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**MISSION OF THE CHURCH
TODAY: BASES, OBJECTIVES,
DESIDERATES**

– ABSTRACT –

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MISSION OF THE CHURCH TODAY: BASES, OBJECTIVES, DESIDERATES

The place and mission of the Church in the world can be a starting point in assessing Saint Maximus the Confessor, who considers the Church as the type and icon of “the entire cosmos (the whole world), consisting of the visible and invisible beings”. So, we can co-witness and appreciate that the Church is right on track it is the true society, which manages, through its various modes of expression, to emphasize the human nature, man being regarded as individual or social. And if in the recent past, the Christian world was considered within the “Church”, now it seems increasingly obvious that it has become the opposite: that the world needs to validate the Church and her mission. And if someone cannot accept the idea of secularization, we can mention that, as it is understood by some radical theologians, the term “secularization” is most often associated with “upgrading” because, sociability or community of man does not occur only horizontally but also vertically. The natural and logical conclusion is that religiosity is sociability in its vertical expression and is directly related to its horizontal expression. And the Church, i.e. the true society, blends these two manifestations of sociability harmoniously, the horizontal one with the vertical one.

The Church is in the world and works in the world to save those that she incorporates into Christ through the Holy Spirit, serving them because she was founded by Christ after His death and resurrection from the dead and placed in history as a Man-God reality by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, for man was redeemed by Christ from the bondage of sin and death, and restored to the communion with God. Her being is not the order of nature, it is beyond the fall that requires the causal intervention of God in the world, to avoid its displacement; it is the restoration through Christ, God-Man, of the union and communion without God interfering with the people and with all creation, and the union in a communion of love, of those distant from and those close to the Christ - the Lord. Therefore, in the Church, man lives his personal communion not only in relation to his neighbour, but also in his relationship with God. Communion with neighbours and communion with God are organically and inseparably connected. Of course, one can leave the communion with God and communion may be limited to the neighbour. This is, in

fact, the main characteristic of a secular society. But, the Church focuses its mission in this world, because only in contact with the world, may the Church be renewed. The world has become self-sufficient and a substitute to God. In this sense we can understand why this paper, *Mission of the Church today: bases, objectives, desiderates*, aims at treating the teaching of the Church's mission in contemporary society, while seeking God's relationship with the world, man's with divinity, and also the Christians' relationships with each other, taking into account each time the teaching of the Christian faith.

The mission of the Church is seen in turn as an apostolic vocation, an act of reference, of fidelity, the fundamental criterion of the mission, but also an act of faith in the resurrection of Christ, as the missionary call of the Church is in her apostolic nature. Designed as a work of divine love, the mission is to act and, from this perspective it involves two meanings: a narrower one for the purposes of evangelism, i.e. preaching the gospel orally or "the ministry of the Word", but also a broader one, meaning the testimony relating to the whole Christian life: worship, sacraments, prayer, spirituality.

Christian mission springs from the mission of Christ, and was the grand event of the recapitulation in Him of the whole universe, of the things in heaven and those on earth, to enable them to participate in His divine glory. The founder of our Church-God Himself was the first missionary, Apostle and High Priest of our testimony and as Father sent Jesus, so did Jesus send his disciples to preach, and the latter sent the Apostles, who in their capacity as missionaries of faith had to go around the world, teaching all nations "sowing the seed of the Gospel and tending to bring them all on the way of salvation".

Therefore, in Christ, the world is created again and renewed by grace through God's eternal love, all people "heading into his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3, 24). *Mission of the Church today: bases, objectives, desiderates* is structured in five chapters, preceded by a brief introduction and completed by some conclusive assessments.

Particularly important is the accurate understanding of the term "mission" which, in fact will be the starting point of this work.

"Mission" (in Latin "mitto, ere" = to send) is the apostolic vocation of the Church to preach the gospel to all nations, calling them to reconciliation in the name of Christ through

repentance and baptism: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28, 19).

A mission is sending someone to a place: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20, 21), and also acknowledging Christ's resurrection: “On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14, 27).

