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The Holy and Great Myrrh: Theological, Liturgical and Historical Dimensions in the Perspective of the Orthodox Church

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Abstract

This study analyzes the Holy and Great Myrrh from the Orthodox theological-liturgical and historical perspective, exploring its biblical origins, its composition and its ritual preparation. The present research highlights the simboical and sacred dimensions of the Holy and Great Myrrh, its importance in the Orthodox rituals and Mysteries, and the cultural interconnexions reflected in its ingredients and preparation methods. Starting from its biblical fundaments and its historical evolution, this scientific paper presents the complex composition of the Myrrh and its traditional preparation methodology according to the *Arhieraticon*. The results demonstrate that the Holy and Great Myrrh represents not just an essential liturgical element, but also a testimony of the cultural and commercial exchanges between the civilizations of the Antiquity. The study contributes to a better understanding of the multiple dimensions of the Holy and Great Myrrh, underlining its importance as element of continuity in the Orthodox liturgical tradition and as material expression of the spiritual dimension of the Church.

Keywords

the Holy and Great Myrrh, Holy Oil Mystery, ritual, aromatic substances, sanctified oils, ritual preparation, *Arhieraticon*

I. Introduction

The Holy and Great Myrrh occupies a central place in the Orthodox theology and liturgical practice, being used in fundamental rituals such as the Mystery of Holy Baptism, the consecration of churches, antimins, the Holy Table, and the reinstatement of those who have fallen into heresy or schism. The Holy and Great Myrrh is an expression of the communion and continuity of grace in the Orthodox Church and symbolizes the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11, 2). Composed of 38-40 spices, it also signifies the diversity of the gifts.

This sacred substance, whose composition and preparation method have been transmitted via the Church tradition along the centuries, represents an authentic link between the material and the spiritual dimension of the Christian faith. The Holy and Great Myrrh combines material elements with deep spiritual meanings, reflecting the Orthodox conception about the consecration of matter and the presence of divine grace in the elements of the created world.

The importance of the Holy and Great Myrrh derives from its essential role in the liturgical life of the Church. By the anointment with the Holy Myrrh, the being is sealed with the “gift of the Holy Spirit”, which marks the moment of full initiation in the ecclesial community. Its rich symbolism, its anchoring in the biblical and patristic tradition, and the complexity of its preparation give this element a special value from both a theological but also a historical and cultural perspective.

The present study aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of the Holy and Great Myrrh, by approaching aspects such as its biblical substantiation, the historical evolution of its use, its traditional composition and its preparation methods. This research relies on Orthodox theological sources, liturgical documents, such as the *Arhieraticon*, and comparative studies between religious and pharmaceutical traditions of the Antiquity.

In today’s context of interdisciplinary theological research, to understand the Holy and Great Myrrh from multiple perspectives – theological, liturgical, historical and cultural – contributes to a deeper appreciation of the richness of the Orthodox tradition and of the way it

interacted with other cultures in time, simultaneously preserving its distinct identity and fundamental values.

II. Biblical and patristic substantiation of the Holy and Great Myrrh

II.1. Old Testament origins of the ritual anointing

The practice of ritual anointing with consecrated oil is deeply rooted in the Old Testament tradition, being mentioned in numerous biblical passages. The fundamental text laying at the basis of the conception about the Holy Myrrh is found in the Book of Exodus, where God commands Moses to prepare an “oil of holy ointment” (Exodus 30, 22-33). The detailed description of the ingredients and of their proportions in the biblical text demonstrates the special importance given to this ritual element: “Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred *shekels*, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, *even* two hundred and fifty *shekels*, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty *shekels*; And of cassia five hundred *shekels*, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil an hin: And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil” (Exodus 30, 23-25).

This oil was destined to the anointing of the holy tent, of all the liturgical objects and, especially, of the priests, for their sanctification and consecration in the divine service. The biblical text underlines the exclusive and sacred character of this myrrh: “This shall be an holy anointing oil unto Me throughout your generations” (Exodus 30, 31), and explicitly forbids its use for profane purposes or the realization of imitations for personal use.

