

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
83 (2), pp. 167-180, 2020

Eucharist's Ontologically-Sacramental, Community-Social and Mystagogically-Missionary Character, in the Thinking of Father Ion Bria

Răzvan Emanuel FIBIȘAN

Răzvan Emanuel FIBIȘAN

“Lumina” Publication, Edition of Banat, Romania

Email: fibisan_r@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Eucharist was the foundation from which emerged the deepest and most complex Christian thinking, because it, besides the fact that is a permanent history of the death and resurrection of Christ, it is also a means of union of Christians with Christ, present in it. The present study aims to highlight the contribution of a Romanian theologian, who, though he lived for more than 20 years outside the borders of his country, spoke in an ecumenical and multi-denominational space, in various ways, the riches of Orthodox spirituality, expressing that Christian spirituality means, first, openness to God and to others, in order to sanctify human beings; and the supreme way of participating in the life of communion with God and of human perfection is accomplished through the Eucharist, that is, no doubt, fulfillment the iconomy of God's love for people and His union with us.

Keywords

Liturgy, worship, icon of unity, missionary event, kingdom of God

I. Preliminaries

Not few times Father prof. Ion Bria talks about the structure of the Orthodox Liturgy, saying that it has a configuration which contains the Church's double movement: an apostolic one, missionary, and an other, Eucharist, pastoral. Moreover, one is centripetal, the Church's coming back from the world, it itself, round the Cup, and a centrifugal one, of going out into the world (Go forth in peace), as witness and confessor of the Gospel, in order to realize the mission of bringing back or to transform the world into *ecclesia*¹. In his opinion, the first part of the Orthodox Liturgy, the catechumen Liturgy or the Word's Liturgy emphasizes, through biblical readings, through the procession with the Holy Gospel and through preaching or homily, the Liturgy's kerygmatic and missionary role in order to bring sacrifices without blood. At this part, people are invited to take part, those anabaptized or those without faith, which signifies that the Gospel addresses to each and everyone, having a universal value. The other part, the faithful one's Liturgy or the Eucharist Liturgy is indispensable to the first one and emphasizes the ontologically-sacramental aspect of Christ's Sacrifice, as well as its missionary dynamics, because the Holy Mysteries give to those who received the Gospel and admitted the belief in order to become witness and confessors of Christ in the whole world².

If in the first part, the Church calls all to listen or to feed with God's word, in the second part, it gathers in itself, with its sons, in order to renew, liturgically, the New Covenant, giving the sacrament to its sons by God's Body and Blood, which is the true nourishment and drink (cf. John 6, 51.55). The "called" is now the "sent" outside the Church's yard, after Christ's example who wore the cross outside the gate (Heb 13,12) having the Eucharist as the truth food for the life's pilgrimage³.

Thus, in Father Bria's opinion, the Word and Sacrament are indubitable in the Liturgy's Sacrament. From the Pentecost to the second coming,

¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, Genève, 1982, pp. 41-43;

² Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică*, Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga", Sibiu, 1996, p. 221; See also, Ion BRIA, "Liturgie et Mission", in: *Dictionnaire oecuménique de missiologie. Cent mots pour la mission*, sous la direction de Ion Bria, Philippe Chanson, Jacques Gadille, Marc Spindler, Cerf/Labor et Fides/CLE, 2003, p. 191.

³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, p. 49.

Eucharist's Ontologically-Sacramental, Community-Social and Mystagogically...

Christ shows and manifests Himself through Word and Sacrament⁴ in the liturgical life of the Church. Rightly, they are called by Saint Nicholas Cabasilas⁵ “gates of kingdom”, “gates of the sky” or “gates of grace and heaven”, because the power of the coming kingdom is given by them. Thus, the Word and Mysteries for the Father Professor represents the fundament of missionary structures⁶, because the Church lives through the Word of God who is alive and eternal (I Peter 1, 23), as well as through Mysteries (Acts 2, 42). In the following we will stop at the Holy Eucharist, considered as “the mystery of mysteries” or “the missionary event” par excellence.

II. The ontologically-sacramental character of the Eucharist

In contrast with the Anglican theologian E. L. Mascall, who was trying to emphasize the ecclesial character of the mysteries, saying that the effect of Sacrament upon the receiver has to be considered not as a receiving of a quasi-physical quality which we cannot have in advance, but as a resituating in the relation with the Church, as an incorporation of the subject in the common frame, Father Bria emphasizes the mysteries' sacramental character, saying that Orthodoxy approaches mysteries, firstly, from the Christological point of view, in which the Sacrament can be named as “life into Christ”, and this “life into Christ” lies in ontological-sacramental communion with the deified humanity of Christ. The ecclesial character of the mysteries emphasizes more the relational aspect, of incorporation, while the sacramental character, beside the fact that it consists it, emphasizes in addition, the aspect of sacramental participation in a new teandric reality, which comes from the deified humanity of Christ. This profound correlation shows that the Church is not only the “effect” of mysteries – aspect at which the new theology stops -, but also that the

⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică*, p. 203.

