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# Vocation and Priestly Service According to Romanian Liturgist Ene Braniște

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## Abstract

The purpose of our paper is to highlight the vocational profile of the priest, as well as the way to complete his priestly work, through the liturgical act and also from the immediate perspective of his pastorate, capable to regenerate the ecclesial *corpus* of the parish and each Christian soul. All these aspects are approached from the perspective of the written literature on this matter, assumed by one of the greatest personalities of Romanian liturgical theology, the scholar and the chosen servant of the Altar, Ene Braniște.

## Keywords

priestly calling, Liturgy, teaching Theology, Orthodox priest, family, Orthodox values, cult

## I. Introduction

In this world described by constant change, the mission of the Orthodox priest becomes even more difficult than it used to be, as he goes along the challenges determined by the present as an immediate mirror of every contemporary man's experience and living. Facing such deeply desecrated tendencies in every Christian's life, the priest of Christ's Church is forced to

embrace an entire series of ways in which he must bring the moral and the Holy Word close to the human heart, as the landmarks for the sanctification and perfection of the human being.

In such context, the mission of the Church consists first of all in establishing the main guidelines which are to shape the priestly vocation of the future servant of the altar, as well as to ensure him the adequate habits of multiplying the ways of manifestation and fulfillment, according to the most important values which describe the status of the Orthodox priest, received by him during the Sacrament of Ordination. Thus, through his work, one of the greatest theologians and priests of the Romanian Orthodox Church – Professor Ene Braniște – offers us real and consistent knowledge to serve all those who are interested in identifying and completing the priestly vocation.

Therefore, this article's purpose is to highlight some of those ways that Father Ene Braniște shares in his work, as we can notice their relevance regarding the priestly vocational certainty, as well as regarding the liturgical life which is to ensure the priest of the completeness of his calling.

But, first of all, we have to bring upon your attention a relevant part of the Romanian liturgist's biography in these following lines.

## II. Short biographical references about professor Ene Braniște

Born on October 12, 1913, in Suseni commune, Argeș county<sup>1</sup>, Father Ene Braniște<sup>2</sup> was to be the third of the eleven sons of the teacher Marin D. Braniște and Anica Braniște. The personality of his parents would influence his entire life, morally and also through the full consciousness of the love that the two spouses put before their children.

Thus, his father's personality, as a teacher in his place of birth, would translate itself through years in a series of activities which spoke about the

<sup>1</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, "Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște la aniversarea a 70 de ani de la naștere", in: *Studii Teologice*, XXXV (1983) 7-8, p. 564.

<sup>2</sup> This paper can be read in an extended version in Hieromonk Dr. Rafael Povîrnaru, *Repere de liturghisire și pastorație pentru preotul contemporan în lumina operei dascălului și sacerdotului Ene Braniște*, Eurostampa Press/University Aurel Vlaicu Press, Arad, 2021.

professor's genuine desire for self-sacrifice, support and help given to the whole Christian community, all carried out by at the school chair, but also at the church pew.

A real *pater familias*, Marin D. Braniște will fulfill his role as a parent in the atmosphere of perfect love for the family, giving everyone not only his knowlledge, but also a "communion of the heart" springing from the echo of the evangelical light that traces philanthropy as an authentic event of the encounter between man and God<sup>3</sup>.

All these will practically reflect the entire experience of professor Marin D. Braniște as a reflex of consciousness born from the state of accepting the mysterious cross that he would enjoy as an effect of "embracing Christ"<sup>4</sup> similar to those who chose to become Christians and gained the joy of acquiring Christic dignities<sup>5</sup>. If the "state of the teacher" becomes one of his main graces, and the "royal state" will be felt through the public recognition of his successors, the "priestly dignity" will be manifested by a permanent presence of Marin Braniște in the ecclesial community, where he was often invited to speak, thus assuming the face of the minister who served with love, devotion and self-sacrifice both the "home church" – the family, "essential element of the Church and society"<sup>6</sup> and the serving community to the "sacrifice of Christ".<sup>7</sup>

From the ambience of the Liturgy, professor Braniște will acquire the sublime feeling of communion<sup>8</sup>, keeping in a very special way the

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 25, 40: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me". – King James Bible, translation available here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Molitfelnic (Euchologion)*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe, București, 2019, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> About the dignities received by each person through the Sacrament of Baptism, please see Alexander SCHMEMANN, *Din apă și din duh – un studiu liturgic al Botezului*, Sophia, București, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> † His Holiness LAURENȚIU the Metropolitan of Ardeal, "Dintotdeauna Biserica a binecuvântat familia", in: *Bucuria de a trăi viața în Hristos. Cuvinte de învățătură 2005 – 2011*, Andreiana, Sibiu, 2012, p. 288.

<sup>7</sup> *Liturgier (Missal)*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe, București, 2012, p. 158.

<sup>8</sup> Father Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român. Opere complete 9*, Basilica, București, 2018, p. 269: "the bond among generations is achieved merely by will power, but it is also related to our spirit".

icon of family unity<sup>9</sup>, to which he will imprint the certainty of reciprocity in sacrifice and love, in the light of the God's teaching. However, like all earthlings to whom Christ the Lord has prepared a "dwelling place in heaven" (Jn 14, 1-2), Marin Braniște will be called into eternity by the King whom He has served all his life, embracing the joy of "gazing upon his Creator's face" (I Cor 13, 12), in 1955. This moment would be captured by his son, Ene, in an essay<sup>10</sup> of deep emotion and thoughtful appreciation for his own father.

On his mother's side, the figure of Ana Braniște would represent the icon of perfect maternal femininity for the future professor and liturgist. She was the chosen mother to give the Heavens three servants of the Church – Ene, Marin and Emanoil<sup>11</sup>.

The mother's face, almost permanently sprinkled by the smile of the sacrifice, remained eternally current in the conscience of Father Ene Braniște, the one who would take over from the sentimental nobility of his mother. At the same time, from his mother, the famous liturgist would learn:

His mother's smile of self-sacrifice was kept unaltered in father Ene Braniște's consciousness, as his sentimental greatness comes from her. Moreover, the well-known liturgist was to learn from his mother

*"The love of his books, honesty, fairness and respect for the others. His mother, a pious and God-fearing woman, planted in his soul feelings that would turn the shy and gentle chills into a true priest with a special Christian experience and respect for the priesthood"*<sup>12</sup>.

