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THESIS SUMMARY

*Psychological implications of the spiritual
priest in the New Testament*

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The perspective that offers the short analysis of this paper's title is particularly complex, that's why I have the belief that in these pages I have surprised, as much possible I could, some of the aspects that define this subject. I will not have, therefore, the claim that it is an exhaustive paper, but, rather, a radiography of a state of fact from the contemporary society, and here I refer at the Christian priesthood and the spiritual relation with the psychological counseling, at their explicit forms of presentation and expression, and last but not least at the way in which this is perceived in the new social-cultural-religious contemporary aspect.

We assist today at a reconfiguration of society, which implicitly engages also the Church in a process of transformation regarding the adaptability at the religious and unreligious conscience of the modern human. "In this tendency it exists the flagrant danger of harmonizing the Christian identity in the spirit of a new secularist contemporary conscience, of trivializing the Christian spirituality's dimension in a pluralist and fragmentary context"¹. Thus, today, we speak of a reconsideration of the priesthood's valences in its sacramental and social direction, a reevaluation and actual adaptation of the priesthood in the context of actual reception. This state of fact, this post-modernist secular attitude, lowered the priesthood in the sacramental plan as an active ferment of the descent and entering of the sacred in society, at a wrongly reduced problem at the social aspect "The priesthood today is perceived as any other "job", without a real efficiency in the human spiritual dimension".²

A repositioning of the priesthood in the sacramental position state, through which is communicated the divine unifying grace, in the original identity, helps at the reconfiguration of the religious conscience of the contemporary human. We can speak of a priestly mission theology, because the way of existence and expression of this holy sacrament, finds its valences and fulfillments in the dynamic act of the sacramental mission. "In the priesthood it is discovered an authentic Christian responsibility an ecclesial conscience as a responsibility factor for the sacramental and liturgical life barometer of the Christians in the organic unity of the Church"³. The priest's typology that addresses to a society which Christianity is easily erased, must efficiently answer to the actual claims and requirements. The priesthood has a history on the

¹ Father Prof. Valer Bel PhD, *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană*, Vol: 2 *Exigențe*, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 34.

² Gheorghe Șanta, *Vocatie si misiune în preotie*, Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai - Teologie Ortodoxa, no. 1-2, 1996, p. 111

³ *Ibidem*.

religious map of the world. Even before the Levitical priesthood, the institutional priesthood of the Old Testament, Holy Scripture, the revelation of the alive God, offers the image of Melchizedek, the king of Salem, “the priest of the Almighty God” (Genesis 14, 18-19) that offered to Abraham bread and wine, a prefiguration of the “incense offering” and of the “pure offerings” which will be brought “from the sunrise till the sunset through the nations” (Malachi 1, 11), the Eucharist bread and wine, which, in the Christ’s Church, founded through His Sacrifice on the Cross (*Acts* 20, 28), but becoming effectively a worker of peace and love, in the Pentecost through the descend of the Holy Spirit upon the Holy Apostles, mysteriously and bloodless the bloody and unique sacrifice of Golgotha. Although all the sons of the chosen nation were “royal priesthood and holy nation” (Exodus 19, 6) due to the fact that God revealed to them in a wonderful and unique way in the pre-Christ context and the Jews were the only ones that received the true revelation through Moses (even if some critics have seen in Plato “a Moses with an attic accent”, as Fath Prof. Gheroghe Peraru was pronouncing⁴ and the prophets of the Old Testament were firm keepers of the monotheism, and at the chosen people the priesthood position, servant at the temple and bearing of offerings, was reserved to a certain category of persons, namely Aaron and his sons, those from Levi’s tribe (Numbers 18). So in Christianity, in Christ’s Church, even if the Christians are named “the chosen tribe, royal priesthood, holy nation, people earned by God” (I Peter 2, 9), this birth from water and Spirit (John 3, 5) and for “the anointing from the Holy One” (I John 2, 20; Titus 2, 5). Not all Christians are called to be “stewards of God’s sacraments” (I Corinthians 4, 1) namely priests that receive the grace of the Holy Spirit in the Ordination sacrament “with the hands placement of the elders” (I Timothy 4, 14), of the canonic ordained bishop, receiver of the gift in the unbroken succession of it and righteous faith of the Holy Apostles upon which Christ the Savior breathed and told them “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you don’t forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20, 22-23). Actually, during His messianic activity, Jesus Christ the Savior chose the 12 Apostles and the 70 disciples (Matthew 10; Luke 9, 10), and the Holy Apostles in their turn have ordained the 7 deacons (*Acts* 6, 1-6) through which the world had access to Christ, at His teaching and grace and had the possibility to receive the saint’s grace.