The mission is a fundamental criterion of the Church, not only in the sense that the Church is “the instrument of salvation”, but that the Church is the purpose or accomplishment of the mission. The missionary call of the Church is related to its apostolic nature.

The mission is an act of fidelity to the Church of the twelve “foundation stones” and the twelve apostles of the Lamb: “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Revelation 21, 14). This fact highlights the universal value of the Gospel: “Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory” (I Timothy 3, 16).

The mission is to inform and involve the action of two ways: one strictly evangelistic, that is the oral preaching of the Gospel or “the ministry of the Word”: “And we shall devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6, 14).

Preaching is essential for the Church mission as the proclamation of the word is the basis of faith: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10, 14).

It also involves a broad sense, the “martyria” testimony referring to all Christian life: worship, sacraments, prayer, spirituality. The fullest testimony of Christ is the life of holiness which is theophany. “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”.

The mission was conceived as a work of divine love, which wanted everyone to enjoy the benefits of the Incarnation of the Son of God and be “adopted children” in Christ. The Christian

mission “springs” from Christ's mission, which was to “review” the entire universe itself, to make him participate in His glory. In fact, St. Paul states clearly that God's plan was to unite in Christ all things in heaven and on earth. “...to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Ephesians 1, 10), and this “plan” was submitted to the Church. Specifically speaking, the missionaries were always convinced that all those outside of Christianity are “destined” to the Church, starting from the teaching about the divine will of universal salvation. According to this will, the missionary will was an action of ministry, of “rescuing” all the people.

“Another mobile” of the missionary activity has always been the universal ideal of spiritual unity, in the eschatological perspective. The missions were inspired by serving universal unity. This was the wish expressed by him, that all may be one.

The founder of our Church, God Himself was the first missionary, the Apostle and High Priest of our testimony and as Father sent Jesus, so did He send His disciples, and these, as apostles and missionaries of the faith, had to go in the world and teach all nations “sowing the seed of the Gospel and aiming at bringing all to the path of salvation”.

In Christ the world is created, again renewed by grace through God's eternal love “and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3, 24). Scriptural basis: “to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26, 13). It is every man's duty to speak to “those who sit in darkness” about the love of Christ and salvation in God. Our duty is to talk about Christ. “Indeed this” is the responsibility before God and it should not be at all indifferent to us. The sense of this debt should guide our thoughts. The first mission is to “awaken the soul”. Before that, however, we must understand well that the desires of a man who is “not born again”, who, according to the Scriptures is “dead in sins and crimes” are “unclean” and then realize that they do not know this truth and this is because all “easy” (vain) things of a passing world seem to them as the only worthy to be desired. The mission is “to open the eyes” to realize that these things are not “the pearls” that are eternal, but to encourage them to seek the divine “pearl”.

“The young fisherman of men” should avoid believing that a mere “spiritual awakening” is a true repentance. Our duty is to “give light!”. Many were awakened as to the needs and dangerous condition, but fell asleep again “because they were not enlightened”. Behind the dark mind or the sleeping consciousness is the mortal enemy of the soul - Satan. This belief “pushes” us to a prayer and makes us cry out: “Deliver us from our adversary!”.

Our task or our work is to “lead the people from under the power of Satan or from under a deceiving, enslaving destroying power”. To God, this mission can be fulfilled only if God helps us.

In this mission, the main target is that souls be saved and to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and to receive forgiveness of sins through faith in the sacrifice and His resurrection from the dead: “That if you confess with your mouth, -Jesus is Lord-, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10, 9). We are the “tools” that God uses to accomplish this mission.

The Church is the subject of evangelism, the preaching of Christ through all who live in her womb, through all her members. However, due to the structure, to the hierarchical order there are priorities of evangelism.

The hierarchy, the clergy of the Church, that is the bishop, the priest, the deacon are ordained for they were meant to be teachers, leaders of the visible Church. They are called “masters of faith” of preaching the Gospel.