Mother Ana Braniște "will be born in eternity" in 1968<sup>13</sup>, leaving behind the maternal model that we can still hardly find today, when the

<sup>9</sup> Father Cătălin Mihai BUCUR, *Contribuția părintelui profesor Ene Braniște la îmbogățirea tezaurului liturgic românesc*, Doxologia, Iași, 2019, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Father Cătălin Mihai BUCUR, *Contribuția părintelui profesor Ene Braniște...*, pp. 74 – 75.

<sup>11</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, "Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...", p. 566.

<sup>12</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, "Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...", p. 564.

<sup>13</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, "Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...", p. 564.

crowds of children once filling the houses of our forefathers remain a memory that reaps the present through the impact felt in the contemporary maternal mindset.

In the light of Heaven coming from the echo of the eternal comprehension of paternal values<sup>14</sup>, but also maternal ones<sup>15</sup>, the child Ene Braniște would study at the primary scholls in his birth place, between 1920 – 1925, following the courses of the Theological Seminary from Curtea de Argeș, which he graduated in 1933<sup>16</sup>.

This period will be characterized by a deep and assiduous preoccupation of the young student Braniște for the knowledge and deepening of the experience of the Holy Spirit in the light of the letter acquired through the program taught at this educational unit.

In order to confirm the above, history highlights his involvement in the choir of the Seminar, thus sustaining his experience through a recognition of his school value confirmed through awards that not once the student Ene Braniste would receive as a reward for his seriousness regarding the desire to study and know as much as possible. In fact, this virtue of his being, which mysteriously fulfilled the exhortation of Christ, “anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt 5, 19), would know its apogee in the university environment, where even today the work of the Romanian liturgist remains a scientific landmark, full of precision and complexity, in the note of a perpetual claim of the actuality of the issue under study.

Subsequently, the graduate Ene Braniște would enroll in the undergraduate courses of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Bucharest, which he graduated in 1938, following the defense of the thesis entitled: *The Orthodox Liturgy. Historical-liturgical study*, a work that unfortunately remains unpublished<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Christ himself teaches us the authentic dimension of paternity when he refers to the “divine dialogue” in the light of the Kingdom – Matthew 6, 9-13.

<sup>15</sup> We have all learnt maternity from God’s cross, when, during the labours of sacrifice, Christ gave us the perfect icon of the sacrificial love between Son and Mother – between person and The Mother of God – John 19, 26-27.

<sup>16</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, “Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...”, p. 564.

<sup>17</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, “Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...”, p. 564.

Concerned with the support and intensification of his spiritual life and thus cultivating his future priestly profile, the young student would serve the Emperor of all ages and the eternal Bishop from the pew of the Oborul Nou Church in Bucharest.

Also, among the studied areas, we have to mention that Professor Ene Braniște also turned his attention towards the courses of the “Titu Maiorescu” University Pedagogical Seminar in Bucharest, with a major in “Religion”. Also, his thirst for reading and knowledge led him to the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest, Romanian language department, courses he would take for two years<sup>18</sup>.

Observing his deep inclination towards the study of practical disciplines, the then head of the Liturgy and Pastoral Department, the distinguished priest and professor Petre Vintilescu<sup>19</sup> would propose to the Faculty of Theology Council the classification of Ene Braniște as assistant in the area he pastored as “liturgist and professor of great reputation”<sup>20</sup>, an approach that ended successfully on October 1, 1938.

At this moment, the teaching debut of the one who would later become “probably the greatest professor of liturgy in our country and one of the greatest in the whole Orthodoxy”<sup>21</sup> was marked.

Thus, having become a full-time assistant until March 1, 1950<sup>22</sup>, Father Braniște temporarily replaces other teaching positions, as follows:

- a. assistance from the Department of Homiletics and Catechesis, between 1943 – 1944 and 1944 – 1945;
- b. assistance from the Department of Sectology and Missionary Guidance, between 1945 – 1946;
- c. Conference on Pedagogy and the History of Pedagogy, in March and April 1947;

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950, following the patriarchal decision, he became a university lecturer, being entrusted with the replacement of the Liturgical

<sup>18</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, “Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...”, p. 564.

<sup>19</sup> Father Mircea PĂCURARIU, *Dicționarul Teologilor Români*, Andreiana, Sibiu, 2014, p. 694: “Professor of Theology, member and later on, president of the Diocesan Consistory and eparchial reviewer in the Episcopate of Argeș, archpriest of *Argeșul de Jos*, cultural counselor at the same episcopate”.

<sup>20</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, “Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...”, p. 564.

<sup>21</sup> Father Ștefan BUCHIU, “Părintele profesor Ene Braniște – 100 de ani de la naștere”, in: *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Universitatea București*, 2013, p. 327.

<sup>22</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, “Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...”, p. 564.

and Typical Department, which remained vacant due to Father Vintilescu's retirement.

The autumn of 1950, respectively on October 15<sup>th</sup> would mark the moment of his advancement to the rank of university professor, occasion that accompanies the taking over as holder of the Chair of Liturgy, Pastoral and Typical. This would later become the Department of Liturgy, Pastoral and Christian Art<sup>23</sup>, fields of Theology in which professor Ene Braniște proved a full and perfect training. Between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970 and July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1971, he was elected vice-rector of the University Theological Institute in Bucharest, later becoming the rector of this prestigious institution<sup>24</sup>.

His teaching career will reach the pinnacle of university recognition by acquiring, starting with the 1973-1974 academic year, the quality of doctoral supervisor<sup>25</sup>, a position from which he shaped a real plethora of people ready to serve selflessly and knowingly Our King, Jesus Christ and His faithful people.

This academic endeavour would be haloed by the Holy Spirit through the power and work of God materialized in the election and ordination of the young theologian first in the rank of deacon on behalf of St. Sava Church in Bucharest, an event held on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1940, by the hands of His Holiness Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu<sup>26</sup>. He was offered the gift of priesthood by the care of the Almighty on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1950<sup>27</sup>, being ordained an honorary servant on behalf of the chapel of the Theological Institute in Bucharest, the order being fulfilled by the Patriarchal Vicar Bishop Teoctist Botoșăneanul.

