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The Ecclesial Dimension of Communication and Communion in the Theology of Father Dumitru Stăniloae

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Abstract

One of the biggest existential problems of contemporary man is the lack of communion, a problem that arises from the lack of interpersonal communication. Therefore, we can speak about a real crisis of communication in the contemporary society. In order to understand the role and the importance of the Church for the sanctification of the human beings, I will try to present the remarkable contribution of Father Dumitru Stăniloae to the theology of communication and communion from an ecclesiological perspective, Father Stăniloae being also called the "theologian of communion"

Keywords

Holy Trinity, God's Word, Holy Spirit, Church, ecclesiology, communion, intercommunion

I. Ecclesiological communion as presence and model of the Holy Trinity in the life of the Church and society

In his ecclesiology, Father Stăniloae sees the ecclesiological communion as one that expresses the presence of the Holy Trinity in Church's life¹.

¹ Adrian LEMENI, *Adevăr și Comuniune*, Editura Basilica, București, 2011, p. 201.

Besides, this presence is confessed in a doxological manner: “Church’s doxology represents complete communion of the Holy Trinity through the words: *Glory to the Holy and consubstantial and life-giving and indivisible Trinity*”²

The Church is founded after the trinitarian model, being in communion and communication with the Holy Trinity. The intratinitarian relationships are a model for relations between believers but also a “source of power which sacramentally establishes and deepens this relation. In Church life, the godly life of the Holy Trinity is present and working in an apophatic way... The trinitarian dimension of the Church is a guard against individualism which could break community relations that have to characterize the reports between members of the Church”³.

In the Church, the man meets all the necessary conditions in order to reach communion, thus being in direct relation of communication with the Holy Trinity and achieving personal salvation done by Christ. “Here he finds the communion with God and people... The Church is the mysterious Body of Christ, and Christ being One of the Trinity gives the believer, member of the Church through Baptism, the possibility of communion with the whole Holy Trinity”⁴.

The man’s climb to God and communion with all his fellows “starts and ends in the Church, for it is the Body of Christ... In Christ he finds his spiritual family, joins in communion with all those who believe and confess like him. In Church, the Holy Spirit unites them with the Son and through the Son they reach the Father”⁵.

Thus, through Christ, the man can join the communion with the Holy Trinity, in Church, understood as mystical Body of Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Christ, being Son of God, is also

“the door that opens towards godly life communion of the Holy Trinity, to receive through Itself in this communion, the human

² Pr. Ioan MIHĂLȚAN, “Comuniunea în cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXX-VII (1985) 1, p. 189.

³ Pr. Ștefan BUCHIU, *Dogmă și Teologie. Curs de teologie dogmatică și simbolică ortodoxă*, vol. II, Editura Sigma, București, 2006, p. 119.

⁴ ANDREI, Archbishop of Alba Iulia, *Spovedanie și Comuniune*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2000, p. 74.

⁵ ANDREI, Archbishop of Alba Iulia, *Spovedanie și Comuniune*, p. 18.

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being... The life communion with Christ in Church is like an organic unity, through the unity of the person that animates it having as a model and source the communion of the Holy Trinity”⁶.

Only by appropriating Christ’s sacrifice we can enter in love communion of God the Father, addressed to us as a continuous call to dialogue: “Christ keeps His humanity fully open, through its sacrificial state, to the divine infinity, and in the Church He communicates this state to us too if we open ourselves to the horizons in which His humanity was raised”⁷.

Thus, the life of the Church is taking place in the relation of personal love and communality of the Holy Trinity, the communion of the Church being an expression of communion fundamented on the mystery of perfect communion of infinite love of Trinity Persons. The Church is “a community of love that is bathed in the relationships of the infinite Triune love. She lives in the Tripersonal (or Trisubjective) and inexhaustible ocean of this love and life, or in relation with this infinite source by drinking from it”⁸.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae says that in the Church it breathes the Spirit of love between the Father and the Son: “the breath of this love, brought to us by the Spirit, has created the world, and it recreates it as the Church”⁹. Therefore, the Church is the mystery of communion, “the reflection of trinitarian communion, in the communion between members of the Church”¹⁰

The Church’s communion can not be understood and lived without direct connection with

“the model of trinitarian relationships where the power of communion starts, the principle of unity in Trinity being personal and

⁶ Pr. Vasile IGNĂTESCU, “Principiul comuniunii în Ortodoxie”, in: *Ortodoxia*, VIII (1956) 3, p. 358.

