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THESIS SUMMARY

**THE NEW TESTAMENT
IN THE ORTHODOX LITURGY**

PHD CONDUCTOR:
IPS Dr. Teodosie Petrescu

PHD STUDENT:
Protos. Dan-Robert (Sebastian) SERDARU

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1. The argument and research objectives

The Holy Scripture is an essential element of the Orthodox spiritual life and the foundation on which was built around the liturgical tradition. Its reading finds its way completely naturally into the divine services, not only because once it constituted their only content, but also for that either being public or private, the Bible's lecture is always ecclesial, therefore liturgical. As Paul Evdokimov writes: "the whole Church reads the Scripture through me, with me." According to St. John Chrysostom, the Bible's reading is a "conversation with God" and by this it gives all those who practice a spiritual consolation (*paraklesis*). The Scripture, he says, is a haven of delights, superior and preferable to the former, for God hath not planted this on earth, but in the souls of the believers. In another homily, St. John Chrysostom says: "Reading the Scripture dispels sorrow and inspires joy ... It is a spiritual cure, an ineffable and divine charm, destroyer of passions. For she snatches the sins thorns, cleans the field, spreads the godly seed and makes the fruit to ripen".

In the New Testament, the Church is born from the event of death and resurrection of the Saviour "*after the Scriptures*" (I Cor 15, 4). The Scriptures of the New Testament do not lie *near* or *parallel* with the Old Testament Scriptures, but are a consequence, a fulfillment. From the day of Resurrection, the early Church united, progressively, the Scriptures and liturgical celebrations in a way it resulted the Christian liturgy, *word and gesture*, covenant and communion with the Risen Jesus.

The liturgical space thus, remains the privileged place of listening the Word and this for several reasons: because the Word is not only read, listened, interpreted but also celebrated, for that, in the gathering, the Word enters the believer's ear and he seeks instinctively the one that speaks; because the liturgical assembly is strengthened by the Holy Spirit which, through the richness and diversity of charisms leads to a privileged listening to the Word; because the Bible is the Wisdom of God, which in the liturgical synaxis builds his temple, making from the believers living stones joined with the cornerstone which is Christ.

The Scripture and liturgy maintain a synergistic relationship in which one influences the other and vice versa. *The Mass proclaims Scripture*, like the liturgy of the word and other specific Bible readings that are preferred in liturgical celebrations. Even if it is about scriptural passage whose origin is mentioned - by specifying the chapter and verses - the text processing not only refers to only one writing but involves the making of a living utterance, solemn through a number of pre-established attitudes and ritual gestures. *The Mass preaches the Scripture* when, in the midst of the liturgy's gathering, the Scripture is the subject of a

comment, of a homily or a sermon. Thus the words of the Savior: "Today this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4, 21), becomes fruitful.

In line to what was told, we propose that in this thesis we can achieve a better hermeneutic of the New Testament biblical texts that are part of the Liturgy's constitution, stating the historical frame, critic of them parallel to the development liturgical act presentation. The exposure that we want is a systematic, logical one and that to take account of the scientific instruments of today. Ultimately, we aim the awareness of the Christian of what axiology defines the interpretation of the revealed text. Not ultimately, we aim to provide a better indication of the technical terms (*Mass, Eucharist*).

2. The topic's relevance in the context of the current research

This hermeneutic Orthodox sacred texts paper that we present aims to highlight some aspects of the role of the Holy Scripture in the life of our Church, which require, in the present context, a specific theological clarification. The theologians concern in the biblical hermeneutics found nowadays, and also the diversity of themes and issues addressed, are designed to identify and state the issues that the Holy Scripture's researcher must consider before undertaking a systematic study of it.

An understanding of the Bible in the ecclesiastic Orthodox context, with the implications that this context entails, will help us to understand that the biblical and liturgical language is the same. We believe that the attempt to clarify what does represent the Bible to the Church and defining the link between them will shed light on understanding the importance of the Divine Revelation and how does the Bible report to it. Orthodox theology has its own understanding of the Church, of the ecclesiastical and liturgical life, therefore there exists also an understanding of the Bible specific to the Orthodox theology. From the understanding of the Bible's relationship with the Church we can discern the Orthodox meaning of reporting the Bible to the Church tradition, to the worship and spirituality, to the sacred and profane history; we will perceive it as the Word of God, and human alike, we will receive it as the Bible, the Book of Books, Book par excellence, from which reading comes the spiritual benefit.

As we will see in this study, for the Orthodox theology, the Liturgy is an essential hermeneutical part, a general framework for understanding the Holy Scripture and a fundamental prerequisite for an Orthodox hermeneutic. The Eucharistic Liturgy and Holy Scripture are the same, i.e. the understanding of the salvation of God's people in a history that has past, present and future. This is reinforced also by the Pr. Prof. Dr. Constantin Coman in his book *Spirit's Erminia*,

in which he says that the Mass is a favorable environment for understanding the Holy Scripture not only that there are used in the Liturgy Bible readings and are referred to the whole biblical history, but especially because it is an update of this history that makes the partakers participants. Mass is a Mystery, the Mystery of Mysteries. In the liturgical tradition the Church is fulfilled in the constant link of the word and Sacrament. Christ comes to us through word and we become His partakers through the Sacrament.