It should be mentioned that the access to the higher clergy of the Church became possible for the theologian Ene Braniște after he materialized the public confession of love in the Sacrament of Marriage, together with Professor Ecaterina D. Vasile, also a graduate in Theology and Philology at

<sup>23</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, "Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...", p. 565.

<sup>24</sup> † His Holiness Patriarch DANIEL, "Părintele profesor Ene Braniște – un mare dascăl al teologiei românești", in: *Preot profesor Ene Braniște. Cuvântări și predici*, Basilica, București, 2014, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Father Nicolae D. NECULA, "Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște...", p. 565.

<sup>26</sup> On Patriarch Nicodim's personality, please see: †H is Holiness Patriarch Nicodim MUNTEANU. *Un mărturisitor al Luminii în vremuri întunecate*, Basilica, București, 2019; Constantin Claudiu COTAN, *Conferința internațională Biserica Ortodoxă, Statul și societatea Românească, ed. A II-a, Constanța, 28.oct. 2019. Biserica Ortodoxă Română în timpul Patriarhului nicodim Munteanu. Cultură, Pastorație și filantropie*, University Press, București, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Father Cătălin Mihai BUCUR, *Contribuția părintelui profesor Ene Braniște...*, p. 102.



the University of Bucharest, on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1940<sup>28</sup>. Although this family based on love and sacrifice did not know the parental feeling, nevertheless professor Braniște with his wife “raised a lot of disciples as their own sons”<sup>29</sup>. On the night of March 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 1984, the father is called to serve the Holy Liturgy in God’s Kingdom.

Once we have captured these existential milestones, in the following lines we will focus our attention on some of the vocational-priestly “signals” that the renowned liturgist offers us.

### III. The vocational profile of the Orthodox priest

Before putting into words the main characteristics of the process of becoming a priest, it is worth highlighting the main framework in which a future priest fulfils the seed of his calling in the “whisper of Heaven”.

Analyzing the dimension of his vocation, the father professor captures in one of his articles the finality of a sincere, devoted and pure ministry of an Orthodox priest. Thus, he considers that “the selection of worthy and capable priests (..) would have incalculable consequences and would be a great gain, not only for the Church, but also for the Fatherland”<sup>30</sup>. In other words, the author confirms the certainty that an ordained person carries with him not only the ecclesial image that confirmed him as a servant, but through this he is obliged to assume the state of God’s people from Whom he also comes.

To put it in different terms, a believer in the manifestation of his call to the altar of Christ will never be able to claim the finality of his sacred gesture in a register of confessional particularities and individualities, but will be called to permanently confirm his origin, as part of the nation that adopted him by divine will at the time of his birth. On the other hand, the nation and the Church remain the expression of the universality<sup>31</sup> that the cult expresses in one form or another in each of its ordinances.

<sup>28</sup> Father Cătălin Mihai BUCUR, *Contribuția părintelui profesor Ene Braniște...*, p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> † Casian CRĂCIUN, “Dascăl, liturghisitor și mare pedagog: preotul profesor doctor Ene Braniște, la un secol de la naștere”, in: *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Universitatea București*, 2013, p. 333.

<sup>30</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXXI (1979) 2, p. 323.

<sup>31</sup> On the multiple layers of the cult, please see: Father Vasile COSTAN, *Părintele Petre Vințilescu. Activitatea liturgică, academică și de cercetare*, Doxologia, Iași, 2020, pp. 384-392.



Under such conditions, serving God and serving your own nation becomes the icon of a synergy that man who has become a priest of Christ illustrates as an echo of his inner being. The Church and the Fatherland do not remain two desideratums of the exteriority of the priest's person, but they actually mirror the Heaven captured by the soul from the very first moments of life, when the Nation and the Church adopt him in order to acquire holiness, which is to be outpoured on those who share the same love for our Heavenly Father. As a result, at the table of the Holy Altar and practically through his whole devotion, the priest transforms his life into a response given to God and his Nation to the calling that the priestly quality implies. Yet, this can only become a reality in the context in which a nation builds by its character Christian consciousness capable of later becoming true vocational icon of Orthodoxy. Therefore, it is appropriate that in the itinerary of discovering, confirming and living the priestly vocation through ministry, we first analyze the initial framework in which, through its attributes, a nation, in this case the Romanian one, sows in the Christian soul the seed of the future call to the clerical *corpus* of the Church.

First of all, some aspects that make up the notion of vocation from a scientific point of view must be highlighted. In this sense, psychology evaluates the vocation as “a call to a certain activity or to the fulfillment of some social missions, based on the consciousness of one's own skills and on the responsibility regarding their development”<sup>32</sup>. In other words, through the voice of the renowned priest and professor Constantin Galeriu we find that the human vocation is seen bearing the consistency of the relationship between God and man, as stated here: “in the original creative act itself, man was conceived as divine adoption. This is firmly stated in the Revelation. In this respect, God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Genesis 1, 26)”<sup>33</sup>. In his turn, Father Ene Braniște sees in the sphere of his vocation the very mysterious call confirmed by the Latin etymology of the word, which claims its origin in the verb *voco*, *vocared* translated into calling. From this point of view, the Romanian liturgist scholar appreciates that “having a vocation for a profession means having those psychophysical skills, those natural inclinations or innate predispositions, necessary for the practice of a profession, occupation or

<sup>32</sup> Paul POPESCU – NEVEANU, *Dictionar de Psihologie*, Albatros, București, 1978, p. 776.

<sup>33</sup> Father Constantin GALERIU, *Vocația pascală a creației*, Basilica, București, 2019, p. 317.

functions, in the best conditions”<sup>34</sup>. Completing this first consideration on how to define the calling, the same author states that “vocation requires certain special attributes of intelligence, affectivity and will, as well as physical qualities required to perform a particular task”<sup>35</sup>. To these realities related to this calling or to other fine manifestations felt internally by each person towards choosing a particular field of work, we can also notice a strong revelation of the Creator in the light of vocational experience.