⁷ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II: *The World: Creation and Deification*, translated and edited by Ioan Ioniță and Robert Barringer, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brooklyn, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 31.

⁸ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 33.

⁹ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 34.

¹⁰ Gheorghe GHIȘCĂ, “Ideea de comuniune în Ortodoxie”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXI (1969) 3, p. 409.

not impersonal... Orthodox triadology, with the person emphasized instead of the being, is reflected also on an ecclesiological level, where the unity is conceived in community terms, reality that facilitates conceiving an ecclesiology of communion”¹¹.

Therefore, the presence of the Holy Trinity in Church and world creates the premises of an understanding of the Trinity in society as a model of the society.

“Being unable to disassociate in a radical way the ecclesial community from the social community, because the Christians are not socially separated but integrated both ecclesially and socially, the Church proposes an extension of communitary relations in it and that have a model of love relationships between trinity Persons and on a social level. Starting from these aspects we can assert that the Church does not follow change in a brutal way of economical structures, social and politics of the world, but follows to be blessing and way to heal the world and light for inspiring the world towards the capacity of identifying the origin, sense and finality of the world”¹².

The relationship between Church and the world is one challenging, the world also being for the Church a responsibility but also a chance of

“extending her trinitarian way of life in society, in world, in order to transfigure it... The relationship between Trinity and society, or better said, the presence of the Trinity in the society is achieved by the Church - established after the trinitarian model”¹³.

Orthodox Theology proposes, taking into consideration both the communion and distinction between Persons of the Holy Trinity,

¹¹ Cristinel IOJA, “Prezența Sfintei Treimi în Biserică și în lume”, in: *Altarul Banatului*, XIX (2008) 1-3, pp. 48-49.

¹² Cristinel IOJA, “Prezența Sfintei Treimi în Biserică și în lume”, p. 51.

¹³ Cristinel IOJA, “Prezența Sfintei Treimi în Biserică și în lume”, p. 53.

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“overtaking pure individualistic systems and communitary that place the individual above society or society above the individual... Therefore, the Orthodox vision on society has trinitarian foundation that involves, paradoxical, the interpersonal relationships, making room to an interior relation between unity and diversity, between community and person. The Orthodox social project is the extension of size of trinitarian life present in Church at a social level, general, human and cosmic”¹⁴.

Thus, ecclesial communion has its foundation in intratrinitarian communion and is perfected after the model of supreme communion of the Holy Trinity¹⁵, present in Church’s life.

II. God’s Word incarnated - the personal-communitarian principle of Church

The communion could be described in a personal and communitarian perspective, because it has its basis in the mystery of the person¹⁶.

In Christ’s Church, the personal-communitarian aspect is stated for example in the relation between every believer and its ecclesial community:

“The Church is composed of distinct persons that do not confuse in the communion of the Church, but also they do not separate in an individualistic maner. The communion between members of the Church has also a human dimension, for the persons are wearing the face of God in common and only in communion they can transform it in resemblance with God. This human dimension is however inseparable from the pnevmatical dimension, because the Holy Spirit through His work of christification deepens and transfigures the communion between members of the Church through partaking Its gifts that have a double meaning: diverse and unitary, in the same time. Therefore, in the Church, the person

¹⁴ Cristinel IOJA, “Prezența Sfintei Treimi în Biserică și în lume”, p. 54.

¹⁵ Dorel POGAN, “Comuniunea Bisericii după chipul comuniunii treimice”, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, XXIV (1974) 1-3, p. 37.

¹⁶ Pr. Ioan MIHĂLȚAN, “Comuniunea în cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe”, p. 188.

does not isolate itself from the community in an individualistic manner, but nor does the community abolish the specific and uniqueness of the person”¹⁷.