In the Jewish tradition, the anointing with holy myrrh became an essential ritual for the consecration of the kings, of the priests and of the prophets. Saul, David and Solomon were anointed as kings of Israel (1 Samuel 10, 1; 16, 13; 1 Kings 1, 39), and this anointing symbolized the transfer of divine authority and the presence of the Spirit of God on the anointed. Prophet Samuel tells Saul after the anointment: “the LORD hath

anointed thee captain over His inheritance” (1 Samuel 10,1), and in the case of David, the text explicitly mentions that “the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16, 13).

II.2. The meaning of the anointing in the New Testament and the patristic tradition

In the New Testament, the symbolism of the anointing is transferred and enriched in the person of Jesus Christ, whose very name, “Christ” (from the Greek Χριστός), literally means “The Anointed”. Jesus is presented as the accomplishment of Isaiah’s Messianic prophecy: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4, 18; cf. Isaiah 61, 1). The anointing is no longer just an external ritual, but its significance is profoundly spiritualized, representing the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

This conception is developed in the apostolic writings, where all the believers are described as being anointed with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul affirms: “Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1, 21-22).

The patristic tradition developed this theology of the anointment, linking it directly to the Holy Oil Mystery. The ecclesial tradition preserved this conception about the Holy Myrrh, developing and enriching it along the centuries. The Holy Fathers constantly emphasized the relation between the anointing with the Holy Myrrh and the descent of the Holy Spirit, considering the anointing with Holy Oil during the Mystery of Holy Baptism or Chrismation as a “personal Pentecost” for every believer.

III. Historical perspective on the Holy and Great Myrrh

III.1. Evolution of the use and preparation of the Holy Myrrh in the early Christian tradition

During the first Christian centuries, the practice of anointing with holy oil gradually evolved from the simple blessing of the oil to the elaboration

of complex formulas for the preparation of the Holy Myrrh. The *Didache*, a Christian text of the first century already mentions the use of oil in the Christian initiation rituals¹. Saint Hippolytus of Rome, in *The Apostolic Tradition* (third century), offers one of the first descriptions of the blessing of the oil for Chrismation, distinct from the oil for catechumens:

“If someone offers oil, the bishop shall give thanks in the same way as for the bringing of bread and of wine... In order not to say the same words, but other similar ones, he shall say as follows: «Sanctifying this oil, give, O God, holiness to those who receive it and to those who anoint themselves with it, as You have anointed the kings, the priests and the prophets, similarly may it give power to all those who taste of it and may it strengthen them»”².

In the 4th-5th centuries, as the liturgical rituals develop, the formula of the Holy Myrrh becomes increasingly complex. In the Byzantine tradition, the ceremony of the preparation of the Holy and Great Myrrh gradually developed, becoming a solemn ceremony presided by the patriarch or the metropolitan.

Historical documents of the early Byzantine period attest the fact that the preparation of the Holy and Great Myrrh already was a complex ritual, involving the use of numerous aromatic ingredients and the observance of specific procedures.

III.2. Development of the ritual during the Byzantine period

During the middle and late Byzantine period, the ritual of the preparation of the Holy and Great Myrrh became formalized and acquired

¹ *Didahia celor doisprezece Apostoli* [Didache of the Twelve Apostles], VII, 1-3, coll. *Părinți și scriitori bisericești* [Church Fathers and Writers], vol. 1: *Scrierile Părinților Apostolici* [Writings of the Apostolic Fathers], translated by Pr. D. Fecioru, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1995, p. 29.

² Sfântul IPOLIT ROMANUL [Saint Hippolytus of Rome], “Tradiția Apostolică” [Apostolic Tradition], 5, in: *Canonul Apostolic al Sfântului Ipolit Romanul* [The Apostolic Canon of Saint Hippolytus of Rome], translated by Pr. Prof. N. I. Barbu, Editura Herald, București, 2008, p. 43.

solemn dimensions. The Patriarch of Constantinople had the exclusive responsibility of preparing and sanctifying the Myrrh for the entire Orthodox Church. The process included collecting the rare and precious ingredients, preparing them according to precise recipes and the final sanctification during the Liturgy on Maundy Thursday of the Passion Week.