We notice that the psychological field claims in the definition set out above a key – term that practically sets the human being on the edge of eternity, that being the word “consciousness”. We know very well that translated through the prism of our own etymology, this word expresses “knowledge shared together” with Someone. If we place this reality in the area of Eternity confirmed by the Holy Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, respectively that concerning the reflection of the deeds of morals by pagans according to the Law written “in their hearts, by the testimony of their conscience” (Rom 2, 15) we realize that every manifestation of man in favor of the perfectible potentiality for which it nourishes certain affinities becomes the ontological fecundity that the human being receives as a gift from God towards the guidance, development and perfection of his talents. By obeying the law of conscience, man reveals the secret within him, thus discovering the will of the Creator. Through the “voicing consciousness of eternity in us”, the man, but especially the Christian man, is keeping alive the relationship of his becoming in the light of God’s will contained in the “innate inclinations and predispositions” of which Professor Braniște speaks. Trying to configure the portrait of *the man of vocation*, the renowned liturgist considers that:

“First of all, there is a perfect adaptation to them to the specific nature and conditions of the professional activity; in other words, there is a need for a perfect correlation between each man’s personality and the profession he exercises or the agreement of the individual particularities with the psychophysical exigencies of the embraced profession”.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, p. 316.

<sup>35</sup> Father Professor ENE BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, p. 316.

<sup>36</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, p. 318.

Secondly, “the voluntary and conscious consecration of his whole personality and of all strenghts is aquired by a man of vocation”<sup>37</sup>.

Particularizing these general ideas, it is appropriate to turn our attention to the way in which the highlighted details work together, in order to make the person who truly feels it acquire the clerical dimension.

Thus, from the perspective of Christian pastoral care, the vocation is divided into objective vocation and subjective vocation. From the perspective of objective calling, it must be said that it has an external character, coming from God or the Church. It can manifest either in an extraordinary way or in a common way. In order to understand the difference between these last two types of vocational manifestation, we have taken into consideration tthe Professor Braniște’s presentation. Therefore, we learn that the extraordinary or supernatural dimension of the call becomes visible through the great personalities called or rightly indicated by God Himself through epochal missions in the religious history of mankind, such as Moses and Old Testament prophets, apostles, and especially the Holy Apostle Paul<sup>38</sup>. The call of common nature becomes effective at the moment of receiving the grace of the Priesthood through the Sacrament of Ordination<sup>39</sup>, an act materialized this time not by the direct intervention of God, but by the mediation of His grace materialized through the ecclesial hierarchy.

At the same time, the subjective, psychological or actual vocation is the vocation in the current sense of the word:

“A natural inclination or an inner predisposition, oriented to priesthood, a strong predilection or attraction to it, a natural endowment from God, acquired by birth, which engages our

<sup>37</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, p. 318.

<sup>38</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, p. 320.

<sup>39</sup> On Ordination, please see: Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, *Despre preoție*, Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2004; Father Constantin GALERIU, “Slujirea preoțească după Sfânta Scriptură și Sfânta Tradiție”, in: *Studii Teologice* XXIX (1977) 1-2, pp. 5-14; Father Constantin GALERIU, “Preoția ca slujire a Cuvântului”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXX (1979) 2, pp. 294-312; Father Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Sublimitatea preoției și îndatoririle preotului*, in: “Mitropolia Olteniei”, VII (1957) 5-6, pp. 298-312; Father Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Slujitorii lui Dumnezeu, slujitori ai oamenilor*, in: “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, XCVII (1970) 3-4, pp. 408-416; Archimandrite Zaharia ZAHAROU, *Pecetea prezenței lui Hristos în inima omului*, Basilica, București, 2020, pp. 113-151.

whole being and is proved by the skills required to fulfill this holy mission. In a higher form, it manifests itself as an organic necessity or an inner impulse, a kind of power above us, which pushes us spontaneously and irresistibly into the service of Christ ”<sup>40</sup>.

In addition to all this, the future priest enriches his experience with a series of inner impulses manifested through feelings, affinities and gentleness towards everything that means the creation of God, an increased inclination towards contemplation, interiorization, piety, prayer, altruism, church service etc. All this becomes the horizon capable of shaping the profile of a potential future priest. Following the objectivity of the study on the type of vocational –priestly feeling, we appreciate that the ethnic spirit of the Romanian people, which manifests “a biology of eternity”, as it was captured in previous presentations, becomes the fertile space of birth, development and perfection through the act of laying on of hands, of the calling to serve the Holy Altar.

To all these, family and school are added as a decisive factor in maintaining and manifesting the priestly vocation, according to Father Ene Braniște’s indications. The school’s input is a determining one, as it represents the organized framework of the theological quality’s improvement and confirmation. A special contribution in this direction belongs to the confessor of the school, as well as to the entire teaching staff that becomes a real model for the whole group of pupils and students who are actually looking for a confirmation of their feelings which are to be placed in the sanctifying work of the Orthodox priesthood.

At the same time, we notice how the family institution becomes the avant-garde and the model of any type of recognition of an ethnic, social, ecclesial and even vocational nature. This is how, through its very spiritual content, the Romanian ethnicity creates the recognized and scientific premises in the evaluation and substantiation of the family institution as a cell of becoming not only national, but especially ecclesial-priestly. The inner profile of the Romanian man ensures to the organizational factors the seed of the conscious living of God, whose attributes become the mirror of the Romanian personality. To love, to believe, to sacrifice, to give, to forgive are attitudes practically born from the Romanian’s belief that

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<sup>40</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preotie”, pp. 320-321.

through these virtues the supreme ideal hidden in each of us is acquired – holiness. Under these conditions, the space of family manifestation rightly acquires the status of the *small ecclesia*, which transforms the relational act between family members and all of them with God, into an authentic act of worship through which the priest is placed on the sacred liturgical “*prothesis*”<sup>41</sup>.

In this direction, Orthodoxy has an essential function in the life and manifestation of the Romanian soul, fully ensuring the incorporation “in our intimate life of transcendent, sanctifying, divine values and powers”, manifesting itself especially in the private life of the Romanian Christian by: the use of bread, in a sublime mysterious relationship with the “binder of the Christian community” – the Holy Liturgy<sup>42</sup>; the adoption of the liturgical language as a national language; inclusion in social life through the family<sup>43</sup> – a model of the plurality of people in the communion of love.