God’s word incarnated respects the individuality of each member of His Body, affirming and supporting him in its personal work towards perfection. “The Church is the communitarian-catholic extension of the resurrected Christ, in people, where the assimilation of people with Him through the Holy Spirit is gradually achieved”¹⁸. In this way, the communion does not cancel the personal attributes of Church’s community members, but harmonizes them promoting common perfection¹⁹.

The communion of the Church also has an anthropological basis profound tied of the christological one:

“she was founded by God for the people, to support their existential intentions towards communion. The man as image of the Holy Trinity was created to be in communion with God and all his fellow men. When he loses this communion all his relations with his fellows and his environment are disturbed. But in Jesus Christ this intention towards communion was restored in both directions and we can all achieve it fully, in Church’s communion through the Holy Spirit”²⁰.

Christ being the Pantocrator of the Church maintains the Church in Himself

“as a unique body, as a unity, but not as an impersonal unity, because He is in a direct dialogue with each member of the Church, and thus He keeps each one connected with the others.

¹⁷ Pr. Ștefan BUCHIU, *Dogmă și Teologie. Curs de teologie dogmatică și simbolică ortodoxă*, vol. II, pp. 120-121.

¹⁸ Pr. Dumitru RADU, “Aspectul comunitar-sobornicesc al mântuirii”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXVI (1974) 1, p. 102.

¹⁹ Pr. Teodor M. POPESCU, “Duhul comunitar al Ortodoxiei”, in: *Ortodoxia*, VIII (1956) 1, p. 150.

²⁰ Pr. Ioan ICA, “Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, in: *Glasul Bisericii*, XXXVII (1978) 5-6, p. 534.

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Therefore, He is in a dialogue with the whole Church, a dialogue in which He is understood as a symphonic partner²¹.

In relation with Christ, people gain the quality of sons of God by grace, entering in communion with the Father: “The glory that fills the Church coincides with her members’ complete acquisition of their quality as children of God; this quality means the most intimate communion with the Father²².”

The Church has a theandric constitution, divine-human, after the divine-human Person of Christ, the incarnated Word of God, its life being based on Christ

“united with the Father and the Spirit according to His divine nature, and united with us according to His human nature... the Church is understood by the Orthodox as new life in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, as unity of the charismatic life, because it is the living, unitary and whole organism, the body of Christ²³.”

III. The Holy Spirit - The Spirit of communion in Church

The ecclesial communion also has a pneumatological aspect: “the Holy Spirit is the One that gives a personal and ecclesial nature to Christ’s communion, the One who integrates it in the historical existential plan, personal and communitarian, being the Spirit of communion²⁴.” Father Stăniloae believes that “the Spirit is not truly present except in the communion of the Church, or where the Church is²⁵.”

The redeeming and unifying work of Christ “is achieved on human beings through the Church founded by Him at the Pentecost. In the

²¹ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 28.

²² Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 30.

²³ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, pp. 22-24.

²⁴ Pr. Ioan Ică, “Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, p. 533.

²⁵ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 19.

Church everything is communitary or catholic through the power of the Holy Spirit descended during the Pentecost over the Holy Apostles community”²⁶. Thus, the Pentecost represents “the beginning of a new existence, restoration of the heavenly Church (primordial communion) and even more, its perfection through the descent of the Holy Spirit”²⁷.

Father Stăniloae says that

“the descent of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire at the Pentecost shows not only Christ’s will to include everyone through His love in the Church, unified in this love, but also the will that within this unity the identity of each person is maintained. Christ and the Spirit do not abolish the variety of creation. And something amazing happened: as there (at the Babel tower) the tongues split the world, thus the tongues have now united it and brought harmony (within simphony)”²⁸.

Pentecost marked the moment of the Church’s birth, in which the Holy Spirit works uninterruptedly, “it initiates the indwelling of Christ’s deified body in human beings and hereby initiates the Church as well. The descent of the Holy Spirit is thus the act of transition from Christ’s saving work in His personal humanity to the extension of this work within other human beings”²⁹.