⁴ Father Prof. Gheorghe Petru PhD, *Principiile „rigorii protestante” și continuitatea lor în ideologiile neoprotostante*, în “Analele Stiintifice ale Universitatii AL. I. CUZA din Iasi”, new series, Teologie, tomul VIII, 2003, Editura Univesitatii “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, p. 35.

Actually, “the Church priesthood is the temporal and spatial actualization and visualization of the only eternal and unseen priesthood of Christ, as Father Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae PhD was stating, which unceasingly sacrifices to the Heavenly Father, which as a supreme Bishop, great Prophet and king of the entire world, entrusted through the Holy Spirit, that this deifying service to be fulfilled by the Church’s priesthood, which learns, sanctifies and leads the people towards the God’s kingdom which is and comes, each Christian in their time and space, enjoying the full communion with the risen Christ in the community of which member is”.

The pages of the Holy Scripture of the New Testament offer sufficient and fair arguments about the existence and position of the Church’s priesthood, sacred Body of Christ, the source of priesthood and “The eternal bishop” (Hebrews 8, 1-3, Which brought Himself as supreme sacrifice for the redemption of the people under the sin bondage and of death because of the love towards the people (John 3, 16).

The topicality of the presented subject is an indisputable one, being brought again in discussion the position of the Church regarding the science that should be one of dialog and complementarity. The same as the psychologist has a great responsibility towards the soul he has in front of him to heal, the same also the priest has the salvation responsibility of his believers’ souls.

In the exercise of his sacramental function and especially in the liturgy, the priest comes in an immediate, close, substantial connection with the Savior Himself, of which Holy Body and Blood is touched, carried in hands and consumed by the priest. It is understood that for such a frightening together-party of the man with God, the priest cannot portray himself anywise. And if the Law imposes even to the ordinary believers a rigorous and prolong bodily and spiritual training regarding the receiving of the Holy Communion, the more is required for the priest to have such an integral and express training of his being, besides moral uprightness and holiness that must permanently beautify his life. Thus, the Advices from the end of the Liturgy, that only represent the synthetization of some promptings, rules, canons and patristic dispositions, older synodical and diocese, prescribe to the priest, in categorical terms, that “for the divine service of the Liturgy, indebted is to be clean, as the soul, so the body...” (Missal, 2000). The typical instructions with which is prefaced the ordination of the Proskomedia from the missal and which have the same origin as the Advices, remember also of such an elementary obligation of the

priest in the following terms: “Having to commit the divine Liturgy, the priest is first obliged to be confessed and in peace with everyone, not to have sorrow with anyone, to keep his heart away from bad thoughts as much as he can, to abstain in the evening, to oversee until the coming of the Holy Liturgy’s time and to read the ordained ones by the holy Canons” (Missal 2000).

We all live today, indisputable, a new reality, and the marginalized Church and obliged until some time ago, to develop its saving activity only in places of worship, is called now to proceed at its reunion in society, assuming, as His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist was saying, “a great responsibility for the moral and spiritual rebirth of the Romanian society. We are all aware that the fundamental report of the Church at the healing of the social Romanian life is the one of modeling humans with fear of God, faithful people, people that have “the Spirit of God” (I Corinthians VII, 40).

In all this mission of “*building the new man*”, Pauline, a preponderant role the priest has, which as Lamartine characterizes him, is a man of everyone, which is called as a witness, as an adviser and sanctifier in the most solemn acts of the human life. A man without which we are not born, without which we do not die, that welcomes you from the bosom of the mother and only leaves you at the hole, that blesses the cradle, the conjugal bed, the death and coffin nasal, a man which the kids get used to love and to naturally fear him; a man which the acquaintances call him father, a man in front of which the Christians bring their hardest confessions, the most secret tears; a man which through his purpose is the pearl of all human sorrows, which sees knocking at his door both the poor and the rich; the rich one to discretely leave his charity, the poor one to receive without being ashamed; a man which isn’t of any social rank, supports equally all the social ranks...anyway, a man that knows them all, that has the right to know them all and which word descends upon the mind and heart of the man through the divine action authority.