By focusing on the relation between the Romanian consciousness and the “everyday bread”, we realize how it becomes as common, as respected by all man, “everywhere present and yet unpopular, the basic element of life”, by its being and by its use, as the most adequate parallel of the body of Jesus Christ – the supporting element of the spiritual life”<sup>44</sup>.

This “Eucharistic experience” is due to the fact that, through Church, the Holy Liturgy entered deep into the soul of the Romanian nation, practically finding its cultic projection in the everyday gestures that the Romanian man made in his house transformed into a fortress of the Spirit”. Let us not forget the gesture that even today the Romanian Christian makes on the bread, which is now imprinted with the sign of the Holy Cross, recalling the Holy Proskomidia, where the priest himself does the same accompanied by the prophetic word of the prophet Isaiah<sup>45</sup>. Also, the perfect public prayer in the sacramental act of the Eucharist is lived in the private approach of the Romanian, in which his particular prayer becomes an undoubted

<sup>41</sup> Father Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în liturghia ortodoxă*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2004, pp. 176-215.

<sup>42</sup> Father Vasile COSTAN, *Părintele Petre Vintilescu...*, p. 364.

<sup>43</sup> Father Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român*, pp. 258 – 259.

<sup>44</sup> Father Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român*, pp. 258 – 259.

<sup>45</sup> See “Rânduiala Dumnezeieștii Proskomidiei”, in: *Liturghier*, pp. 117-130.

opportunity to embrace and place before Heaven all his brothers, both the living and the ones inhabiting the eternal happiness of the afterlife. Having the consciousness of the liturgical concelebration with the saints and angels in the church, the Romanian vivifies this conviction by the expressed desire to transform his house into a space of eternity through the mysterious presence of God, the Mother of God, saints and angels, asking in this sense the help of the priest who has to perform the ordinance of the consecration<sup>46</sup>. The spirit of the Liturgy is also felt in the act of decorating the house with holy icons, in the gesture full of mysterious sacrifice of lighting candles, in the continuous dialogue through reading the psalms and praising God through religious lyrics. At the same time, by following the ways in which the priest prepares himself and dresses accordingly in order to perform the Holy Liturgy<sup>47</sup>, the Romanian man understood completely the significance of his own preparation, by adopting not only the most appropriate and clean clothes, but mainly that one that brought to the present his baptismal and virtuous state, suggested through colour and mysterious message, in the mirror of the priestly adornments.

The language of Heaven, as an act of national identity, became an occasion for divine reflection<sup>48</sup>, by revealing through grace filled with Holy Spirit the creative power of the word coming from the Word. The liturgical speech became the speech of the familiarity among the Romanian brothers, for which the utterance became a perpetual original claim, as an echo of the utterance from eternity, in the heart of the Holy Trinity. In this respect, “the word is a bearer of grace and has the power to change people, to renew their way of thinking and manifesting. The word of grace reaches the depths of human creation and calls to new life in Christ”. Also, the Romanian *logos*, carrier of the uncreated energy of God<sup>49</sup>, becomes soul food for those who believe and has creative power or edifying power<sup>50</sup>. All

<sup>46</sup> Molitfelnic, pp. 423-441.

<sup>47</sup> Liturghier, pp. 485-495.

<sup>48</sup> † His Holiness Metropolitan Antonie DE SUROJ, *Ești creștin sau doar bisericos. Cuvântări despre trăirea autentică a credinței*, Doxologia, Iași, 2020, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> On the uncreated energies, please see: Florin Toader TOMOIOAGĂ, “The vision of divine light in Saint Gregory Palamas’s theology”, in: *Acta Theologica*, vol.35, no.2, Bloemfontein, 2015; Nichifor TĂNASE, “«Crucifixion» of the Logic. Palamite Theology of the Uncreated Divine Energies as Fundament of an Ontological Epistemology, in: *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 2015 6:4, pp. 69-106.

<sup>50</sup> Father Viorel SAVA, “«Limbajul liturgic» al lui Dumnezeu”, in: “*În Biserica Slavei Tale*”. *Studii de teologie și spiritualitate liturgică*, vol. I, Doxologia, Iași, 2012, pp. 41-42.

these iconic characteristics take place practically in the Christian family, configuring the entire existence also on an authentic “Eucharistic format”, in which love becomes an occasion of sacrifice between spouses<sup>51</sup>. The appetency for devotion “to the grave”<sup>52</sup> as a way of life that “springs from the chalice of the Church” is confirmed in the way in which love dresses in the “Eucharist”, through the very special order of the Sacrament of Marriage in the Holy Liturgy. This approach becomes the telling mirror of a Eucharistic consciousness cultivated in the “self” of the Romanian people through the values described above, representing at the same time a necessity of its existential reconfirmation, as an echo of the priestly vocation that the baptismal light places in the Orthodox being and the act of life within the framework of the priestly calling. This is also confirmed in the following lines:

“The liturgy, the feasts, the fasts, bearing the seal of the Eastern faith, having the old and unchanging teaching of the Holy Fathers as essence is the Christianity preached and practiced at the level of the needs of the people, it is Christianity that pierced the whole being of the people, shaped his life, gave him a rhythm and placed it in a spiritual horizon, enlightened it with meaning. It is the spiritual law of the existence of the entire Romanian people”<sup>53</sup>.

Under such terms, receiving the grace of the priesthood became for the son of the people dedicated to the deep study of the “divine logos” a crowning of his experience, a perfection of his calling, maintained and metabolized by his entire concept of life. Ordination becomes in these conditions the order in which the candidate enjoys a new breath of the Spirit<sup>54</sup>, a gesture by which “the Church is giving”, and her ministers

<sup>51</sup> On the mysterious sacrament of joining in love, please see: Hiermonk Rafael POVÎRNARU, “Sacrifice, Communion and Teophanic Love – Pedestal of Marriage and Pastoral Desideratum of Romanian Orthodox Church for the Contemporary Family”, in: *Teologia*, 84 (3/2020), pp. 142-164.

<sup>52</sup> *Molitfelnic*, p. 101.

<sup>53</sup> Father Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român*, p. 329.