We can therefore state that the Mass is the tensioned meeting between that *today* in which Christ dies, revives and rises – with the history, with today, with the world of today. On the one hand is the world of then, presented in the Mass as a *mentioned* reality, and on the other hand is the *literal* Mass, the ritual one, verse by verse (which finds its basis in what Jesus said and did for us). This was always the Church's destination: to proclaim Christ. And through Mystery, this word, this proclamation fulfills, becoming a part of us, or, better said, making us partakers of Him. In the Church we gather to dwell in us the Word, which He should become our life. Without the Mystery, the word would be a simple doctrine, and without the word, the Mystery would become magic, as Pr. Alexander Schmemman states. The Mystery is the interpretation of the word and testimony of Him, as a result in it is the source, the base of the interpretation and understanding of the word, the true *erminia*: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (In1, 14). Precisely for this reason, from this inseparable union of the word with the Mystery, the Church is the only keeper of the true meaning of the Scripture.

That is why it is so important to see how the Orthodox Church has understood the Holy Scripture through the Mass, through its sacraments. It is a unique way, traditionally, different from all the modern interpretations of the various Christian denominations. After being noticed, perceived, understood, it transpires as a continuity of the evangelical language. Through the Divine Liturgy, the Gospel is said, *today*, for each one, for the whole community. Therefore, the Mass - and the entire liturgical life, in fact – it becomes that road to Emmaus, during which the Son of God explains to us the Scriptures and He reveals to us at the breaking of the bread.

Let's remember the great challenge of our faith Patriarch: *Get out from your land, from your people and your father's house and come to the land that I will show you* (Genesis 12, 1). Receiving it in the obedience of faith and the entire effort of the fulfillment, entails the accomplishment of the promise that accompanied it: *And I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, I will glorify your name and you'll be a source of blessing*. Abram left himself guided and proceeded to the search of that promised land. The novelty is a challenge, and depends on us that it becomes fruitful. In this sense, when we start to study closely

the religion and the Scriptures, we need to get out of all that it seemed that we know, that were familiar, and let the One who is outside the door to show the way.

Christ said clearly: *I came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword*. The word is a double-edged sword. The word is always effective and fulfills its content, what expresses, as Paul the Apostle summarizes in the Epistle to the Hebrews: *For the word of God is **alive** and **active** and sharper than a two-edged sword* (Hebrew 4, 12). The idea was already present at Isaiah: *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and does not return to it until it waters the earth and makes it bud and flourish and yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so it will be My word that comes out from My mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it*. (Isaiah 55, 10-11)

It is necessary for us to place the New Testament in the Holy Liturgy so that we will find the liturgical approach of Christ's message contained in the Gospels. Trained in this effort, we will discover the Mass as part of the New Testament, we will understand that they overlap, that they are inseparable. The Holy Liturgy is the bearer of the New Testament's message, of its testimony, of communion, of blessing, of His peace and joy, of love, which overflows upon all generations.

In other words, the link that connects the Holy Liturgy and the Holy Scripture is God's Economy, His plan mankind's salvation, which is written in the Scripture and celebrated in the Liturgy. Since "the Word was made flesh", we cannot see in another way the Scripture other than in a liturgical way. All documents and signs of God are for the Christian community liturgical acts. All are meaningful, they hide in them God's great love for us. In his hymnography, the Liturgy carries and deciphers the words of the Scripture, revealing to us God's saving work. In the history of salvation, the Eucharist represents the central place, for that the whole divine Stewardship, as it is presented to us by the Holy Scriptures, leads the mankind to the climax: that of the total dedication of the Son of God *for the life of the world* (Jn. 6, 51). The Eucharist is the Sacrament in which Christ unites with us, filling us with the Holy Spirit and giving us therefore the adoption. We become children of the Father, such as the Son. There is a continuous connection between God's Stewardship, Scripture and Holy Liturgy; all proclaim the same message: the Kingdom of God has approached! The time of salvation has arrived! God became man, so that He can deify the people.

3. Short frame of the work

This work is methodologically structured into 6 chapters, each chapter highlighting and furthering the necessary elements in assessing the relationship

between the New Testament biblical text and the liturgy, in which, moreover, is scaled to a meta-language level which updates Jesus Christ.

In the first chapter, *Liturgy and the Scripture in the Biblical Theology Horizon*, we set a very careful assessment of the concept of Λειτουργέω ("Mass"), following the evolution of the term from the first and secular significance to its definition in the Eastern Christianity space. In this context, for the logical completion of the term's evolution from the laic into field the religious one, this first chapter is divided into two subchapters, which in turn are divided into other sections: 1.1.1. Λειτουργέω, λειτουργία in non-biblical Greek language; 1.1.1.1. Etymology and basic meaning; 1.1.1.2. The term use in the secular space; 1.1.1.2.1. Technical use policy; 1.1.1.2.2. The extensive use; 1.1.1.2.3. Folk sense; 1.1.1.2.4. Cultic use; 1.1.2. Λειτουργέω and λειτουργία in the Hellenistic Septuagint and Judaism; 1.1.2.1. Λειτουργέω; 1.1.2.1.1 Hebrew appearance and equivalents; 1.1.2.1.2. Λειτουργέω as cultic technical term; 1.1.2.2. Λειτουργία; 1.1.2.3. Septuagint relationship with the non-biblical use of the term; 1.1.3. Cultic service in the Rabbinic Judaism; 1.1.4. Λειτουργία and Λειτουργέω in the New Testaments; 1.1.4.1. The emergence and use of terms; 1.1.4.2. The findings and their significance; 1.1.5. The term transition for the ecclesiastical use; 1.2. The biblical text and the liturgy - axiomatic coordinates of Christian worship; 1.2.1. Historical-critical references of the scriptural canon making; 1.2.2. Mass – a way to boost and enhance the biblical text in the Church.