Monasticism held and still holds an important role in the mission of the Church. This is because the monk, as a hermit, the “athlete of Christ”, has total availability for Christ. The Church, the Body of Christ in the world, exists and works in the present social context and is itself in need of vigorous monastic support. Through monasticism, the Church will not only live on, but increase, revitalize and become perfect in spirit of the Gospel.

At other times, some monasteries were centres from which missionary work used to radiate. Even today, other monasteries can be in a similar situation, to help the Church mission. The Church should encourage those who are in such a situation, to work with love to extend the Kingdom of God.

The role of monasticism is positive in that it “accumulates” spiritual energy, vocations, people committed to God and the good of the Church, primarily as people who pray, then life examples; and then, it uses this energy that could be thrown into ordinary life or could shrink if someone goes on this path. Given this strong and vivid example of sacrificial and selfless life, as witnessed by the monastic community, the Church has “a real and solid standard to re-organise her work”.

Laymen: Orthodox theology has rediscovered the theology of laity, the “royal priesthood of the Church”, which testifies the Gospel through word and life, and Christian acts. They are those sent to bear witness to Christ in society.

Youth: With their enthusiasm, their freedom they must choose the path of Life – Christ, for the world today is exposed to great dangers. From evangelized, they can become preachers themselves.

The Church of Jesus Christ has always felt the presence of youth in her midst, as “dough which leavens the whole lump”, the ferment which stimulates life and Christian faith in the missionary side, the Christian youth has always been present and active.

The Holy Apostles, starting from the example of the Saviour who called the young to Him, had young disciples in the missionary work of spreading the Gospel. The young missionaries of the Gospel would go in their work guided only by their sincere and sacrificial zeal to carry out the Gospel commandment of love for mankind, to spread the light of faith to all gentiles. Today, too, the Christian youth’s mission should be as lively and dynamic as throughout the history of the Church.

It is known that in general, young people “run after” a role model, because more and more easily corruptible young people are met. In today's world “stormed” by advertising, the most widely spread model is that of violence, pornography, easy and irresponsible life, a very dangerous model for a society which states, by its laws, that is based on Christian morality.

It is the duty of Orthodox Christian youth who is under the patronage of the ancient Church and under the “kind leadership” of the teachers of Orthodoxy, to participate more actively in restoring the Christian image of youth. Some lines of action may be considered truly

missionary: Mission can truly be called a few lines: dynamic Christian feeling, knowing and assuming the history and traditions of the Romanian people, active participation in the Liturgy, the foundation of a family under the grace of Lord, care for those in need.

An important direction for young lovers of Christ, is the Samaritan or charity work. A growing number of split families separated, the children, the abandoned elderly and other dependents are desperately calling for help. The Christian youth's duty is to join more actively in the Church missionary work, because these "unfortunates of life", but "our brothers" should not fall into the toils of despair, disbelief, immoral life or false or sectarian belief.

The role of youth in this missionary work is very useful, because it brings "the zeal and vigour of the young" bringing fresh hope, and the joy of communion of all around Christ.

The family is a factor of Christian mission, being a domestic Church, where in the communion of fruitful love, the Divine love is experienced: God is love, because "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (I John 4, 8).

The Christian family, threatened by certain things in its structure, should be aware of its essential reality, that of Christian testimony.

Inaugurated by the Sacrament of Marriage as a "social institution", family remains for the Church not only a distinct but also a unique value, as it carries within it – thanks to the woman – "the eternal law of life". Physical motherhood of women - inseparable from suffering - has a symbolic value, being the foreshadowing of the sacramental modernity of Baptism, which is both death and birth. The family role is to transmit Christian faith, mainly due to the fidelity and courage of women, as they were the first to receive the news of the Resurrection.

The Christian Groups (Associations). The goal of the Christian mission is life in Christ, through which the Christian has the vision of the Holy Trinity, participating in the spiritual life through deification by grace: "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (II Peter 1, 4). Mission is social momentum and human generosity, it is love for mankind. It means desire for the better of humanity, which is the ideal for social development.

Missionary work is a perfection of faith because “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2, 17).