<sup>54</sup> John 20, 22.23: “Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven”.



gain power “to labor with all their word and deed to build the people”<sup>55</sup>. From these defining words for the entire priestly service<sup>56</sup> emerges as clearly as possible the inner and active profile of the Romanian man, who consolidated the unity of the people through his word detached from the pulpit of the Church and through his entire existential dynamic, by which he extended in the middle of the world the Orthodox cult, attesting in this way its vocational-priestly feature.

Reaching the state of vocational fullness by receiving the sanctifying grace, the new clergyman is obliged to generate through his whole life and ministry, the accomplishment of the synergistic act in which through gesture, action and the exercise of his own priesthood, grace ensures the materialization of the faultless process in which the priest accomplishes his status in order to acquire his own thoroughness, as well as the redemption of the souls entrusted to him for pastoral care.

In other words, the clergyman must take constant care of his spiritual ascent, an aspect that is required to be accomplished through his liturgical service. In this sense, Father Braniște considers that the strong and insistent prayer that is the “lung of the vocation” becomes the expression of the will of “progress and perfection that must not leave us throughout life”<sup>57</sup>. At the same time, the consciousness of perfection must be kept alive in a spirit of culture, both in terms of continuous theological preparation and improvement of the practical skills required by the priestly quality, and in the “dimension of the Paraclete”, in which the Holy Spirit opens new and new horizons in order to obtain salvation. An authentic priesthood as it is characterized by the minister Ene Braniște means zeal, vivification, love and enthusiasm, virtues “that which are proved by a priest of true vocation”<sup>58</sup>. And the liturgical ministry becomes the way in which all these graces can assure the clergyman the status of the “perfect man”<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> Deacon Ioan I. Ică Jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei I. Canonul apostolic al primelor secole*, Deisis/Stavropoleos, Sibiu/București, 2008, p. 755.

<sup>56</sup> On the dimension of the priestly reality, please see: Hiermonk Rafael POVÎRNARU, *Viața cultică a Bisericii după Tratatul Pseudo – Areopagitice. O realitate autentic creștină*, Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2018, pp. 347-423.

<sup>57</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, p. 318.

<sup>58</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Vocația (chemarea) pentru preoție”, p. 316.

<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 4,13.

#### IV. Worship and Sacramentality, the Way of Engaging and Orienting the Soul Powers towards the Completion of the Priestly Vocation

To reach the state of completeness of his vocation according to the coordinates highlighted above, the priest is called to continually maintain his relationship with God, especially in the light of prayer and his own ascetic effort to put on the Light of Christ. Only with the gift of the Holy Spirit can the servant of God overcome the trials of life that appear on the path of his priesthood, the point of resistance being the inner source of manifestation, considered a true point of resistance, “a refuge of retreat for restoration and strengthening, in which dwells the love for God and for men, which inspires the zeal and devotion of the shepherd of souls”<sup>60</sup>. This iconic face determined primarily by love can only be consecrated as an icon following the path of liturgical service, which opens the infinite horizon of the human being’s sanctification. Faced with the challenges of his mission:

“The priest will need (...) the revival of his vocation, by the grace of God, which can only be possible through prayer and meditation. Prayer becomes a command and a duty by which the priest must accompany himself more than anyone, in order to keep alive his conscience as a man of prayer, a man of God set for his work and ordained to pray for himself and for others, for the salvation of his soul and of all those entrusted to him. It will remind him that any pastoral undertaking must start with prayer”.<sup>61</sup>

In this sense, the public prayer manifested through the worship of the Church becomes the main source of becoming the servant in God, generating a real communion of love, sacrifice and compassion for the soul of his neighbor. Through worship, “the spirit of man lives and rises to Heaven”<sup>62</sup>, thus living togetherness with the Holy Trinity – God. In fact,

<sup>60</sup> Father Petre VINTILESCU, *Preotul în fața chemării sale de păstor de suflete*, Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 2007, p. 68.

<sup>61</sup> Father Petre VINTILESCU, *Preotul în fața chemării sale...*, p. 217.

<sup>62</sup> Archimandrite Emilianos SIMONOPETRITUL, *Tâlcuiri și cateheze. Tâlcuiri la sfintele slujbe*, Saint Nectarie Press, Arad, 2009, p. 29.

“the whole Orthodox liturgical life is a hymn permanently addressed to the Holy Trinity. Through the [ecclesial liturgy] the Holy Trinity dwells among us and in us, the kingdom of God becoming a present reality for everyone. Through the divine worship, filled by the Trinity, the Church turns our world into Heaves”<sup>63</sup>. Under the auspices of grace, the world becomes an authentic “sacrament”<sup>64</sup> due to the cult of the Church, which not only for man represents the essence, foundation and source of life, but also for the world, as being the epiphany of God, the cult thus becomes the epiphany of the world. Being “knowledge of God, [worship] is the only true communion with the world, (...) it is the supreme perfection of all human knowledge”<sup>65</sup>. And this knowledge of the Absolute through cult becomes possible precisely due to the fact that through its ontological constitution, man is a cultic being. Therefore, only through the mysterious encounter in the prayer of the Church, the Christian, but especially the priest can fully live the expression of divine virtue capable of making his existential purpose a true proof of sacrifice before Heaven, but also before the world to which he looks and owes to fulfill his calling, through God.

Father Ene Braniște considers that through its entire biblical<sup>66</sup>, dogmatic<sup>67</sup>, historical<sup>68</sup> and traditional content<sup>69</sup>, the liturgical ceremony has the gift of moving the soul. Through the church service “the senses are first impressed, the heart is moved and the mind more easily accepts the dogmas that the Church associates with its rites”<sup>70</sup>. At the same time:

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<sup>63</sup> Father Viorel SAVA, “În Biserica Slavei Tale”. *Studii de teologie și spiritualitate liturgică*. Vol. 2, Doxologia, Iași, 2012, p. 2; see also: Hieromonk Rafael POVÎRNARU, “Cult, Liturgy and «Trinitarian culture» as Mirrored in Father Dumitru Stăniloae’s Vision”, in: *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, vol. 10 (2019/4), pp. 171-197, <https://www.orthodox-theology.com/media/PDF/4.2019/RafaelPovirnar.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Father Alexander SCHMEMANN, *Pentru viața lumii. Sfintele Taine și Ortodoxia*, Basilica, București, 2012, p. 152.