The Holy Spirit is the One that restores the communion of love between God and people, communion manifested within the Church. “Selfishness broke the unity of nature that only Christ’s love restores it through the Son’s Spirit, that’s the Spirit of communion”³⁰. Christianity assumes personal perfection within Church’s community. “Nobody cannot be a Christian through himself as an isolated individual, but only part of the

²⁶ Pr. Ștefan BUCHIU, “Părintele Profesor Dumitru Stăniloae – Teologul comuniunii”, in: *Glasul Bisericii*, LI (1995) 1-2, p. 73.

²⁷ Pr. Ilie IVAN, *Cuvântul în slujirea mântuirii*, Teză de doctorat, Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă, Universitatea București, 1997, p. 103.

²⁸ Sfântul IOAN GURĂ DE AUR, *In Sanctam Pentecostem*, Hom. II; col. 467 *apud* Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 212.

²⁹ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, pp. 10-11.

³⁰ Pr. Dumitru RADU, “Aspectul comunitar-sobornicesc al mântuirii”, pp. 100-101.

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ecclesial community... Thus, the Christian community is a *christophorus* and *pneumatophorus* community³¹.

The Holy Spirit dwells in us and communicates His uncreated grace without revealing Himself as Person, like the Son that enhypostasiates human nature³², but “remains hidden within the Father but present through His works”³³.

If Christ is the head of the Church, the Holy Spirit is the One who inspires it, the One who brings

“the divine powers through His transparent body, because these powers are no longer hindered from communicating with us... Thus the Spirit who is being communicated to us from the Person of Christ makes Christ more evident as a Person and at the same time makes the power of Christ Himself communicable in a more accentuated manner”³⁴.

The Holy Spirit and Christ maintain and increase communication and communion in the Church:

“Both the Spirit and Christ, who remain in the Church and in the faithful, are not static for the additional reason that They are not impersonal powers, but Persons. And persons are always in motion, and they always want to communicate themselves even more. From the beginning, the divine Persons come and remain willingly; They come and They remain in order to come in a higher degree, and thus to maintain and increase the living communion. For this communion those to whom They come must prepare themselves by asking for and wanting an increased coming of the divine Persons”³⁵.

³¹ Pr. Gheorghe POPA, *Comuniune și înnoire spirituală în contextul secularizării lumii moderne*, Teză de doctorat, Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă, Universitatea București, 1998, p. 171.

³² John MEYENDORFF, *Teologia Bizantină*, trad. de Pr. Alexandru I. Stan, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1996, p. 231.

³³ Pr. Ilie IVAN, *Cuvântul în slujirea mântuirii*, p. 104.

³⁴ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, pp. 13-14.

³⁵ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 17.

IV. The communion of saints - the expression of perfect communion in Christ

In the Church, the Holy Spirit communicates an unitary atmosphere to all Christians. Therefore, "the Church through his communitarian life is above all, an organism of Christ's life in the people, a place of living the divine life in an atmosphere of intimate familiarity and love"³⁶.

As such, the Church intercedes the meeting of Christians with God, in a communication and communion relationship with God, made possible by the Incarnation of the Son of God. This relation assumes

"a communion between people that must be visible in the world as a confession of Christ's work that came so that all would be one... When we are in communion with the Church, we are in communion with Christ in all its fullness. The Church offers the man's possibility to meet with Christ in the Holy Eucharist"³⁷.

Through the Church services and, especially, the Holy Liturgy, we can live a state of communion with the members and saints of the Church, but also with those departed, the fighting Church praying together with the triumphant one for "uniting everyone" Thus, there is a relation of communion between all members of the Church, dead or alive, from all times and places: "in Church's communion there is not only those who are on earth, from some random time, but its communion exceeds the borders of time and space"³⁸.

The Christian, when he is in relation with God, is no longer alone, but together with all the others he joins the communication and living communion with God.

"Eucharist is, thus, the communion of saints, communion of the whole Church. We remember this thing since the *Proskomedia*,

³⁶ Pr. Vasile IGNĂTESCU, "Principiul comuniunii în Ortodoxie", p. 362.