Our Lord Jesus Christ founded the Church with the aim of further work. The church is the religious establishment of maximum utility for believers, because it alone gives salvation. The essential purpose of the Church and its mission is soteriologic. All other manifestations of the Church in the life of believers are just means for the work of salvation, which is the supreme goal. For this purpose, the Church owns teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is the revealed doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures and the Sacred Tradition.

There is no Church outside the mission, as the Church is the goal of the mission, but also its fulfilment. The mission is inseparable from the Church by her very being. The Church is missionary because she has to fill all creation: “The mandate entrusted to His Church by Jesus Christ expresses eloquently the mission size: ...therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28, 19-20).

We cannot speak about the Church and her mission separately, but about the mission of the Church, of her members, that is the clergy and the faithful. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”(I Peter 2, 9).

In her missionary essence, the Church is the very meaning of the mission. This quote may be the most convincing to illustrate the relationship between Church and Mission: “The Church lives through the mission as a fire exists by burning”. If the mission of Christ means nothing more than the self-dedication of unitary life of God to the world, it means that the mission is ultimately possible even through an event of communion which reflects the history of the Trinitarian existence of God Himself. The church is designed to be precisely this.

The Church is also called our proper mother, which gave us all birth through the water of the Holy Sacraments of Baptism. St. Cyprian said, “One who does not have the Church as mother cannot have God as Father”. Even if men possessed by pride and disobedience were divided among themselves and more or less moved away from the true Church founded by Christ

and the Apostles forming several “churches” or cults, or schismatic groups, we must not believe that the One Church split into several “churches”.

Outside the Church founded by Christ there is no salvation, as there is neither priesthood, nor Holy Sacraments through which to receive the grace of salvation. The Truth, which is Christ God, the Cross, the Gospel, salvation and grace and the Apostles’ successors, that is bishops and priests, is only in the Church; They are all here together with the Mother of God and even the invisible throne of the Holy Trinity, because it is here where the Holy Communion, the Holy Liturgy, the salvation and the joy of life are.

Through Christ we suddenly have the relationship with God and our fellows who become faces of the Son through the Holy Spirit. Therefore our personal salvation is the fruit of the relationship with God through the Son in the Holy Spirit and of the active love towards our fellows, in the same Christ Who incorporates us all to Himself through His Spirit.

The Church must have Christ as her centre and head, as she grows to the extent that she lives in Christ and makes Christ transparent in all her work of salvation. Saint John Chrysostom, explaining the words of the Apostle Paul: “He has lost connection with the Head, of which everything depends” (Colossians 2, 19), says: “From there it has its existence (the Body) and the good existence. So why leave the head, taking hold of the limbs? If you fall from where everything depends on the body, you lose. Whoever that one may be, he says, not only life but also the incorporation in the body of the Church he has from there. The whole Church keeps growing as long as she stays united with her Head”. The Church must live in Christ and show Christ in all her work in the service of man's salvation, because she is the expression of common faith in Christ, because her members live the life of Christ and because only in Christ do they obtain their salvation, serving God by serving their fellow men: “What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3, 8). The Church and her members should have the same awareness of Christ's presence in them, as stated by Saint Paul: “Now I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2, 20). But we have Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit sharing to the Church and to us, His divine energies, unifying and sanctifying, by which we make our own salvation.

Christ is in the world, but also in Heaven; we, Christians, get to the Heavenly Christ through the Christ Who is in the Church and in the world seeking today to overcome poverty, hunger, social inequality, racial cultural and spiritual discrimination, violence, the identity crisis of individuals and of peoples, the evil in man and in the society in which he lives. People and nations tend today to better relations between them, giving expression to the message “Today’s salvation of Christ”.

If “God's love poured into our hearts” (Romans 5, 5), and as a natural consequence we may see in the face of Jesus Christ, God Incarnated, the faces of all our fellow men, just as God the Father sees us all in the image of His Son, born man and fellow of ours, to Whom we owe our love (John 13, 34). For he who despises the needs of his fellow, despises Him Who said, “...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25, 40).