<sup>65</sup> Father Alexander SCHMEMANN, *Pentru viața lumii...*, p. 153.

<sup>66</sup> Deacon Ioan I. ICĂ JR., *Canonul Ortodoxiei I*, pp. 142 – 205; Marguerite HARL, *Glas de Laudă. Cântările biblice din rugăciunea liturgică*, Doxologia, Iași, 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Marguerite HARL, *Glas de Laudă...*, pp. 103 – 142.

<sup>68</sup> Marguerite HARL, *Glas de Laudă...*, pp. 278 – 318.

<sup>69</sup> Marguerite HARL, *Glas de Laudă...*, pp. 565 – 834.

<sup>70</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Cultul ca mijloc de propovăduire a dreptei credințe, a dragostei, a păcii și a bunei înțelegeri între oameni”, in: *Studii Teologice*, V (1953) 9-10, p. 629.

“Through the elements of art, which the cult puts at its service, through the charm exerted by the poetry of liturgical hymns, the beauty of ceremonies and church paintings and the intuitive and concrete language of rites, it dresses the religious truth in sensitive forms with great power of attraction meant to captivate the imagination and to warm the heart, strengthening religious beliefs. Through this, the cult helps us enter the sphere of religious truths not through speculative reason that scrutinizes dogma, but by making them live them with all our hearts. Through their rich doctrinal and catechetical content, the forms of worship (...) have the gift of configuring the right faith deep inside the souls of the faithful, making them love it and cherish it”<sup>71</sup>.

This perspective opens new dimensions of living through prayer, especially as “in Orthodox worship, teaching is transformed into prayer, and prayer is a teaching”<sup>72</sup>.

At the same time, the joy of living a life according to God’s will embraced the cult in the source of the renewal of life for the man who loves Heaven and is eager to learn virtue as a form of the mysterious encounter with his own Creator. Thus, having its foundation the life in Christ, the cult propagated in the hearts the love, the brotherhood, the dedication, as forms of comprehension of the eternity in the being of the neighbor. All the biblical texts that formulated the commandment of love are included in the cult service, in the form of readings from the customs of the services<sup>73</sup>. Also, the main hymns<sup>74</sup> sing about the state of forgiveness and encounter with one’s neighbor in the icon of Christ. The foundation of the “working through love”<sup>75</sup> faith facilitates the concrete metabolism of peace, understood both as a form of assuming the cross and manifesting the love for God, as well as as an indicative landmark in the light of the

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<sup>71</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Cultul ca mijloc de propovăduire a drepte credințe...”, p. 631.

<sup>72</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Cultul ca mijloc de propovăduire a drepte credințe...”, p. 632.

<sup>73</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Cultul ca mijloc de propovăduire a drepte credințe...”, p. 636.

<sup>74</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Cultul ca mijloc de propovăduire a drepte credințe...”, p. 637.

<sup>75</sup> Galatians 5, 6.

relationship with one's neighbor. Many of the ordinances of the Church include the articulated invitation to *peace* addressed to the man eager to acquire the likeness of God. Under such conditions, the cult has the purpose through its sanctifying and revealing gift of the divine will, to deepen inside man's heart, but especially in the clergy of God, the teaching of faith, love, peace, sacrifice, dedication, altruism, as forms of fulfilling the mission of the priesthood, thus leading to an increase and confirmation of the priestly vocation.

Only by living in this way can the priest discover, at the same time through cult, the answer he offers to the state of the icon of the present world. Beyond the scriptural message that is characterized by a permanent dynamic in the light of an *eternal today*, through which Christ offers comfort, rebuke, but also a landmark of the resurrection, the cult bears the imprint of an existence permanently settled in accordance with the spiritual needs of contemporary man. In the face of current secularism, which is nothing more than an attack on the cultic face of the human being<sup>76</sup>, a denial of man as a cultic being, a denial of worship, the sacred liturgy of the Church is permanently enriched in order to respond to mysterious calls from the hearts of the "legitimate" sons of God<sup>77</sup>. The acutality of the cult and its speed of reaction to the pains contemporary man's suffering is also affirmed by Father Braniște, who considers that, like any organism of the spiritual life, the Orthodox cult "has already known [and still knows today] a long evolution, a process of change. (...) by developing or adding new elements designed to meet the religious needs of believers"<sup>78</sup>. From this evaluation made by the distinguished Romanian liturgist and confirmed by the present work of the Romanian Orthodox Church which fully demonstrates its concern for keeping present the answer offered to the current believer, the priest's calling is strengthened and placed on the ascendant-spiritual path towards which each and every servant of God must aspire to. Thus, the Orthodox cult is able to provide the necessary framework for the sanctification of the soul of each Christian, but especially of the first of the parishioners, none other than the one whose merit was

<sup>76</sup> Father Alexander SCHMEMANN, *Pentru viața lumii...*, p. 148.

<sup>77</sup> *Molitfelnic*, pp. 647-765.

<sup>78</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, "Cultul ortodox în cadrul lumii de azi", in: *Liturghia – sufletul etern al Ortodoxiei în rugăciune. Studii de Teologie Liturgică*, vol I, Andreiana, Sibiu, 2013, p. 316.

confirmed during the Holy Liturgy at the call made by the hierarchy in the ordination<sup>79</sup>, while ensuring the renewable resource of word and deed directed to the world in the rhythm protected by grace, but reconcilable in the light of God's will.

But all these virtues reach their sublime in the Holy Liturgy, where the priest recognizes his adoption that God gives him by consecrating the Spirit in the steps of the church hierarchy. In the soul of the minister, the Holy Liturgy becomes a perpetual updating of the moment when receiving the Holy Wafer in his hand, his conscience is transfigured, but also responsible for the perfection of his own being, as well as those who were entrusted to pastorate. The Eucharistic sacrifice becomes the space of enrichment in God, in a full encounter between Heaven and earth, between the Heavenly King and His world, in which the liturgical gesture is "an authentic divine act that includes not only this world, but also the world outside its borders"<sup>80</sup>. In order to live this truth it is necessary "to live the Holy Liturgy with our whole being"<sup>81</sup>. In this sense, being aware of his own inner state altered by sin and eager to reach faultlessness, as a form of personal sublime, but also vocational, the priest prays at each Liturgy:

"You, Who are the only good and benevolent, look at me, the sinful and unworthy servant and take away from my soul and heart all the wicked thoughts; make me, the one embraced by priesthood's grace, worthy of the power of your Holy Spirit to stand before this Holy Table of Yours and to sacrifice Your Holy and Most Pure Body and Your Precious Blood"<sup>82</sup>.