³⁷ Pr. Adrian IONIȚĂ, *Hristologia neopatristică în gândirea părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae*, Teză de Doctorat, Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă „Justinian Patriarhul”, Universitatea București, 2010, p. 277.

³⁸ Pr. Ioan MIHĂLȚAN, "Comuniunea în cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe", p. 197.

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when along with Christ, symbolized by the *prosphora*, lays the mother of God, angels and saints, along with all the Christians dead and alive, mentioned by their names”³⁹.

Father Stăniloae describes this state of true communion in the next terms:

“in the prayer that is prayed in the presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord, mention is made of all of the following: the living, the dead, human beings and angels; and, first among all of these, the Mother of the Lord. The Eucharist strengthens the communion that exists among all beings”⁴⁰.

Christ restored the communion between Christians and saints “in the family of communion”⁴¹. The *koinonia* aspect of the Church is manifested also in the communion of all the saints⁴².

So, Christ is the basis of unity and ecclesial communion. “With all the souls from the Church’s communion there is a unique life in all, and the who bears and maintains this life is the Resurrected Christ... Christians uniting in Christ being the principle of communion in Church”⁴³, “the life of this great big family (the Church) is the expression of communion in Christ”⁴⁴.

Father Stăniloae understands the Church as “a human communitarian I in Christ”:

”The Church is the *I* of the prayers of all sentient beings: earthly beings, angels, and saints; in this way prayer has a great unifying role. In the Church all pray in me and for me, and I pray in all and for all. In the Church all things are united but unconfused in this

³⁹ ANDREI, Archbishop of Alba Iulia, *Spovedanie și Comuniune*, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. III, p. 17.

⁴¹ Pr. Ioan MIHĂLȚAN, “Comuniunea în cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe”, p. 194.

⁴² Diac. Ioan BRIA, “Eclesiologia comuniunii”, in: *Studii Teologice*, XX (1968) 9-10, p. 673.

⁴³ Pr. Vasile IGNĂTESCU, “Principiul comuniunii în Ortodoxie”, p. 359.

⁴⁴ Pr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “Sfântul Duh și sobornicitatea Bisericii”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XIX (1967) 1, p. 35.

unity. The Church is the body of Christ and as such is united with Him and distinct from Him. The Church is the immanence that has transcendence in herself, the Triune community of Persons full of an infinite love for the world, maintaining in the world a constant movement of self-transcendence through love⁴⁵.

In the Church, a cosmic liturgy is uninterruptedly done, during which the sky is united with the earth and the Christians with the saints, through common prayers communicated in the mystical Body of Christ.

“The meaning of communion among members of the Church’s spiritual organism appears as a union of all in Christ... Through the power of this divine love, the Christian from the Church’s communion feels united with the whole being of both the heavenly Church and the one on earth... This is the most perfect image of communion⁴⁶.”

So, in Church it is fulfilled God’s plan from eternity: “the Church is the union of all that exists, or, in other words, she is destined to encompass all that exists: God and creation. She is the fulfillment of God’s eternal plan: the unity of all... united in a divine Thou, or in a direct, dialogical relation with Him⁴⁷.”

V. Communion and intercommunion

As we seen, the Church’s communion is a community of faith, of those “who answer through love and faith to God’s call to communion... Christian’s communion is based firstly on the unity of integral confession of faith, of *the word of truth* (*Ephesians* 1, 13)..., which is why the Christian’s communion by keeping *unity of faith* (*Ephesians* 4, 13) is a communion of confessing the Orthodox faith⁴⁸.”

⁴⁵ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILĂOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁶ Pr. Vasile IGNĂTESCU, “Principiul comuniunii în Ortodoxie”, p. 363.

⁴⁷ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILĂOAE, *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. II, p. 21.

⁴⁸ Pr. Ioan BRIA, “Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistii”, in: *Studii Teologice*, XI (1959) 7-8, p. 417.