Symeon of Thessalonica (15th century) offers a detailed description of the Myrrh sanctification ceremony in the Byzantine tradition:

“The Myrrh is sanctified by the bishops, on Moundy Thursday, because on this day Christ instituted the Mysteries... It is sanctified during the Holy Liturgy, after the Gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, because it is through Christ that all things are sanctified and it is from Him that all things receive sanctification”³.

The importance of this ritual was underlined as well by the active participation of the Byzantine emperor, who personally brought some of the precious ingredients needed for the preparation of the Myrrh, demonstrating in this way the collaboration between the ecclesial authority and the imperial authority in maintaining the sacred traditions.

After the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, the privilege of preparing the Holy and Great Myrrh was inherited by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but gradually other autocephalous Orthodox Churches also acquired this right. At present, the Holy and Great Myrrh is prepared by the majority of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, respecting the traditional rituals and formulas transmitted via the *Arhieraticon*.

IV. Composition of the Holy and Great Myrrh

IV.1. Traditional ingredients and their symbolic significance

The composition of the Holy and Great Myrrh reflects a rich tradition, developed along the centuries, combining biblical elements with

³ Sfântul SIMEON AL TESALONICULUI [Saint Symeon of Thessalonika], *Despre Sfintele Taine* [On the Holy Mysteries], 60, PG 155, 229C.

contributions from diverse cultures and regions. According to the *Arhieraticon*, the 1993 edition, the Holy and Great Myrrh contains 38 ingredients, each with its own symbolic significance and practical function⁴.

The fundamental elements of the composition are the olive oil and the wine, constituting the basis of the preparation. Olive oil, used in quantity of 60 liters, symbolizes the divine mercy and blessing, being in the biblical tradition the symbol of the Holy Spirit and of the spiritual light. Wine, in quantity of 120 liters, represents the spiritual joy and the spiritual transformation, being associated in the Christian tradition with the blood of Christ.

To these are added 36 aromatic ingredients, resins and vegetal, each with its own significance and contribution to the final composition. Among these, there are:

1. Myrrh (*Myrrha*) - used in quantity of 1.26 kg, represents Christ's sacrifice and suffering, being one of the gifts brought by the magi and also used for embalming Him.
2. Incense (*Olibanum*) – 1.575 kg, symbolizes the prayer that ascends to God and spiritual purification.
3. Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum*) – 1.89 kg, represents the sweetness of spiritual life and is mentioned in *Exodus* as ingredient of the holy myrrh.
4. Spikenard (*Folium nardi indicae*) – 0.945 kg, symbolizes devotion and sacrifice, being associated to the woman who anointed Jesus' feet.
5. Cloves (*Caryophylli*) – 0.945 kg, represent the nails of the Crucifixion, reminding of Christ's Passions.

Each ingredient has both a practical value, contributing to the aroma and consistence of the myrrh, and a profound theological significance, reflecting diverse aspects of the salvation mystery and of the spiritual life.

IV.2. Analysis of the geographic origin of the ingredients

An analysis of the geographic origin of the ingredients used in the composition of the Holy and Great Myrrh highlights the cultural and commercial interconnexions between diverse regions of the world of the

⁴ *Arhieraticon*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1993, pp. 323-328.

Antiquity. The ingredients come from various geographic zones, reflecting the extensive commercial network that linked the Mediterranean to Asia and Africa⁵.

From the 38 ingredients mentioned in *Arhieraticon*, about 72% (26 of 36 ingredients from the positions 3-38) come from the Indian subcontinent or South and South-East Asia, including India, Sri Lanka, China and Indonesia. Among these, there are Indian spikenard, pepper, cinnamon, cloves and other exotic spices. Other ingredients come from the Arabic Peninsula and the Middle East (incense, myrrh, bdellium), from East and North-East Africa (certain varieties of myrrh and resins), and also from the Mediterranean zone (olive oil, rosemary, turpentine).