In Chapter II, entitled *The Interdependence between the biblical text and Liturgy. Resizing the Word in the Scriptural hermeneutic vocabulary*, we intend to present the meaning of the word in the biblical Christian theology, meaning that positions it better in the Church's cult. Another objective of this chapter, divided into five chapters (2.1. *The relationship between the Word and Sacraments, preaching and liturgy, preaching and ministry in the ecclesial space*; 2.2. *Fulfillment of Word's Liturgy in the Eucharistic Liturgy: theory in the biblical hermeneutic horizon* 2.3. *"Anamnetic" dimension (Christological) of the Holy Mass*; 2.4. *Liturgy as interpretation and updating of the Holy Scripture*; 2.5. *Ecclesial community - hermeneutical scriptural space*). One of the most important aspects of the liturgical celebration is, undoubtedly, the relationship between word and ministry. For the theme of this thesis, methodological, the analysis of our research must develop this organic relationship between the word and sacrament, given the fact that the Mass is composed in a very large proportion of biblical texts, but more than is necessary we need to rediscover the dimension of the word, of the language, of the human vocabulary in the liturgical worship. To this end, we believe that the analysis made by Rev. Prof. John Breck in both of his books *The Power of the Word in the Holy Greatness Church* and *The Holy Scripture in the Church's Tradition*, true coordinates of biblical hermeneutics, showing an

authentic orthodox insight of the sacred text interpretation by evaluating and contextualization of the Holy Fathers hermeneutic. Therefore, the Word of God revealed in the Holy Scripture and in the traditional formulations of faith symbols possess an inner strength through which the divine grace and truth are communicating. It is important to explain and highlight the "power of the Word" as a means to which the saving events of the past are "updated" in every present moment of life Church's experience.

Last but not least, we will exhibit two very current topics for the Orthodox hermeneutic: Eucharistic community, place of scriptural hermeneutic and the problem of scriptural canon. The purpose of this chapter will be proving that the Holy Scripture is the book through excellence of the Church. Scripture appeared in the gathered Church to break bread, the very select books that form the canon of the Scripture, all belonging to the ecclesial community. In the last part of this last chapter it will be exposed also the presence of the biblical themes in the liturgical life of the Church: the iconography and hymnography exposes and interprets in the same time the Holy Scripture.

Chapter III (*Eucharist - the essence of the liturgical worship. Biblical considerations*) focuses on the essence of the Church's liturgical service, of the cult, namely the *Eucharist*. In the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist is first the sacrifice of the Church which turns on the Altar table in the Body and Blood of Christ through the Holy Spirit, and Christ, who assumes it on the heavenly Altar, descends in the Church, remaining in heaven, to share the faithful with His Body and Blood for the sins forgiveness and eternal life. In this liturgical vision, the substantial aspect of the Holy Eucharist as the Body and Blood of Christ, is united inseparably with the personal aspect, because only thus can be spoken of the Holy Eucharist as a means of meeting Christ with the believers and of the believers with Christ, of His descent in the Church and of the Church's up rise in Christ. Under these general issues, we intend to achieve in our analysis the following points, which, incidentally, are the titles of subchapters of this chapter: 3.1. The foreshadowing of the Holy Eucharist in the Old Testament; 3.2. Establishment of the Holy Eucharist, from the Lord's Supper to the breaking of bread and finally to the Eucharist. Historical and conceptual references; 3.2.1. "Last Supper" - origin and development; 3.2.2. "Last Supper" and the Jewish ritual of the celebration of Easter. Historical-critical references; 3.2.3. The "Breaking of bread" (ἡ κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου). Terminology reflections in Acts 2, 42; 3.3. Mass in the apostolic and post-apostolic period; 3.4. The Sacrifice and Sacrament aspect of the Holy Eucharist; 3.5. Christ, the Eucharist, the Church in the light of the Holy Scripture; 3.6. Mass - eschatological meaning of man's union with God.

As Professor Savvas Agouridis shows, of the relationship understanding between the Bible and the Liturgy and between the Bible and the liturgical texts it

depends on the perception of the role the Bible has in the ecclesial community. The biblical and liturgical language converge. The equivalence between Stewardship, Scripture and Liturgy is a vital precondition for the Orthodox hermeneutic. Also in this first chapter there will be talks about the anticipation of the Kingdom of God within the worship so to be understood that the biblical and liturgical language are the same. The end of the chapter talks about the relationship between the Holy Scripture and the Holy Liturgy: both lead us to our ultimate discovery of the reality in this world, namely the transfiguration of the whole cosmos in Christ.