Being united with Christ in the state of Sacrifice and Resurrection for our salvation, we must sacrifice ourselves for our fellows, and consider them as Christ Who requires our response today and seek union with them through our service towards them, as Christ served the salvation of us all, while renewing the entire work in which man is the centre.

Son of God became flesh and accepted the Cross to save mankind as a whole, freeing it from all sin, which means in all cases, a selfish closure of man both from God and his fellow. Through His sacrifice, Christ the Saviour revealed the value of earthly life in general, as the stage in which man works his Salvation. Salvation has a deep sense, as highlighted by Rev. Dr. Philip Potter, General Secretary of World Council of Churches: “For those who lived when the Son of God took human form, whether they were Semites, Greeks and Romans, the word “salvation” had a very deep meaning. To be saved meant to be freed from all that constrains and reduces the life of persons or societies: be it the disease of the body or the soul, ignorance, indifference or fear, disasters of all kinds; injustice committed by neighbours or strangers. Expressing it positively, salvation was the freedom to live with others in justice, respect and mutual trust, good and love-giving. To be saved meant to be free to be yourself, to become an authentic person, which involved an openness to others and the pursuit of their happiness”.

Sustainable reconciliation involves a love more intense and open, which tends to achieve justice, freedom and equality between people, to realize that mutual exchange of values between them. Christians should contribute to it, but not by serving an individual in isolation, but larger communities, in which individuals live causing the appearance of structures to support and ensure, at a broader human and social level, relations of justice, equality and fraternity which meet the aspirations of our contemporary world.

The Church lives in the world and the world is aware of her presence in the Church. The Church and the world are not two contradictory realities, fighting, because the Church is not in a position to conquer the world, but she needs the world. The Holy Spirit works both in the Church and in the world. The Church enriches from her connection with the world, because it gives her the awareness that everything she does comes from her duty to man in view of the Kingdom of God. For man knows himself designed against the world background and in the consciousness of his fellow men, with whom he grows together, and always keeping his identity in the world and towards others.

Given this connection, the salvation brought by Christ offers the strongest foundation to serve the man and the world. For in the Saviour Christ several possibilities are contained: He can fit in all and all can be brought to him and all our fellows can be served through him for salvation. For the relationship with God involves both the right relationship with our fellows. The new man brought by the Resurrection of Christ is open to all through Christ and is the unifying factor of all creation, built again, too, through the resurrection of Christ for man.

Convinced that salvation lies in a deep transformation of man up to his deification and that this is achieved by serving God and people, the Romanian Orthodox Church which was open at all times, as today, to her faithful and to the people to whom she and they belong, contributes and supports, in the local and global ecumenism, promoting a sustained and multiple dialogue for service, together with all the other Churches and Christian denominations in our country.

All these are elements of “today’s salvation” that requires the social inclusion of the Church and Christians, while preserving, however, the authentic image of Christ who saved us, as He emerges from the content of the Holy Bible and of the Holy Tradition faithfully kept by the Church, and while preserving the Christian identity unaltered.

In its various forms, Christian life is a reflection of intra-Trinitarian relationships; any argumentation of one or another aspect of theological life leads invariably to using the Trinity as a model, which becomes the model for earthly life in whose image was moulded the human being. Undoubtedly, the reason for any act of God to man as a historical or generic fact and the mandate of the unique human nature communion is love.

The mission (*mitto, ere, missus*) is the visible form of the Holy Trinity's love for man, updated in the most efficient way by Jesus Christ and left as a legacy to His Church for human salvation. The Trinity God reveals Himself to develop a direct and open relationship with man, sends the Son into the world to bring man back to the springs of communion and gives His followers the mission: "to love one another as I have loved you" (John 13, 34 and 15, 17) and "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16, 15-16). From this perspective, the "missionary" is the one who loves his fellow that he wants to save. The mission, apostolate or sending to the world evokes the dynamics of Christ's Church, which is not a static body, reflecting a stage in history, but a living organism that is adapted to living conditions permanently following the service of Christ, the invisible head of the body. Having originated in the sacrifice of Christ, efficient worldwide, the Church through His Apostles received the truth, becoming "Apostolic", i.e. missionary, preserving the revealed truth directly to the apostles who heralded Him: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ"(I John 1-3).