This geographic diversity demonstrates the extent of the commercial and cultural exchanges in the world of the Antiquity and of the Middle Ages, especially along the trading roads such as the Silk Road and the Spice Road. The rare and precious ingredients were transported on large distances, crossing empires and civilisations, to reach their final destinations.

Egypt played a crucial role in these changes, serving as a nodal point between Orient and Occident. The Red Sea Egyptian Ports facilitated the trade with India and East Africa, while Alexandria connected these roads with the Mediterranean. In this way, Egypt functioned as an important centre of cultural and commercial transfer, contributing to the dissemination of knowledge related to the preparation and use of aromatic and medicinal substances⁶.

This geographic distribution of the ingredients of the Holy and Great Myrrh highlights the universal character of Christianity, which integrated elements from diverse cultures and traditions, transforming them and incorporating them in its own liturgical and sacramental expression.

⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene BRANIȘTE, *Liturgica specială* [Special Liturgics], Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1985, pp. 287-290.

⁶ James Innes MILLER, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire: 29 B.C. to A.D. 641*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969, pp. 153-172.

V. Preparation method of the Holy and Great Myrrh

V.1. Ritual procedure according to the *Arhieraticon*

The preparation of the Holy and Great Myrrh follows a complex ritual procedure, described in detail in the *Arhieraticon*. This process is not just a technical operation, but a sacred ritual combining practical elements with deep symbolical and spiritual dimensions⁷.

According to the *Arhieraticon*, the 1993 edition, the preparation of the Holy and Great Myrrh takes place during the Holy Week, from Tuesday to Thursday, under the supervision and with the blessing of the hierarch. The process includes the following principal stages:

- Tuesday during the Holy Week – Preparation of the initial decoction:
 - Ingredients numbered from 3 to 30 are boiled in wine for two hours;
 - The process is accompanied by prayers and readings from the Holy Scripture;
 - This stage represents the beginning of the transformation of the raw materials into sacred substance.
- Wednesday during the Holy Week – The mixing and the main boiling:
 - The decoction obtained on the previous day is filtered and mixed with olive oil;
 - The mix is boiled for four hours, a process during which the resins are gradually added (ingredients 31-35);
 - Half an hour before finishing the boiling, styrax is added (ingredient 36);
 - After turning off the fire and partially cooling the mixture, musk is added (ingredient 37).
- Towards evening, the mixture is heated again, filtered through flannel, opobalsamum is added (ingredient 38) and possibly other perfumed oils.
- Maundy Thursday – Sanctification of the Myrrh:
 - The prepared Holy Myrrh is brought in the church in special vessels;

⁷ *Arhieraticon*..., pp. 329-335.

- The consecration takes place during the Holy Liturgy, after the Eucharistic Prayer, when the Gifts have already been transformed into the Body and the Blood of Christ;
- The hierarch utters special sanctification prayers, invoking the Holy Spirit to descend on the Myrrh and to transform it into vehicle of the divine grace.

The *Arhieraticon* also contains important physico-chemical mentions regarding the boiling process. For example, it is mentioned that oil, whose density is lower than that of wine, floats on it during boiling. It is recommended to add wine during the process, in case it evaporates excessively, to prevent burning the oil and deteriorating the preparation⁸.

These technical details demonstrate the advanced empirical knowledge developed along the centuries in the ecclesial tradition, combining practical expertise with the ritual and spiritual dimension.

V.2. Mathematical analysis of the proportions of the ingredients

A careful analysis of the quantities of ingredients mentioned in the *Arhieraticon* highlights the existence of precise mathematical ratios among them, suggesting a systematic and well-structured approach of the formula of the Holy and Great Myrrh⁹.

The ingredient in the lowest quantity is musk, mentioned in the document in quantity of 0.018 kg (18 g). The majority of the other quantities seem to be multiples of a lighter unit of measure, which can be estimated to about 0.0175 kg (17.5 g). This suggests that the number mentioned for musk could be a rounding up of the real value.