In chapter IV – *The Herminie of the biblical texts from St. John Chrysostom's Holy Liturgy* – is saved for the interpretation of the biblical passages presented in the service of the Liturgy. This fact is particularly important for the exegete and of a real relevance for understanding both the biblical and liturgical language. We will review the Bible verses that the Liturgy took, biblical texts with the Herminie and development that the worship gave, and also the prayers and the gestures of the holy priests and deacons. What interests us particularly is the way the liturgical hymnography manages to internalize the evangelical message to thus lead to the communion with God. This second chapter will be divided into two parts: the first part will deal with the study of how the Holy Liturgy confirms the texts of the Holy Scripture, and afterwards in the second half we will find the places from the Old and New Testament in which the Holy Eucharist is prefigured and respectively established. The first part of this chapter will present an interpretation of the scriptural texts of the Holy Liturgy, following that in the end of this part to situate the place of our Liturgy in the cosmic Liturgy of Christ. The chapter is divided into seven subchapters, us intending to highlight the capitalizing of the Biblical text in the cultic act as permanence of the sacramental-liturgical identity, continuing with the presentation of some historical-liturgical data about the readings from the Old and New Testament, as finally deepening the Herminie of the biblical texts from the Altar, of the biblical texts of the Liturgy of the Word and of the biblical texts of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Chapter V, - *Biblical grounds of the Orthodox iconography and hymnography* - will highlight the importance of religious iconography and hymnography and organic relationship they have with the Liturgy. We will explain below how the whole liturgical life is inspired from the Holy Scripture. By this we want to show not only the beauty of the divine worship, but also that the house of God which is of an indescribable beauty, through the adorning of the icons and through the hymns that are echoing its dwelling.

In conclusion of the present study, in chapter VI, we will present a brief summary of the Eucharist's Homage Year (2014) which was dedicated in the Romanian Patriarchate for the homage of the Sacraments, and we will explain some important studies that treated the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist in this

year. These studies are particularly important and our subject is closely related to the theme of this homage year during which the Holy Communion has been studied from several points of view: biblical, dogmatic, liturgical, history. In its work meeting of the 29th of October 2012, *the Holy Synod*, at the initiative of the Beatitude Father Patriarch Daniel, decided that the year 2014 should be proclaimed, in the *Romanian Patriarchate*, as the "Eucharist Anniversary Year (of the *Holy Confession* and *Holy Communion*)" and as the "Memorial Year of the *Holy Brâncoveni Martyrs*". At the same meeting, *the Holy Synod* approved the national church framework-programme, written in 10 points, for the achievement of this religious-spiritual project, cultural-columnist and media, at the level of the *Romanian Patriarchate* church unites, in the country and abroad.

In this study we will return often to the Fourth Gospel and John's Book of Revelation, because in the theology that the "beloved disciple" develops in his writings we will find the premises of understanding the equivalence between Stewardship, Scripture and Liturgy. The Revelation complements and continues the doctrinal message of the Fourth Gospel in the same way that the Acts complements the third Gospel. Developed by the Apostle John, the fourth Gospel is concluded by the Johannine community, from which we learn in Chapter 21, that it was conscious of having received the apostolic preaching. *This is the disciple who testifies* (21, 24) is the verse that legitimizes the community reference to the beloved Disciple. By referring to it, the Johannine community not only that it legitimizes as the guardian of his words, but, more than that, it recognizes as the author, "the one who wrote them". Thus restored the chain of the apostolic succession, the Johannine community can conclude with spiritual authority: *We know that his testimony is true*.

Verse 25 transmits a wonderful sense of history, which the Johannine community bears witness that does not finish with the approaching of the end of the Gospel writing, but, also by inviting the future generations Christians, inherits them of this holy history: *There are also other things which Jesus did and, if there would have been written diligently, I think this world would not contain all the books that would have been written* (21, 25). As long as Christians will assume the Gospel's message, its writing will never end, but in every time the wonderful deeds of the Lord's presence among his community will be added on the sacred pages of the history. Behold therefore a clear testimony of the evangelical tradition, which descends from the early days of the Church to this day. And the place par excellence in which we live the Lord's presence and partake from Him is the Holy Liturgy.

4. Research Methods

The central objective of this paper is to identify and interpret the New Testament biblical texts in the Orthodox Liturgy, using an appropriate methodology for its research. Therefore, we presented the methods, techniques and procedures used in this scientific endeavor. Using as a reference point the biblical scientific approach, I will use the specific research methods of this kind:

a) *The exegetic-hermeneutical method*: which were interpreted in a biblical, missionary, dogmatic and pastoral perspective the revealed text of the Lucan's work. The interpretation of New Testament passages were made based on the works of the Holy Fathers, Romanian theologians, but also on the modern and contemporary theological works belonging to the western area, in the horizon which entered our theme.

b) *The historical method*: through which was attempted to contextualize the organic development of the Mass, development that directly addressed the biblical text of the New Testament. Thus, it can be outlined a complex historical picture of the development of the liturgical worship, which is centered on the Eucharist.

c) *The systematic method*, by which I aimed to emphasize the biblical theology texts of the New Testament, which form the background of many liturgical formulas.