The Orthodox Church is an unknown witness of the faith and the spiritual work of faith as understood from the Scriptures and as practiced and professed by the Church of the first centuries; it has the freshness of that time even today. Now we need to renew the way to practice and live the faith, the relationship with Jesus Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit; the man becomes capable of answering to others and to the cosmos himself.

Being sent into the world, the Church in general and the Orthodox Church in particular was always serious about history and those who make history: people, nations and peoples. The Orthodox Church has not made a specific social doctrine. Both the doctrine of full separation of church and world, and the theory of the two divisions, formulated by St. Augustine – not shared by the Orthodox Church - and the system of the Constantine era, or another form of relationship with the world, are real but relative possibilities for the relationship of the Church with the world, according to Orthodox teaching.

Therefore, the best mission of the Church is the tangible and visible manifestation of the life of her members. Many are those who feel the lack of real heart warmth, of the true communion, of the deep and unselfish concern for each other and of solidarity in general. To have such believers, the Church must also carry out a long training and education period, as well as good cooperation between the clergy and laymen in serving and heralding the divine truth. Through the continuous work of the Church they are transformed into victorious fighters and partakers of salvation.

Through her priests the Church must remind to the faithful the need to keep going towards God and that it is not enough for them to admire the piety that does not give them any help in the spiritual ascent.

In the survey “Mission and Christian testimony to religious proselytizing, which is a counter-testimony”, Arhid. John Ică jr. subsumes a number of theological arguments about the Christian mission, which can be reduced to three key issues: sending the Son and the Holy Spirit in the world by the Father, sending the Apostles to preach by Christ, sending the Church, which, through her servants, will carry out the mission entrusted to them until the end of time.

In the biblical-dogmatic sense, sending the Son and the Holy Spirit is an expression of God's love for man, of whom the Holy Trinity takes special care in view of his salvation or restoration to “the state of the beginning”. The Father, the source of divinity and the principle of unity, the One that takes the initiative of creating the human being, has also the desire to save him through the Son (John 3, 17 and 12, 47, I John 4, 14 and Luke 9, 55). For man, Father does not hesitate to do anything, and goes as far as sacrificing His Son that He “sends” to proclaim His will and His love: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that

whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3, 16). From this perspective, the Trinity is on a permanent mission, for the historical coming of Christ and sending the Spirit in the world are generic by assuming the fruits of Trinity’s work by every Christian, through the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity’s missionary work is fulfilled at Pentecost, and the circle of the Trinity’s redeeming work is closed, as the Holy Spirit starts dwelling among men. Each “Heavenly King” updates the work of the same Holy Spirit in the person where He lives and “cleanses him of all defilement”, with the whole ecclesial community.

Christianity today must show that the attention paid to eternal life brings about the transformation of this world. Being a disciple of the Lord, means to love your fellow, to share his concerns and to manifest your love through concrete things. Therefore, we must proclaim strongly that the mission of the Gospel is not to turn the earth into a paradise of prosperity, because the ultimate goal is the acquisition of eternal life. “We must live in Christ, link with the Father in the Holy Spirit. We shall feel then like people on whom the Holy Spirit rests as it rests on the Son. We know that we always receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the prayers of the Church. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit His energies work in us and in the Church, the non-created energies as some Fathers of the Church called them”.

The Church has the “mission” to proclaim the kingdom of God. Because the Church was given the presence of the God's Spirit as a guarantee, she is with us and the “eschaton” is already accessible to the world. Therefore, the Church is the eschatological community, a pilgrim people, anxiously awaiting the return of God and confessing Him before the world. The Church reveals in this way the radiance of God's kingdom in the person of Jesus Christ the Risen One, revealed to all disciples of all eras through the coming of the Holy Spirit, and in this way she finds the strength to preach the kingdom all over the earth.