The quantities of the other solid ingredients align to the multiples of this basic unit:

- $0.315 \text{ kg} = 18 (2 \times 9) \times 0.0175 \text{ kg}$
- $0.630 \text{ kg} = 36 (4 \times 9) \times 0.0175 \text{ kg}$
- $0.945 \text{ kg} = 54 (6 \times 9) \times 0.0175 \text{ kg}$
- $1.260 \text{ kg} = 72 (8 \times 9) \times 0.0175 \text{ kg}$
- $1.575 \text{ kg} = 90 (10 \times 9) \times 0.0175 \text{ kg}$
- $1.890 \text{ kg} = 108 (12 \times 9) \times 0.0175 \text{ kg}$

⁸ *Arhieraticon*..., p. 331.

⁹ The mathematical calculations were realized based on the quantities mentioned in the *Arhieraticon*..., pp. 325-328.

A single notable exception is the ingredient *Aristolochia*, mentioned in quantity of 0.345 kg, a value not aligned to this system. It may have been a transcription error or print error, the correct value probably being 0.315 kg¹⁰.

The total of the vegetal and animal ingredients is of about 29.343 kg (or 29.3125 kg, according to the corrected quantities). The mathematical ratio among the solid ingredients, oil and wine seems to be of approximately 1:2:4, which would correspond to 30 kg of solid ingredients, 60 liters of oils and 120 liters of wine. These rounded proportions suggest an intentional simplification of the formula to facilitate the preparation process¹¹.

This mathematical analysis of the proportions reflects the rigor and attention to details characteristic of the Orthodox liturgical tradition, where nothing is left at random, each element having a precise role in the entirety of the ritual.

VI. Liturgical uses

VI.1. The role of the Holy and Great Myrrh in the Christmation Mystery

The Chrismation represents the main liturgical context in which the Holy and Great Myrrh is used. During the Chrismation Mystery, the newly-baptized is anointed with the Holy and Great Myrrh on various parts of the body, accompanied by the formula: “The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen”. This unction is realized in the shape of the cross on the front, eyes, nostrils, lips, ears, chest, hands and feet, symbolizing the full sanctification of the person and the impregnation of all the human senses and faculties with the grace of the Holy Spirit¹².

The anointing with the Holy and Great Myrrh, also called Chrismation, marks, therefore, the final moment of the Christian initiation, by which the

¹⁰ This hypothesis relies on the analysis of all the other values, which respect the system of multiples mentioned above.

¹¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene BRANIȘTE, *Liturgica specială* [Special Liturgics]..., p. 289.

¹² *Molitifelnic* [The Euchologion], Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2002, pp. 43-44.

neophyte acquires “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4, 13) and receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit necessary for the spiritual life and the confession of faith. Among these gifts, the patristic tradition identifies the seven gifts mentioned by prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11, 2-3): wisdom, understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

VI.2. Other liturgical uses of the Holy and Great Myrrh

Beside its central role in the Mystery of Chrismation, the Holy and Great Myrrh is used in the Orthodox tradition in various other liturgical contexts and consecration rituals¹³:

Consecrating churches: in the framework of the ritual of sanctification of a new place of worship, the Holy Altar and the walls of the church are anointed with the Holy and Great Myrrh, marking their consecration for the divine service. This anointment symbolizes the presence of the divine grace in the place of worship and its transformation into a space consecrated to God’s presence.

Sanctifying antimins: The antimins, a liturgical object essential for carrying out the Holy Liturgy, is sanctified by anointing with the Holy and Great Myrrh. This consecration gives it the quality of portable altar, permitting the celebration of the Eucharist on it.

Receiving Christians from other confessions in the Orthodox Church: Depending on the way of reception, certain categories of Christians who convert themselves to the Orthodoxy are anointed with the Great and Holy Myrrh, this anointing having the role of completing or making amends for the Mystery of Chrismation.

Reconciling the apostates: In the Orthodox canonic tradition, those who renounced the faith and want to return in the Church can be received again, in certain cases, by the anointing with the Holy and Great Myrrh, as a sign of the reestablishment of the communion with the Church and of the receiving again of the Holy Spirit’s grace.