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In the context of ecumenical dialogues it is spoken not only of communion as a wish, but also of intercommunion. The term *intercommunion*,

“used by some Western theologians and indicating the path or way by which the Churches could achieve full eucharistic communion by mutually partaking, is unknown to the Orthodox theology and old Church and was rejected by it as being contradictory by itself... It expresses an abnormal and unacceptable situation meaning a communion between two separated Churches that even after common Communion they remain separated spiritually, doctrinaire and confessional, forgetting that the true eucharistic communion is a fully ecclesial communion and a way of achieving it, that *in* and *through* Eucharist unity and full communion of the Church is expressed and sealed, meaning *its doctrinal unity, sacramental, liturgical and canonical perfection*, the Christians and local Churches thus forming a single seen ecclesial body”⁴⁹.

Thus, a local Church can be complete only in communion with all the other local Churches in unity of faith and not isolated⁵⁰.

Father Stăniloae considers that by supporting intercommunion “the eucharistic communion is separated from the faith and Church, which takes to Church dissolution, unity of faith and eucharistic communion by itself”⁵¹.

According to the Orthodox Church, intercommunion or communion between different Christian confessions can not exist without unity of faith materialized in

“full communion in a single Church, that will come when an agreement has been settled and total communion of faith, making it the sign and coronation of the previous. The Orthodox Church has always conditioned intercommunion by complete identity of

⁴⁹ Pr. Ioan Ică, “Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, p. 539.

⁵⁰ Pr. Ioan Ică, “Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, p. 536.

⁵¹ Pr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “În problema intercomuniunii”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXIII (1971) 4, p. 564.

Orthodox faith... and by recognizing the validity of sacramental priesthood in apostolic succession”⁵².

The Orthodox Church is Christ’s Church, being catholic by its nature and having the universal vocation to include all Christians in spiritual unity lived in Christ’s Body. “The ecclesial *koinonia* has also a community-ecumenical aspect of saints’ communion as one that, beside angels, includes all Orthodox Christians that were, are and will be, from everywhere”⁵³.

Church’s communion means ecclesial wholeness, following actually the integration of all Christians in the objective redemption achieved by Christ.

“If in terms of faith, ecclesial communion is a *closed* communion because it only includes those who confess the same faith of the Church under a moral aspect, manifestation of its *Agapi* love in the world, Church’s communion is not a closed communion but a communion of *opened* love having a panchristian, panreligious and even panhuman extension, pouring out its fruits on all those who were objectively redeemed by the sacrifice on the cross”⁵⁴.

Besides its ecumenical aspect, the Church’s communion also has a side of service in existential solidarity, in life communion for Christ and its fellow. Thus,

“it is also an ecumenical communion of love and service of all its fellows in Christ... By openness and responsibility towards all, the Church’s communion is not manifested isolated and separated by the world but very close to other Christians and religions, to the society, the people and the world where it exists. For Church’s *koinonia* does not exist by itself and for itself, but rather *in* and *for* the world that’s being called through creation, Incarnation and redemption in Christ, to become a Church - communion of God... Therefore, the Christian’s *koinonia*

⁵² Pr. Ioan Ică, “Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, p. 540.

⁵³ Pr. Ioan Ică, “Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, p. 536.

⁵⁴ Pr. Ioan Ică, “Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, p. 536.

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manifests its deaconry in solidarity and versatile dialogue with the whole world in the shape of service”⁵⁵.

VI. Conclusion

The ecclesial communion expresses the presence of the Holy Trinity in Church’s life and follows the communion of eternal love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God’s incarnated Word is the personal-communitarian principle of Church and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of communion from the Church where a true communion of saints exists as an expression of communion perfected in Christ. The Orthodox Church is *a Church of communion*, redemption being understood in a personalist and community perspective.

Today, the Church has the responsibility of assuring man that he is not alone, but God is always with him. The love of God is a call to man, to respond to His love, to be together, in order to fulfill the human being. Only through communication and communion with God we can understand the meaning of our existence. Only through communion with Christ, the Word of God, we enter into relationship with God, the Church promoting the integration into catholicity and helping the others in solidarity.

⁵⁵ Pr. Ioan Ică, „Comuniune și Intercomuniune”, pp. 537-538.