From the beginning, we must admit the fact that the cultural level of the believers is entirely special in comparison with the latter one and the one after the events from December 1989. The information spread among our people until the most estranged localities, because of the new achievements of technology, like the radio, television, mobile telephony, internet, etc. Also, there were founded numerous universities in the province cities, where a large number of young people, coming from rural areas, obtain college degrees, bringing thus a new spirit to their city of origin. In this context, the priest isn’t the only intellectual in the parish, and to still enjoy of the appellative “the salt of land and light of world” (Matthew V, 13-14), he must intensify his

cultural knowledge, “to be up to date with his time, with the civilization and culture, with the literary and artistic works, with poetry and philosophy, with science and new technologies and only in their context, to place his explanation of the Gospel, without fear, because this could be anachronistic and he speaks about things he cannot defend”.

Through culture, mind and his feeling, he is called to give that plus of life, of truth, of beauty and good, which the human souls searches. He couldn't get involved in a competition with the teacher of literature, philosophy or science, but will search in these every concerns to find the way that serves life and man's dignity. “He will always try to excel, through his inner spiritual culture, through the way of giving solutions, through promoting the eternal values, by opening the doors to culture and spiritual living of his peer, of his parishioner.”

To remove these shortcomings, the priest must have to power to discern what is useful from what is useless, the true culture from the pseudo-culture, what is creator from what is retrograde, recommending to the believers only those books of soul creating which promote and develop the creating powers of the man towards his ennoblement with chosen virtues. “The today's theology”, Metropolitan Emilian Timiades highlights, “must learn to talk with other sciences also, in a contrary case the priest's mission won't be successful. A simple preaching of the Gospel in the traditional meaning of the word isn't sufficient anymore.”

An exemplary preaching asks an extensive training, a work plan, a deep reflection upon the treated problems, but in return it saves the priest of the routine, the cancer of the priestly mission, and brings him shocking results.

Another important chapter in which the priest must take action as a real Christian psychologist, are the young people. It is cheering the fact that in some churches are organized spiritual nights with the young people, where is a chance of sorting out many problems specific to their age. In today's society, these confront with great social problems of which the most acute is the uncertainty of a place to work, unemployment. These represent not only the lack of means to live decently, but also an identity crisis for the one that wants to *integrate in the society*. This leads to contraception, abortion alcoholism, prostitution, drugs, depressions and in the most happy case the exodus to the country of aspiration fulfillment. Migration is a cruel reality, made by young people most of the times because of economic reasons.

A negative role for the young people are also the mass-media ways, that race in making the apology of the body, eroticism, liberation of the sexual obsession, thus leading at their

demoralization. Thus, the contemporary crisis isn't only an economic, social, financial or moral crisis, but *an ontological crisis* which questions *the existential problem* and the life's and man's destiny; where are we heading? And here the priest must give a proper answer that must satisfy the young people's believe, intensified by anxiety, crossed by uncertainty and enigmas, an answer well anchored in reality and supported by *an authentic spiritual psychology*.

What is interesting for us is to highlight the psychological implications of the spiritual priest by the New Testament. The priest plays a purely providential role in the spiritual training of the Christian. Practically, the priest and believer become subjects of relation in the Sacrament of Confession, an intimate relation, discrete also in the perspective of life spiritual improvement. We are interested in investigating the relation between the priest and psychologist. Regarding this we will apply parallel to the spirituality and supervision or psychological counseling, as a continuum act of research and normalization, of balancing the social life.

The priest and spirituality and realities that persist in the world since more than 2000 years, during which the people, meeting and living together with this reality, have transposed it in a personal and collective plan, with the help of representations. The perception of the priest as a supervisor can be found in books, but fragmentary and not as alive as we have today the possibility to surprise it through psycho-social methods in which the people represent their priest. The Romanian space, being populated by people that religiously declare themselves Christian – Orthodox in proportion of 86%, religion that contains the priest, is very suitable to such kind of a study. Until the present moment, the priest was a “research subject” from the theological point of view, but the social psychology didn't have him in its vision. Thus, we appreciate that the social representation research of the priest as supervisor in the Romanian Christian Orthodox space is welcomed, and, we consider it, even necessary.

