solidarity for the entire community. The main concern of the Church in the contemporary world is that of restoring the communion of the people, especially because they become more and more lonely.

For Church's life the mission is essential. Through its mission, Church expresses its wish of spreading the Gospel and of offering Jesus to the entire creation. Churches find themselves activating near people of different beliefs and ideologies. The Church is like a tool of God, governing over the entire creation, and it is called to collaborate with these people, working for the welfare of all the creatures and for the prosperity of the earth. Every Church is called to fight against the sin in all its representations and against injustice, and to work together in order to reduce the human sufferings and the violence, so that the integrity of life can be granted to the entire humankind.

The most important value of Orthodoxy resides in the possibility of sanctification that it grants, united with the Church as a "communion in Christ". The Orthodox Church has a sacramental conception, as well as a sacramental structure; it is more than a simple gathering with no soteriological meaning.

The mission of Church is present and it is constantly actualizing through the Scriptures, as an extension of the paschal victory of our Savior Jesus Christ over the sin and death, manifesting itself as a historical component of His Kingdom, that He designates and completely justifies.

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