As exegetic work instruments we used the following editions of the Holy Scripture: *The Bible and Holy Scripture*, printed under the guidance and caring of the Teoctist Father, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, with the approval of the Holy Council, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodox Române, București, 1989; Noul Testament, reviewed version, written and commented by Bartolomeu Anania, București, 1995; Alfred Rahlfs (Ed.), Septuaginta. Id est Vetus graece iuxta LXX interpretes, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 2004; K. Elliger et W. Rudolph (Eds.), Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1999; B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C.M. Martini & B.M. Metzger (Eds.), The Greek New Testament, United Bible Societies New York, 1993; The Acts of the Apostles. Being the Greek Text as Revised by Drs. Westcott and Hort, Fenton John Anthony Hort, Brooke Foss Westcott and Thomas Ethelbert Page (Eds.), Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009.

Last but not least, we mention the fact that the interpretation of some old biblical paragraphs will involve an analysis of linguistic matter of the key terms (Holy Spirit, pneuma, Pentecost), which determined us to appeal at lexicons, dictionaries and encyclopedias of specialty: A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament, Barclay M. Newman, Jr., Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft

United Bible Societies, Hendrickson Publishers, 2010; A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Frederick William Danker (Ed.), 3rd edition, University of Chicago Press, 2001; Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible, Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Ed.), Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 2005; Dicționar Biblic, J. D. Douglas (Ed.), translation by Liviu Pop, John Tipei, Societatea Misionară Română Editura „Cartea Creștină”, Oradea, 1995; Dicționar Biblic, Vol. I, translated from French by Constantin Moisa, Editura Stephanus, București, 1995; Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, David Noel Freedman (Ed.), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Cambridge, 2000; Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich (Eds.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume 6, Translator and Editor: Geoffrey W. Bromiley, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 2003; Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, Revised Edition, Paul J. Achtemeier (Ed.), HarperSanFrancisco, New York, 1996; J. Lust, E. Eynikel & K. Hauspie, A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003; J. M. Harden, Dictionary of the Vulgate New Testament, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1921; The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1, Colin Brown (Ed.), Regency, Grand Rapids, 1975.

CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, in this paper we intend to investigate the *way of Scripture understanding* in the Orthodox ecclesial context, with the implications of which this context entails. Trying to clarify what does the Scripture represents for the Church and to define the link between them has helped us to understand the importance of the divine Revelation and how it relates to the Scripture. We saw that the Orthodox theology has its own understanding of the Church, of the ecclesiastical and liturgical life, and therefore there exists an understanding of the Bible specific for the Orthodox theology. From the Scripture's relationship understanding with the Church we proposed to discern the Orthodox meaning of the Scripture's reporting to the Church's Tradition, to worship and spirituality, sacred and profane history; we then perceived it as the Word of God but also of the man alike, we received it as the Bible, the Book par excellence, from the reading of which comes the spiritual benefit.

The liturgical frame of the Holy Eucharist has always been the place where, under the guidance of the Spirit, the Church has proclaimed and interpreted God's word. For the Eastern Church, the Scripture is the Church's Book, addressed to the man as a member of the Body of Christ and not as the isolated individual. From the Book of Revelation we see that when it sends to us the Revelation, *the Spirit speaks to the Church* (Rev. 2: 7) and not to separate individuals, and from the

chapter 21 of the of Saint John's Gospel, which was written by his disciples, we learn that they were aware of the received apostolic preaching. *This is the disciple who testifies* (Jn. 21, 24) is the verse that legitimates the Communities reference to the beloved Disciple. By referring to him, the Johannine community, not only legitimizes itself as the guardian of his words, but more than that, he is recognized as "the one who wrote them". Thus restored the chain of the apostolic succession, the Johannine community can assert in conclusion with a spiritual authority: *We know that his testimony is true.*

Verse 25 conveys a wonderful sense of history, about which the Johannine community testifies that it does not finish with the coming of the end of the Gospel writing, but inviting also the future Christian generations, it makes them heirs of this sacred history: There are also other things that Jesus did, which if they would have been written in detail, I think this world would not contain the books that would be written (21, 25). As long as Christians will assume the Gospel's message, her writing will never end, but in every era, the wonderful deeds of the Lord's presence among His community will add to the pages of the sacred history. We have here a clear testimony of the *evangelical tradition* that descends from the earliest days of the Church, until today. We, the Church, live in our present history: the Church congregation knows that it loves Christ, but it discovers itself still on the way; would want to love better and more. His presence becomes for her a tense aspiration: she desires him, wants him and feels lively in this torment of love, of the very Spirit: *The Spirit and the Bride say: Come!* (Rev. 22, 17)". And the place par excellence in which we live the presence of the Lord and we partake of Him is the Divine Liturgy.

The Mass is the foundation of the Scripture and the Church. The Ecclesial assembly meets to celebrate the Mass, in which the Church manifests, the mystical Body of the Lord and only in this gathering, the word is preached with power. "In the New Testament, the Word becomes body, becomes man and directly addresses to the world, and the Church exists through these two forms of Christ's presence in the world: the Eucharist and the Word which does not separate them ever, because Christ cannot be divided. So the Eucharist is the incarnated Word, Scripture, the spoken Word, and the Church (God's people) celebrates the Eucharist and preaches the Word with which he conforms to compel until identification. The word is also the extension of the Eucharist and its interpretation".