Beyond the covering of this lack in the psycho-sociology field, this study has a triple practical importance: that of demonstrating the necessity of a tight collaboration between psychology and theology; the fact that offers a feed-back, a mirroring for the Romanian priest of our days and the fact that it offers a possible solution at the problem of the lack of a model, worthy of following, with which the Romanian society is confronting.

This last aspect is something we will detail more, considering it of a very great psychological and social importance. Some years ago, the negative values, that started to proliferate in the Moldavian society after 1989, determined the L. Negură and L. Nacu, not only

to analyze the social representation of the delinquency after the revolution, but also to search ways of changing it⁵. The present work may be an answer to this problem through that it proposes to treat about the supervising role of the priest, and if it proves that its representation is one in positive terms, it would be a sign of hope that the Romanian people has also positive values after which it can guide. Negative models of the society needs to be replaced with a moral model and that can inspire trust – and this model we will see if it can be even the priest.

We started from this hypothesis having regard to the statement of the sociologist Gustave Le Bon, according to which an accepted general belief gives the people a thinking community generator of unity and force⁶. Also, we considered the purpose that Christianity proposes, that of changing the human being and of situating him in a better relation with divinity, but also with the earthly purpose of giving him improved to the society: “the repentance, restoring the ruined human soul, it restores in the same time the body, ennobling the human being, making him a better man, more righteous, more lovable towards his peers, reconstructing thus a new society towards work, honesty, belief, honor and love, for the happiness of all people”⁷. The priest, through his theorized qualities of Christian religion, may be the supervisor that can help that such a change may produce. In a society that pictures itself so openly towards the religious phenomenon, it may play an essential role in replacing the immoral values, with some spiritual and moral ones.

The objectives of this paper are, thus, that of establishing the social representation of the priest and to see, which is the portrait of the priest and from here to depict a conclusion regarding his supervising role in the personal life of the Romanians and Romanian society.

About supervision it was talked about more and more in the human services, with the development of the social work⁸. This fact is due to the concern for the client’s needs, as also of the ideas and practices initiations that owe many to the emergence of psychoanalysis. However, to capture the meaning of supervision, it is necessary to look at the different forms of apprenticeship that existed in different societies. In ancient China, Africa and Europe for example, there are numerous examples of new people in a job or activity, revealing also their

⁵ Cf. Lilian Negură, Liliana Nacu, *De la ce se schimbă, la ce trebuie să se schimbe într-o RS*, în A.Neculau (coord.), *Psihologia schimbării*, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 1998.

⁶ Gustave Le Bon, *Opiniile și credințele*, Ed. Științifică, București, 1995, p. 10.

⁷ Father Serafim F. Morozanu, *Taina pocăinței la Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur*, în *Mitropolia Olteniei*, 6-7/1956, p. 496.

⁸ C. Christian, J. Kitto, *The Theory and Practice of Supervision*, London, YMCA National College, 1987, p. 11.

work, exploring with others, which made them be recognized as qualified and wise. This process of joining an expert, of “learning by practice”, allows the novice to gain knowledge, skills and certainty. Also it allows him to enter in a certain “practice community”, as tailoring or others⁹. Spending time with the practitioners, “looking over their shoulder”, taking part at their habits and associated practices with the commerce or other activities and exploring their work, the novices become members with full rights of the practice community.

The supervising is an efficient mechanism of training the practitioners from the professions of support and may lead to the growth of service’s quality, but also of the life quality of the professionals exposed to the major stress of approaching the persons found in suffering. It is oriented towards specialists from areas of social assistance, pedagogy, education, psychology, spiritual area, justice, medicine, administration, media, economy, research, science and technology. Through specialists we understand also professional teams for which it can be organized coaching activities and optimization, yield improvement, team building or can be traced the development objectives of the human resources.

For a long time, the supervising is part both from the continuous form, and the quality control of the crafts practice in the relation domain. First in psychotherapy, then in the crafts from the personal development area, supervising is considered an almost mandatory stage for the exigent professionals.

Supervising is defined as a confidential interactive process, in two or collective, of which minimum purpose is that of permitting to a professional of the relation or guidance to continue to form through a comprehensive and continuous study of his own client-cases. Not least, the supervision allows the coaching to make an auto-control of its own activity, confronting with other options and rethinking, thus, the reference frame of his practice. To a coach the supervision allows him to question its own practice, to continue to form himself, to assure a good ethical and deontological position, and the public recognition of this approach has the gift to instill the customer confidence.