Sanctifying the liturgical icons and vessels: In some local traditions, the liturgical icons and vessels can also be sanctified by being anointed

¹³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene BRANIȘTE, *Liturgica specială* [Special Liturgics]..., pp. 294-299.

with the Holy and Great Myrrh, although this practice is not universally spread in the Orthodoxy.

These multiple uses of the Holy and Great Myrrh emphasize its role as divine grace vehicle and consecration instrument, applied not just to the persons, but also to the objects destined for the divine cult. By means of it, the sacred quality is bestowed both on the human beings and on the material elements of the liturgical space, reflecting the Orthodox conception about the sanctification of the entire creation via God's uncreated energy.

VI.3. Challenges and adaptations in the preparation and use of the Holy Myrrh in the modern times

The preparation and use of the Holy and Great Myrrh in the modern context present a series of specific challenges, which called for certain adaptations and adjustments of the traditional practices¹⁴:

- *Challenges related to obtaining the ingredients*: Some of the traditional ingredients of the Holy Myrrh, such as the musk (obtained from the musk deer) or amber (secretion of the cachalot), are at present either protected by international conventions for species on the verge of extinction, or very difficult to obtain in their authentic form. This determined the Orthodox Churches to look for ethical and sustainable alternatives respecting both the tradition and the contemporary ecological preoccupations.
- *Ethical and ecological aspects*: The increasing awareness of the responsibility to the environment and to the living beings determined a reevaluation of certain traditional practices. In some cases, the ingredients of animal origin have been replaced with vegetal or synthetic alternatives, preserving similare aromatic properties but eliminating the associated ethical problems.
- *Need for standardizing and preserving*: In the present global context, when the Orthodox Churches are present on all the continents, a necessity to find standardized methods of preserving and transporting the Holy Myrrh emerged, to assure the access of the Orthodox com-

¹⁴ Mitropolitul Kallistos WARE, *Biserica Ortodoxă* [The Orthodox Church], Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1993, pp. 312-315.

munities of the diaspora to this essential liturgical element. This led to the development of specific techniques for packing and preserving the Holy Myrrh.

- *Integration of modern scientific knowledge*: The traditional preparation of the Holy Myrrh benefits at present of the integration of modern scientific knowledge regarding the properties of the ingredients and their interactions. The empirical traditional methods are completed with the scientific understanding of the physico-chemical processes involved, permitting the optimization of the procedures.

These challenges and adaptations reflect the capacity of the Orthodox tradition to remain faithful to its theological and liturgical essence, adapting itself at the same time to the contemporary contexts and preoccupations. This flexibility in the framework of continuity represents an important characteristic of the Orthodoxy in general, visible also in the specific case of the preparation and use of the Holy and Great Myrrh.

VII. Conclusions

The multidimensional analysis of the Holy and Great Myrrh, presented in this study, highlights its complex character and its multiple meanings in the Orthodox theological, liturgical and cultural tradition. Starting from its biblical and patristic substantiation, going through its historical evolution and up to its contemporary liturgical uses, the Holy and Great Myrrh reveals itself as an element transcending the purely material dimension, becoming a symbol and a vehicle of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Its complex composition, which reunites ingredients coming from various geographic regions, and its elaborate preparation methodology reflects not just the empirical expertise developed along the centuries, but also the cultural and commercial interconnections of the world of the Antiquity and of the Middle Ages.

Theologically, the Holy and Great Myrrh represents a material expression of the Orthodox conception about the consecration of matter and its transformation in vehicle of the divine grace. It eloquently illustrates

the fundamental principle of the Orthodox sacramental theology: using material elements as means of transmission of the spiritual realities.

The present study opens, at the same time, perspectives for future research works in domains such as the history of the cultural exchanges among civilisations through the prism of religious practices, the development of liturgical pharmacology in the Orthodox tradition or the adaptation of the traditional practices to the contemporary ethical and ecological challenges.

In conclusion, the Holy and Great Myrrh represents a defining element of the Orthodox liturgical identity, a point of confluence between spirituality and materiality, between tradition and adaptation, between local and universal. To understand it multidimensionally contributes to appreciating the depth and richness of the Orthodox tradition, and to recognizing its capacity to remain relevant and significant in the contemporary context.