In the history of salvation, the Eucharist represents the central place, because the whole divine Stewardship, as it is shown to us by the Holy Scriptures, leads humanity towards the climax: that of the total dedication of the Son of God *for the life of the world* (Jn. 6, 51). The Eucharist is the Sacrament in which Christ unites with us, filling us with the Holy Spirit and giving us so adoption. We become children of the Father, like the Son. There is a seamless connection between *God's*

Stewardship, Scripture and Liturgy; all proclaim the same message: the kingdom of God! Time of redemption has arrived! God became man so He can deify the people.

Divine Iconomy represents taking the divine decision, before the creation of the world, to recapitulate all in Christ, namely God's plan of salvation. It is the "mystery hidden from ages and unknown to Angels" (Troparion Mother, tone IV), "the stewardship of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all (Eph. 3: 9)". "The Bible is God's presence in the world". If Scripture is viewed from this perspective it makes sense liturgically. "Everything that happens is only *history of the progressive divine service of the cosmos*; and the Holy Scripture is the "story" of this divine service". The whole work of God in the world is a liturgical one, and the Scripture is the inclusion of this work.

The liturgical celebration of the biblical themes, of the Stewardship, of the history of salvation, takes us towards God's eternity, but it does it through time, making us also partakers of it, of the past, present and future of the divine Stewardship. Inspired by the biblical history and divided so as to leave to transpire this history, the Liturgy updates God's Stewardship conducted throughout history, making us also participating in it. For the Christian East was never brought the Scripture's absolutization problem. As heir of the vision of Saint John the Theologian on sacred history, the Christian East, has understood that it is more important the inner preparation *to encompass what has been said and accomplished by Jesus*.

Mass is consubstantial to God's Iconomy, otherwise said to signs, deeds and words totality of God which manifest to operate the entry of creation into the uncreated life of the Spirit ... the Scripture, Stewardship and Liturgy are converging. For the Byzantine tradition, *Mass remains still somehow "primary"*, because the Scripture is the narrative of a progressive "divine service" of the cosmos - from his original flow and to the unique liturgy of dead- risen Christ. And the Stewardship that fulfills the eschatological consumption is, itself liturgy: the time of the resurrection, God is known and seen in a liturgical way".

The analysis of the *foreshadowing* from the Old Testament that speak of the Holy Eucharist and the verses that talk about breaking the bread from the New Testament helped us integrate Mass in the Scripture. The coming of Christ in the world and his whole plan of salvation was foreshadowed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. Therefore, we can speak of a *progressive divine service*, about an entire cycle of the Eucharist, which runs through the whole history of salvation, as the pages of the Scripture transmit. Thus inserted in the course of the divine Stewardship, the Eucharist can be understood in the depth of its meaning. The Old Testament foreshadowing helped us to understand the place of the Eucharist in God's Stewardship.

The chapter dedicated to the history of creation of the scriptural canon helped us to see that for the Christian community at the beginning, the Scriptures were not the source of faith, but its rule. Even more than that, it took several centuries until completion of the canon in the way we have it today and this not because there was no consideration given to the sacred writings, but because the living of the Christian message was more important to the early Christians. The cleaning of the person in view of the communion with God was more important than the written form of revelation. Transforming the being inside is the true purpose of Christian revelation and the only way it finds its meaning. The forming of the biblical canon of the New Testament takes place in the Church and brings out the best the ecclesial character of the Holy Scripture. The biblical canon cannot be understood outside the Church, he is of the Church. The Bible is of the Church, and therefore cannot be understood, except by those who are in the Church.

The scriptural canon fixation process greatly contributed to the promotion of the truth revealed in the Church. By choosing the books which form this canon, the Church has shown that the Same Spirit who inspired the Holy Apostles and the Holy writers, also inspired her fixing its own tradition related to this canon. The Orthodox Church always regarded the Holy Scriptures as a divine-human work, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Unlike other Christian denominations who see in the letter of the Scripture the sole criterion of truth, the Orthodox Church understands that, as written in the Holy Sacred Scripture, must be understood as a prophetic writing, to not lose the spirit and the life of the divine words.

To not conceptualize the Revelation about God, the Christian East has found many forms of its expression and enrollment. Therefore, the teachings of the Holy Scriptures have been preserved by the Church in its dogmas, in Hymns and iconography. For the Eastern the dogmas do not represent an attempt to rationalize of the divine truth, as they are for Western scholasticism, but they are rather those "words of eternal life", that received by people with faith, lead to salvation. *Orthodoxy does not understand the dogmatic separation of the mysticism*; a theology that cannot be lived will not help anyone. Also, the biblical themes were taken by the Hymnography, giving them a "poetic structure able to give the intellect another light, another joy, perhaps - to make us artists in the strong sense of the term ... ready to dance under the action of that Truth which continually draws us to Himself."

The Hymnography of the Church "remains the largest painting, by the strength and color of the inspired word, of the sacred history of our salvation from sin and death, through Christ, as the divine-human mode of the Church's beingness. In our liturgical books, the prophecy and its fulfillment, the "foreign miracle" and the heavy praise of wonder, the history and eschatology, the dogma and experience, the passion and the glory, the Model-Christ and His followers, the

judgment and mercy, the repentance and forgiveness, all stand together speaking in an expressive language, always fresh, about the divine order of salvation. The high tension of the spiritual contemplation that were deemed worthy the church's hymnographies made their writing to acquire a power that will not stop drawing, to the nutrition, the inner man in each".