The main objective of this paper is the analysis of the psychological implications of the spiritual priest by the New Testament, with a direct reference at the biblical texts, using an adequate research methodology of them. That’s why, we presented the methods, techniques and

⁹ J. Lave, E. Wenger, *Situated Learning. Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 23.

proceeding used during this scientific approach. Using as a reference point the biblical scientific approach, I will use the methods specific to this kind of research:

a) *The exegetical-hermeneutical method* through which were interpreted in the biblical, dogmatic and apologetic perspective, the Old and New Testament texts with reference at the priest, repentance and confession, as points that express best the general frame of the priest's responsibilities in relation with the penitent. The interpretation of different passages from the psalms, was realized on the work basis of the Holy Fathers, Romanian theologians, but also on the works of the modern and contemporary theologians belonging to the Western space. The focus was mainly on the diachronic exegesis, through the orientation of my thesis to the author/authors of the biblical texts and the context in which they appeared, but also on the synchronic one through the research towards the biblical text and their recipients. Thus, it was equally given attention both to the intention of the biblical authors, and the text's intention among their receptors, with a big relevance at the contextualization of the importance and value of repentance in the condition of the today's man.

b) *The systematic-analytic method*, through which I wanted to highlight the analysis of each concept from the register of our attention, both in the theology horizon and the modern psychology.

c) *The comparative method*; the advantage of this method is its capacity of highlighting the spiritual particularity towards the psychotherapy.

The similarities between the priest and psychologist are obvious, but there are different specifics noted. One of the most significant similarities we find at the priest, from the chair of Confession and psychotherapist, from the therapy hours. It can be said that this comparison is a risky one because today it stirs a lot of controversies. The psychologists consider the priests redoubtable competitors, and the priests see the psychologists as some desacralized medics that work with the human soul from a perspective totally devoid of God.

The first comparison, between psychotherapist and priest, comes from the position of each one of them with the patient, respectively the believer. What the patient represents for the psychanalyst is also the penitent came in front of the priest, after a spiritual disease that harmed him, after some sins that affected his spiritual and bodily life.

In psychotherapy there is a report of reciprocity, between the two human beings present in this act, with a restauration purpose. This thing implies three aspects: a certain link between

the two partners, respectively the patient and his psyche and the medic and his therapeutic function; the formulation of a direction of relation, going from the medic, that assumes a therapeutic role, to the patient's psyche, and never the other way around; the confrontation between the medic and the patient isn't explained as a report with the neighbor, but rather as a service to a cause (This because the psyche doesn't represent a person, but only the animated object or psychical vital function of the respective patient).

If the two aspects are coordinated with the dignity of the priest, in the third one we will find a contradiction, the priesthood doing a service not for a cause but a duty to the believer, closely, assumed once with the ordination, a duty came from the true love of the pastor towards their patients.

In the confession as in the psychotherapy the act is consumed between two persons, the therapist and patient. But the two activities are different in the light of the applied cure. The therapeutic cure is formed from the discussion therapist – subject, but in the psychanalysis framework, the fundamental principles of the cure are: Voir (look) and Ecouter (listening), and the image of the subject is extracted from the narrative context, while in the case of the priest it is pursued a controlled dialogue, with great care and prowess, to discover all the committed sins by the believer through a stimulated dialogue. The psycho-traumatic event from the framework of the psychanalytic cure is the correspondent of the sin from the past of the believer.

The great difference between psychanalytic psychotherapy and the religious one, is that the religious one aims salvation (restoration, renewal of the human being) by overcoming the sin (deviation from the divine order) through which the believer got ill, and the psychotherapeutic one aims the greater good of the spirit. While from the psychotherapist, the patient leaves with more introspective questions designed to bring the self-knowledge to the spiritual balance from the priest to the believer, at peace with himself and God, with the supreme archetype from where the solution comes through the priest to salvation. Another element that intervenes in the religious psychology is the canon, given the priest to the penitent for atonement and repentance in front of the mistakes, a real will exercise through which the man rises to the light.