The mission has to do with the very nature of the Church, irrespective of circumstances, and there can be no Church without a mission church because the Church carries on the work of saving the world, discovered and accomplished by Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the divine power by which the Church is able to obey the command of the risen Lord: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16, 15, Luke 24, 47).

If the Church mission is not accomplished, instead of light, joy and eternal life, for which man craves being made in the image of God, modern man finds sadness, loneliness and spiritual emptiness, becoming a slave to economy and to the systems he invented.

To help man to discover the true meaning of Christian life, the mission and pastoral care must be exercised so as to help man to overcome the dualism between private and social life and parish communities to be a place where believers pray together and celebrate together, where they find support in trouble and feel a real fraternal solidarity. The separation between private and social spirituality lies at the heart of secularism and sectarianism. Therefore, this fundamentalist misunderstanding must be overcome as spirituality and Christian morals for human existence do not refer to isolated areas of human existence, but covers it all. Social problems are eventually spiritual ones, too.

The Christian mission given by Christ to new believers became testimony of the life of communion and love for what greater proof of love can you show your fellow other than the concern for his salvation and eternal life? Apostles and after them the servants invested and prepared for the mission began to proclaim the new life in the love of the Holy Trinity through concrete spiritual means, for “gold and silver they had not” (Acts 3, 6) but from what they had, from that they gave, from the new life in the Spirit. The broad area of the mission is outlined and diversified according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, by fields of activity: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4, 11-12).

He also left the ways in which the Church fulfils its purpose in human life: birth in the faith that makes a stranger become a member of the Body of Christ, for only he who “is baptized” (Mark 16, 16 and Acts 2, 38) becomes “new creation” (II Corinthians 5, 17), the increase in faith, that is active adhesion to the teaching and community life throughout the earthly life, after the primary model where new followers “devoted themselves to the apostles

teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and in prayers” (Acts 2, 42) and finally in the communion of faith, that is fidelity to tradition, because “Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrew 13, 8), is with us until the fulfilment of His promise (Matthew 28, 20), for which the Apostle to the Gentiles warns: “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings” (Hebrew 13, 9).

The mission means, therefore, sharing the Trinity love life from the earthly life, with the Gospel having as visible and concrete the Word of the Bible and the grace-giving Sacraments, through which the Spirit of the Truth is working.

To the people today who, in many cases suffer from loneliness, the lack of an authentic sense and seek real and honest communion that can oppose selfishness, individualism and consumerism, the parish community must provide the space of this communion. It must fulfil its role to restore communion between people, providing concrete evidence of true communion, which can be found only among those who believe in God, Who became incarnate to enter into full communion with the people. Offering this fellowship, the faithful parish community can bring man into communion with God as he enters into communion with those who believe in Him. Christianity presents a real interest to today’s man to the extent that it presents the message of the personal, living and loving God, Who alone can save man here and in eternity, transmitting eternal life and love that cannot be offered neither by material goods, nor by modern ideologies, nor by impersonal Eastern religions, and does this because it helps man to live here and now the anticipated presence of this love in the Church community, in the community of the faithful ones.

The Church is “the gathering of believers” and to maintain the role of a “spearhead” in social activities, must use all elements of social life, especially her members. Among these, the lay apostolate which makes the Bible much more credible. The mission does not belong only to the priest, but to a whole structure which must be set up, with precise tasks and with the purpose of changing people's lives, not of winning over as many “proselytes” as possible in the Sunday church service, because in that case, the mission gets touches of proselytism.

The heart of the mission is the Holy Eucharist, as we stated above, in that it spiritually feeds both the priest and the believers. Therefore, the Christian who listens and shares the Divine

Liturgy becomes a missionary for Christ, and must know this, because listening to the Word, he passes it on performing a lay apostolate, and the image of his soul becomes the image of Christ. The lay mission in a parish is in its spiritual QUALITY, in the way people answer to the high commandments of the Saviour.

Some priests use means to attract “church believers”, which is a small part of the mission and resembles sectarian propaganda that emphasizes all the “methods” to herald a supposed truth, following as a principle the increase in the number of followers. The mission aims at ecclesial integration and changing life.