"It might be established a true parallelism between the hymnography and iconography: hymnography representing poetry in the service of dogma, as the icon represents the plastic art, in the service of dogma (mystery of faith)". Archbishop Lazăr Puhalo says that "the iconography is a form of the Holy Scripture. There is nothing else than the Bible, the correct interpretation of the Bible, through colors and mosaics". *Iconography* illustrates "the progressive salvation of man, in the course of holy history, through Jesus Christ. If at Mass, the Eucharistic communion with Christ, realizes the Church, the body of Christ, the iconography gives the believers a sensible picture of this spiritual body unit, whose Head and Founder is Christ in which they incorporate as members, along with the patriarchs and Old Testament prophets, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles and New Testament Saints".

"It is impossible to find out who were *the oldest representations of the Bible scenes* in the Christian environment. We can at most by, referring to the area, situate chronologically the century in which these paintings were made". The first Christian images that have remained as testimony to this day are icons painted on the walls of the catacombs in the early Christian centuries. We will stop at them to understand the role that Christianity gave the iconography ever since the beginning. The study of the early centuries of Christian iconography, of the biblical themes used in painting the catacombs, will help us to understand how the Christian community has been reported in Scripture from the beginning.

Art and Christian philosophy look like they grew up together. Starting from the first naive figures from and the *scratched inscriptions in the catacombs*, taking then, the fresco painting, which will adorn the gallery walls and vaults of the Martyrs, adorning the basilicas with beautiful mosaics, the Christian iconography will create with time its own canon and its own greatness. In the Christian space, the decadent Greco-Roman art found a new spirit and was revived by the young feeling of the zeal beginning of the new religion. Closely related to the doctrine of faith, Christian art has followed its course, moving from scriptural images and symbols, pleasing to the eye, at the Byzantine allegory and symbolism of later on. *The Christian East saw in the iconography an exceptional enrollment of the dogma*, a doctrine of faith. "The Icon is a writing, a script for the meanings of the Revelation and therefore all the iconography elements are related to a *symbolic* write. For this it requires the deciphering, interpreting, like a text".

But the most important feature of the Orthodox hermeneutic is its faith in living the Biblical word in order to achieve the spiritual vision, given by the Holy Spirit. Hesychasm speaks about the spiritual "seeing" that man receives it through participation in God, through deification. The seeing and union with God gives man true knowledge, and it is superior to science offered by the senses, for eyes transfigured by the Holy Spirit can see the uncreated Light. "People who have the wisdom of the world just understand the envelopment of the Saints words and cannot understand the depth and, of course, that do not get to feed the others spiritually. Only those who are spiritually related to the Holy Fathers can understand their traditions. Saints are those who have cleaned the mind's eye and have acquired the mind of Christ. Therefore, the interpretation of Scripture is a matter of the Divine Revelation. To interpret the Scriptures outside the Church is an impossible thing to accomplish, incomprehensible and harmful". Also it is emphasized the importance of living the biblical word: "Experiencing the Word it becomes therefor a fundamental hermeneutic criterion for the understanding of the Scripture, that when it is lived its revealed to us in a different way than when it is just read or studied: because it occurs the Paschal passage from page to life.

Because the year 2014 was dedicated in the Romanian Patriarchate to the homage of the Holy Sacraments, towards the end of the thesis I presented several major studies that treated the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist this year. These studies are very important and our subject is closely related to the theme of this homage year during which the Holy Communion was studied from more point of views: biblical, dogmatic, liturgical, and historical. Various studies have been gathered together in the volume *Sfânta Euharistie – arvuna vieții veșnice*, published by Basilica, the volume being inaugurated by a study of His Beatitude Father Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, entitled "Eucharist Liturgy and social philanthropy", in which is stressed the extension of the Eucharist in the compassionate serving of your peer.

An important contribution to the study brought the French theologian Jean-Claude Larchet which is talking about the healing role of the Holy Eucharist. The subject is particularly actual and suitable for the spiritual state of the world today, offering the healing through the Holy Sacraments. The man today, unlike the man from the past is running out of time. He isn't practicing much of the Christian commandments, but a minimum of preparation may facilitate the spiritual union with the Holy Sacraments which are bread on the way to the Father. The salvation of man, namely his healing for all the evils of sin started, is followed by the deification of the human beings. And the Eucharist is precisely this healing cure. St. Nicholas Cabasilas calls the Eucharist the only cure for the sin, and we need to run to this cure not just once, but always, so that the helping hand of the Doctor could always be close so it can heal us. The struggle with the sin and repentance

must be crowned with receiving the Holy Eucharist, the great cure, for the soul to heal. The sinners who approach the Holy Sacraments as some wounded and some who ask mercy, the Lord heals them, says St. John of Gaza. The Holy Sacraments can straighten the image of God in us, bringing the renewed soul beauty of yore, Larchet adds. If the baptism gives birth to man the second time, giving him the new state, the Eucharist is the perfect food to this new life in the Spirit. The Holy Eucharist nourishes the spiritual life of man, namely Christ received through the Holy Communion. He impersonates the food for the faithful so that they can live and grow in Him through the Spirit. We receive the Christ in whole in the Holy Communion but each of us as of our worthiness and our struggles. It is also why we go so often to receive the Holy Communion and repeat this in steadfast face, not because once would not be enough or that the Sacrament would suffer any robbery, but because we are never worthy to receive it with the entire worthiness and to make it belong to us the uttermost.