In his parish's activity, the priest absolutely needs of a comprehensive knowledge of his believer's souls to may lead their religious manifestations, by the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order for the fruition's salvation. There were a lot of talks because of the name "spirit shepherd", which is accorded from time to time to the priest and yet, it is a real name, not only a

circumstantial one. The priest, as a shepherd of souls, must know very well the religious manifestation of his believers, because the best seed of the Holy Gospel, cannot be thrown by chance. As the wise steward knows his land and takes care of it, so does the wise priest know and takes care of his spiritual land. The priest must take into account the principles of the Orthodox ministry and religious psychology, so his work in the Lord's land won't be in vain.

It must be insisted especially upon the psychological principles that must be known by the theologian and priest, because they stand on the foundation of any parish work. These religious psychological principles suck their sap from the pastoral experience of the Orthodox Church and are within our reach to reflect upon and acquire them.

The religious psychology portraits our priesthood under two aspects equally important: the religious psychology of the priest and the religious psychology of the believer. Both aspects help us to precisely build the same problem; one without the other failing to offer the nuances richness and religious psychological realities from the spiritual field.

Firstly, the priest must know himself. The good start of any pastoral and its favorable continuation depend of this knowledge. The priest has as a prototype our Lord Jesus Christ for His followers. How He was behaving with the ones that were surrounding and coming to Him, so must also behave the priest.

The first contact with the believers is governed for the young priest and father by a specific spiritual complex. Being mandatory of the saving Gospel, the young priest must always flex his being at maximum, to correspond his mission. In this consists the great psychological weight of the moment. The priest must thoroughly know his spiritual powers and compensate his weaknesses, not letting himself dominated by them. He must be conscious that he represents in front of his believers, the Orthodox Church and our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why the priest must enjoy of the moral authority in front of his believers. He must reflect seriously upon the name he receives from the young to the elder: "father". The naming of "father" designates the purpose and moral and religious attitude of the priest. He is a father for each one of his believers and as such it has the duty, to lead them with love and fatherly authority towards salvation. The start of the priesthood is, thus, particularly beautiful and hard. Upon him, never is insisted enough, because a single inattention compromises usually the preaching or catechesis, painstakingly worked, flips the good intention, insults the sensibility of the believers, produces disorder or sheds distrust in the spiritual powers of the priest. A real priest will thus balance, each word,

each gesture, and any posture in front of his believers, always, ready to follow good examples. They are however, just as unforgiving critics, and the situation of the priest is from this point of view, special. He must show the path to salvation, and this path requires the following and cultivation of the Christian virtues. To preach them, the priest needs moral authority, namely he must put them in practice first, therefore, to claim the believers some behaviors.

The great difficulty of the priest is that he must harmonize his life with his teaching. He must live his preaching, thus, enters in a crisis of moral authority: is not listened, or is even bantered. Not without a signification is the deep observation of our believers that say in similar cases: "Do what the priest preaches, not what he does!" This proverb was born precisely from the contradiction caused at some priests by their teaching, which was denied by their deed. This mustn't happen so the work of God won't have to suffer.

The priest must thus, take into account, of these religious psychological principles, that are at the foundation of his mission. Nobody can be a moral personality formed even from the first moment of his activity on Lord's field, but each one is indebted to know and master himself. The priest must respect his given word, to be ready for duty, to carefully balance any of his attitude, and not to offend the believers and especially, not to be in contradiction with the teaching he preaches from the pulpit. It the supreme concern of the priest, because in vain he will try to give authority his work, if he himself will crush it. The priest must, thus, to show that he is convinced and believes in the truths he is preaching and works as any believer, at his own salvation. The one that teaches the others, must thus, know how to save himself and show others, not only with the word, but by act also. In such cases, the spiritual work is on the right path.

The priesthood and psychology complete one another, are complementary thus, and in no case it is imposed a relation of competition. As the priest cannot develop his priestly activity without some psychological principles, nor does the psychologist can develop his activity without the main priestly principles. The two (priesthood and psychology) are practically twinned until a certain point where intervene the specific differences of each one of them.