We can say that the fracture between man and divinity is the source of enormous crises and planetary disasters, all rooted deep in the unbridled lust of man.

Missionary work and pastoral leadership must be understood in the context of the saving love for humanity of God and the Church of Christ, love that is often ignored or misunderstood. The mystery of the Incarnation of God is man's release from bondage of himself and his transfiguration by grace. Therefore, the first step towards winning the impact of stress that faith is the Incarnation of the Son, the passion, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension are directly related to our own condition. Christian life involves more than mere acknowledgment of the benefits for the salvation of life, death and resurrection of Christ. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ the Risen is the “first fruit” of the dead (I Cor 16, 20). Through faith, the believer's personal history is converted into the personal history of Christ. In this conversion, participation in the liturgy and the expansion of the experienced communion in daily life, in a word, the achievement of a genuine communion with God in its centre, has an important role.

The mass is precisely established by Jesus Christ and performed to create an environment in which it is possible the cultic and public expression of the faith of a Christian community. This faith, celebrated in the Mass, must then be embodied in social life. For personal conversion is a significant moral and disciplined commitment towards the path marked by Christ in His commandments. No one can serve two masters (Matthew 6, 24), so following Christ, living according to His image is the only authentic Christian attitude. Any segmentation of the faith cycle: confession, celebration and practice of faith leads to a crack in Christian spirituality.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae said: “We live in a time when Christ and chaos seem to meet... and we must meet the threat to nature.... Nature is the scene of grace and the redemption area”.

In the last volumes of his vast work (Teodramatik), Urs von Balthasar deals directly with the church mission. Christology and pneumatology are complemented by a systematic ecclesiology. The starting point, the guiding principle, is the person of the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent from the Father. “The Spirit opens the field of missions; in this area runs, on the one hand the participation after the analogy of the important drama in a theological manner or the created people that may be found in their place. In His role as Divine actor, Jesus Christ is God himself while, on the other hand, He is also the source of the roles given to all the other actors, to the extent that they happen to take part in a Theo-dramatic ascension, and where they do not appear by themselves in a brief passage onto the world stage. The mission of Christ, because it is identical with the actor himself, is that of an original figure, the starting centre where the roles and personal missions are confessed to human subjects”.

Today the Church mission cannot be conceived other than in the context of the ecumenical dialogue, be it at a parish level, or diocese or the Church. The ecumenical mission is so much the more a chance as it summarizes the beginnings of the Christian Church, called by Rev. John Bria “the ecumenical Church”, i.e. “The Church of the ecumenical synods” when the mission was not accomplished through isolation and self-sufficient triumphalism, but through open dialogue with mentalities, religions and cultures, as in the Apostles.

In Western Europe people already talk about “the post-Christian era” or the “re-evangelization of Europe”, that is the orientation of the Church mission depending on the context in which man refuses God, unlike the apostolic period when the main issue was to choose God over pagan gods. Therefore, the task is much more complex because it no longer addresses a religious being, but self-sufficient, indifferent or even stubborn. In addition, various types of religious and separatist tendencies lead to confusion and separatist tendencies: God no longer accepts Himself as such, but He is built by man, after the cliché most convenient to his type of life.

At a local level, opening to Europe has three aspects that must be considered in their challenge in terms of consequences and challenges pertaining to mission: Challenges of ever

more varied forms of various imported denominations, with studied methods, applied earlier, amid a difficult environment: the lack of training of ministers and means of response, whether psychological, economic or otherwise.

Modern Orthodox Christian is not the profile as in classic writings, but a man moving freely throughout the European area, working in rural heterodox environment, having spiritual needs that our Church cannot meet.

Scientific progress makes modern Christian individuals, people who think more subtly, read more, evaluate, compare, and are informed.

Although no more missions are organized to the “gentiles”, the Church has more missionary demands than ever, is provoked in the new context she has to respond to relevantly and timely. We know that Christ leads the Church into all truth, but also that ministers must understand her purpose and mission, to serve her in fulfilling the eschatological vocation by providing adequate means of Truth.

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