From these words emerges on the one hand the feeling of personal condition which the priest invokes for his renewal through divine grace, being aware of his unworthiness and addressing to God the prayer that his entire Eucharistic liturgical work may become a reality, in the view of personal, shared and ecclesial sanctification, as the Holy Liturgy represents

<sup>79</sup> "Is he worthy?" – It becomes the call of the hierarchy addressed to the Christian community, which is meant to confirm in its turn the undoubted quality of the newly consecrated in the hierarchical ranks of the Church.

<sup>80</sup> Alina Ana NISTOR, *Cuvinte purtătoare de viață în epistolele Sfântului Sofronie Athonitul*, Doxologia, Iași, 2020, p. 67.

<sup>81</sup> Alina Ana NISTOR, *Cuvinte purtătoare de viață...*, p. 67.

<sup>82</sup> *Liturghier*, pp. 159-160.

through the prayer of the diptych, “an excellent and unparalleled form of solidarity, charity and mutual assistance”<sup>83</sup>. Through these gestures, the priest confirms before God and the world that his calling is fulfilled and accomplished through the sacramental act of the Church. But in order to be able to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, the priest must cumulatively gratify several conditions, both spiritual and material. In other words, for the performance of the Holy Sacrifice, the priest must prepare both mentally and physically, these being necessary due to the fact that:

“During the service of the Holy Liturgy, the priest comes into direct contact with the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord himself, Whom he touches, carries in his hands and consumes or distributes to the faithful. It goes without saying that for such a frightening encounter with God, the priest cannot appear unprepared”<sup>84</sup>.

That is why Father Ene Braniște states:

“The life of the priest should be a continual preparation and greatfulness for the Holy Liturgy – the highest dignity by which God has honored men and which even the angels of Heaven cannot perform. But in addition to holiness and impeccable moral purity, virtues that describe the status of the priest and makes him different than the rest of the believers in his daily life, (..) he needs in addition an (...) express purification, whenever necessary to serve the Holy Liturgy”<sup>85</sup>.

Following the exhortations made by the erudite professor Braniște, we observe how practically the whole ministry of the priest by increasing the divine graces and including them in his own being becomes preceding the celebration of the Holy Liturgy. The whole cult prepares the priestly person for the sacramental fulfillment, appreciated as a peak of the spiritual

<sup>83</sup> Father Petre VINTILESCU, *Liturghierul explicat*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1998, p. 279.

<sup>84</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Săvârșitorul Sfintei Liturghii și pregătirea lui pentru slujbă”, in: *Glasul Bisericii*, XLII (1983) 6-8, p. 390.

<sup>85</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Săvârșitorul Sfintei Liturghii...”, p. 390.



experience. Precisely in order to highlight a face as close as possible to the vocational icon, among the conditions of a spiritual nature that the liturgist must take into account when celebrating the Holy Liturgy is the one regarding the passage through the Sacrament of Confession, where the clergyman becomes this time the penitent which in need of the perfect mercy of God. In this sense, Father Braniște would state:

“If we cannot completely avoid sin by banishing it from our lives, then at least we have the power and comfort to erase its traces and wounds, through confession and repentance. If we fail to keep the white garment of purity from the beginning of our endeavour on this earth untouched and unblemished, obtained through the baptismal bath, we have (...) the ability to wash it and cleanse it from time to time of the mud and dust of sin. How? – Through our tears of repentance and confession”<sup>86</sup>.

Therefore, we see how the servant of the Holy Altar also needs continual deliverance from the pressure of death through sin. Meeting the Life he holds in his own hands, the priest is obliged to fill his whole existence with the sacrificial light of God, a fact that can only be achieved through cultic prayer, which has the gift of making the being human “reflection of Christ”<sup>87</sup>, strengthened and perfected in the form of the sacramental sublime. Constantly preparing himself by confessing his sins to the clergyman and removing from his soul the state that “most often threatens – routine, formalism, and automatism in performing holy services”<sup>88</sup>, the altar minister is able to catch the entire blaze of grace given by god through the Praises of the Church. In this manner, faith, love and peace are cultivated once more, as preparatory states for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, a source of communion and sacrifice, of Word and consolation that it can later offer to the Christian community.

In this way, through liturgical act and through divine grace, assimilated as a result of his own spiritual experience, the priest transforms his being

<sup>86</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Cuvânt de îndemn la spovedanie”, in: *Glasul Bisericii*, XVII (1958) 4, p. 321.

<sup>87</sup> † His Holiness Metropolitan Antonie DE SUROJ, *Ești creștin sau doar bisericos...*, p. 52.

<sup>88</sup> Father Professor Ene BRANIȘTE, “Participarea la Liturghie și metode pentru realizarea ei”, in: *Studii Teologice*, II (1949) 7- 8, p. 605.

and ministry into an authentic church which, through communion with the Eternal Bishop, confirms the perfect face of the priestly vocation, able to return the gifts of personal love for God and his neighbor.

## V. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the whole family environment that Father Ene Braniște enjoyed would be the main source of his becoming a teacher, but also a priest. In this sense, the described vocational image finds its origin in the Christian family, where the human being secretly exercises its “priestly latency”, so that later, the educational environment can confirm the aspiration to serve the altar of Christ. Beyond what represents the immediate physiognomy of the calling to assume the mystery of ordination and, implicitly, of vocational confirmation, the priest has the duty, through prayer, meditation and Eucharistic service, to complete this graceful stature, to the salvation of his own soul, but especially to eternal rest of all the believers entrusted to him by God. We appreciate that all these considerations do not remain only a reflective register of the Romanian liturgist Ene Braniște, but express the sublime of his own calling to the service of the Church of Christ and of the Romanian nation.