The mass order of the Church in its whole is considered as *a path of the Spirit*. The whole liturgical function expresses that Stewardship of God which culminates with a presence in the sanctuary of man, of every man: the presence of the last communication of God, who is the Spirit. "The last communication" because it communicates what is the innermost: the Spirit, which is the inner Logos, of the Word. *Who says he lives in Him is indebted, just as He walked, also him should walk the same* (1 John 2.6). Since completing the Byzantine liturgical cycle we understand that through him, the Church, puts us on our spiritual path of following Christ. Travelling the entire liturgical life of the Church, we will walk as Christ walked, and this will lead us to deification, namely to achieve the purpose of our life on earth. All the sacred moments of our Savior's life, His holy moments of Stewardship, are closely related to our spiritual life stages.

Everything the Saviour said or done to us is ever present to us, and the Church's hymnography reminds us that through that *today*. The birth of Christ, His Passion, the Resurrection, and all other moments of His life, are not only historical events that occurred sometime, a few thousand years ago, but, being the acts of the God made Man, are continuously present in the liturgical life of the Church. Christ left us the Holy Sacraments, left us His Body for food, left us the Baptism and all other sacred works, through which he has promised to be with us every day. If we want to remain in Him, we must receive His Body, His Holy Sacraments, meaning that he lives in His Sacraments, in the Church. In them, He left His Spirit, this force that heals us and matures us, who gives us life and perfects us from year to year, taking us to the measure of the perfect man. By His Spirit, Christ lives in the Holy Sacraments, sharing His power to all who participate in the liturgical life of the Church: *He who has the Son has life* (1 John 5, 12). The body without the soul is dead, as is the soul who did not accept Christ through the Holy Spirit. Of course

that those who do not know Christ also have existence, but without the Spirit of Christ, they do not have life in them: *In Him was life and the life was the light of men* (John 1, 4). It is what the book of Revelation says: *You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead!* (Rev. 3, 1). The Spirit is the one that prevents the transformation of Christ in the past. Without the Spirit, Christ would be the past, a historical event. Also Him, is the one that prevents the confusion of Christ with the present, for example with the institutional structures. As well He, prevents us of transferring God somewhere in the distant future. So He is the One who forms us for the sacrament, for the mystery. The Holy Spirit is present in the sacraments, bringing Christ in our midst every day.

The more actively we participate in the liturgical life of the Church, the more we unite with Christ by His Spirit, and conversely, the more we will live intensely the holy Stewardship holidays, the more we can discover the spiritual state we are in. Inspired by the biblical history and divided that it can transpire this history, the Liturgy updates God's Stewardship held in history, making us also participating in it. "God is known in and through the text of the Scripture, as it is known through the liturgical text, and, we can complete, by the text's "icon". "Mass is consubstantial to God's Stewardship, otherwise said to signs, deeds and words totality of God which manifest to operate the entry of creation into the uncreated life of the Spirit ... the Scripture, Stewardship and Liturgy are converging. For the Byzantine tradition, Mass remains still somehow "primary", because the Scripture is the narrative of a progressive "divine service" of the cosmos - from his original flow and to the unique liturgy of dead- risen Christ. And the Stewardship that fulfills the eschatological consumption is, itself liturgy: the time of the resurrection, God is known and seen in a liturgical way". The liturgical "Seeing" of the historical events is an essential characteristic of the Church, which always understood the fusion between the Liturgy and God's Iconomy.

It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you (John 16: 7). These Lord's words are full of profoundness and calls us to a higher level of understanding. They talk about the presence and absence. The leaving, the absence of Christ among us will be the means by which he will return among us to be more present, closer, more intimate to us than it was in His historical presence.

Because going back to the Father, as the Priest and Mediator, with the body alike ours, which he sacrificed and deified, we obtained the forgiveness and adoption, and thus the Father has bestowed the Gift, The Most Holy Spirit, over His humanity. And for the ontological union virtue of Christ's humanity and our humanity, the Spirit fell upon all mankind, as well the Chalcedonian dogma observed. This is the historical moment of the Pentecost.

All these events, historical moments of Christ's life: death, resurrection, ascension, the sending of the Spirit, are entered and updated in the Liturgy as the work of God-loving man for us. The Scripture presents us the historical events in the order of their progress, where the Liturgy communicates us, in the strong meaning of the word (communication - sharing), its divine message and work of these works of the Lord."

I tried as much as possible I could to show in this study the fact that in the Church, the New Testament's message is alive and working, and that through the Holy Liturgy, Christ is present in the middle to all those who believe in Him. The Holy Liturgy, this wonderful legacy left from Christ the Savior and transmitted through the Holy Apostles, enriched during the Christian history under the assistance of the Holy Spirit, she speaks to us even today about the great love of God to us.

Our Church theologians insist on the fact that the origin of the Holy Liturgy must not be searched in the Jewish worship, because with all the specific elements of this cult, she brings something new. Father Petre Vintilescu was saying that in the Liturgy still speaks the spirit that inspired the Holy Writings, the Liturgy being the Tradition in its biggest level of power and solemnity.

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