It is known the fact that the Savior founds the Christian priesthood firstly, in the sight of its sacramental purpose, at the Last Supper, when He gives to His apostles the duty and power of performing the Holy Eucharist ("do this for My remembrance..."), completing then with the prerogative law of unraveling and only later, the apostles received the full authority through the preach referring words, namely to convert the entire world. Besides, even in the historical

priesthoods of Paganism has always dominated the conception that their main attribution, that of characterizing their office, was in bringing the sacrifices in the public cult, and in the Christian Church, the priestly grace bearers are “the servants of Christ and stewards of God’s sacraments” (1 Corinthians 4, 1).

The celebrant office of the Orthodox Christian priest, is, thus, not only the most sublime point of the priesthood, but also the most significant aspect of its mission, namely that of being, in the last line, the sanctifying body of his believers’ lives. It is needless to say that this office, because of its sublimity, is a task of confidence, which reports from the celebrant’s perspective a high rank of holiness in his service. It is known that, in the Orthodox conception the priest represents an indispensable connection link between the common or secular believers and God. In this capacity, he thus fulfills a double function: on one side it presents God what the believers offer – namely gifts, worship and prayers and their requests – and on the other hand, transmits to the people what comes from God, namely His gift.

Therefore, the Orthodox priest was always a sanctifying body of his flock, a commissioner and holder of the above grace, which puts it in reach to the faithful. The priest through the wonderful thing he makes, is even beyond the angels, thus the severe criteria preside at his election and ordination and then at the appreciation of his service. The unbidden and intruders, that become desecrators of the holy ones are severely criticized, and, as much as possible, eliminated. The Holy Fathers do not conceive priesthood without vocation. The priesthood being a godly dominion, God is the one that chooses and names the priest at this high service. Chosen and called by God, the priest works from love, in love and for everyone’s love. He is a precious factor for understanding and peace between people and nations. No one on earth, in His service, does not enunciate in the world, as the priest, and with such conviction, the victory formulas of peace. The patristic priest is a man of high culture which grows it and continuously perfects. The priestly mission is paralyzed without culture. It is also paralyzed, without an exemplary life and without zeal to enrich and perfect the others. The patristic priest militates for the social progress against the iniquities, exploitation, slavery, social classes, appreciating the work and twinning of all people. As a missionary and civilizing, he changed the hearts of people to which he preached the Gospel. As sanctifier and immolate, the patristic priest, largely opened the ways of the human deification and gaining the kingdom of heaven. Through him especially, the earthly city has the purpose to reach the heavenly city.

The main calling of the priest is to be sanctifier of the believer's lives. Through this he delivers over the centuries and in all places, in the believer's spirits, the gifts of the sacrifice from Christ's cross. He is called to approach the altar with all the godliness, dignity and holiness, being conscious that the work he develops is holy and sanctifying and that the Holy Liturgy is the center of life and pastoral mission.

Besides the teaching and sanctifying activity, the mission of the priest contains also the activity of the spiritual leader on the path of the good, having the duty to care for the spiritual, moral and material life, after the possibilities of his believers. If the priest is indifferent, unknown and away from life, concerns and aspirations of his believers, greedy and grabbing, lacking understanding and mercy that lives only for him, is anachronistic and away from the priestly mission. Eloquent is in this regard is the advice of the great Patriarch Justinian, worthy of remembrance: "you can be the most brilliant preacher, but if the people around you groans of deprivation and suffering, and you only preach patience and expectation, brother, not only that you insult their hearts and increases their pain and hopelessness, but you give them all the basis of considering you as a common fraud. There is another preach, of the act, of the immediate action. He is hungry, give him something to eat, he is naked, give him a coat, he is cold, find him a shelter, he is ill, take care of him; his child died or his wife, not only with the tears, but with the necessary help in these cases."

If we go deeper in these words, we will see that the priest today must come out with dignity on the social arena to meet the actual today's needs of the believers. And how can this thing be better done if not using the veritable psychological means that must come in the support of the people with special needs. The religious assistances in the army, penitentiaries and hospitals, are new forms of pastoral-missionary and philanthropic activity of the priest.

For many of our Church parishes, the priority is the building of worship places, as also the maintenance of the existent ones in good condition in order to gather the faithful to prayer in them and then, the work of social assistance. But if the material possibilities allow, the charity Christian work must be made with all responsibility.

When the priest will impose through his social, theological and secular nature, through the faith of truth living, through the moral example of his life and family, then his credibility and of those confessed by him, will be able to create around him confessors and apostles, that will support him in his noble mission, which has to lead to form people bearers of Christ.

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