⁵ Sf. NICOLAE CABASILAS, *Despre viața în Hristos*, Cartea I, translation from Greek and notes by Pr. Prof. Teodor Bodogae, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 2009, pp. 34-37.

⁶ Ion Bria, “Liturgy after the Liturgy”, in: *International Review of Mision*, LXVII (1978) 265, p. 88.

Church - fundamental sacramental organism - is a condition of mysteries, being a condition of the intercommunion⁷.

Therefore, the Romanian theologian, Ion Bria, gives the mission an ecclesial character, but specifies that this character shouldn't be understood in an instrumentalist or ecclesiomonist sense, because the Church, through its own sacramental nature, confesses God's Kingdom and is sent in order to extend on earth, this Kingdom. In this sense, he affirms that:

“The Church is not a simple instrument of mission. The mission is a criterion of the Church and there is no real Church outside the mission. Therefore, the orthodox vision, the Church is already the mission's aim, being, in the same time, principle, and condition of the mission. The existence of a Christian community is a precondition of the mission”⁸.

III. The community-social aspect of the Eucharistic sacrifice

In Father Bria's theology, the Eucharist is not understood only as having and exclusively individual point of view, in the subjective salvation's perspective, but as being a community and ecclesial act, as a churchly event made in the community's name and for the community or better said, for each and everyone, in conformity with the prayers after the anthem of Mother of God: “We still bring to You this service for everyone”. The cultic and ecclesiast expression of the Eucharist, says Father Bria, is called Liturgy⁹ (term which comes from Greek, *λειτουργία*¹⁰ composed of *λήϊτος* (*ληός or, in attic dialect, λαός*) nation, people and *έργον* = work, meaning public action / service or common ministry of people) and shows the presence of people, as a community's ritual. This is why, community's or

⁷ Ion BRIA, “Despre «caracterul» sacramental și despre «efectul eclezial al tainelor»”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XIX (1967) 1, pp- 146-148.

⁸ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, pp. 38-39.

⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1987, p. 156.

¹⁰ E. AMANN, “Liturgie”, in: A. VACANT, E. MANGENOT et E. AMANN, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, tome IX, première partie, Librairie Letouzey et Ane, Paris, 1926, p. 787; Anatole BAILLY, *Abrégé du dictionnaire Grec-Français*, Librairie Hachette, Paris, 1901, p. 529.

Eucharist's Ontologically-Sacramental, Community-Social and Mystagogically...

Church's participation is indispensable to the Liturgy, because the Liturgy is a community's prayer by which the sacramental sacrifice of Christ is invoked¹¹.

The ecclesial and community character of the sacramental offering is shown in the fact that the Liturgy is celebrated in everybody's name and for everybody, not particularly and with a private aim¹². Christ Himself said: "All drink from this..." (Matt 26, 27). On this issue, Father Bria says:

"the community can't, by itself, do the Eucharist, but only together with the bishop or the priest, because only they have the gift of priesthood, i.e. the ability to «do this for the commemoration» of Christ and in the name of Christ; in the same way, the bishop or the priest serves the Liturgy only with the community, because there is only one bread (I Cor 10, 17), only one Cup and only one body"¹³.

Moreover, the Father Professor says that sacramental priesthood itself, received through Ordination, is not autonomic service, but an essential responsibility for the Church. For this reason, Ordination is done only during Liturgy, with the community's participation, which has an important role in the ordination, because it confesses worthiness of the priest. By the community's indication in the ordination, it is shown that the priest is close to that community. Without a community, there would be no ordination (16th Canon of the I Ecumenical Synod)¹⁴.

On the other hand, the Eucharist, far from being an individual or personal act, it is the central action of worship Community¹⁵, because, through it, is performed a collaboration with Christ, through which sublimely we approach him in order to live in Him and He in us¹⁶. But, beside

¹¹ Magistrand Ion BRIA, "Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii", in: *Ortodoxia*, IX (1957) 3, p. 411.

¹² Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică*, p. 222; Ion BRIA, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1996, p. 31.

¹³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, p. 159. This is resulted clearly from Saint Basil the Great Liturgy: "And all of us, who commune from one bread and one Cup, to unite us one with another by communing the Same Holy Spirit..."

¹⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, p. 48.

¹⁵ Ion BRIA, "Liturgie et Mission", p. 190.

¹⁶ Ion BRIA, "Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistii", in: *Studii Teologice*, XI

this vertical liaison, which is realized through Eucharist, there is one more horizontal liaison, which is the spiritual relationship between Christian and Christian. Thus, Eucharist realizes an ontological-sacramental bond, personal with Christ, but also a communitarian bond with the Church, with the community. In fact, there is only one bond with double aspect, because Christ's presence in us represents, in the same time, our presence in his Body, namely in the Church¹⁷.

For the Romanian theologian, the fact that Eucharist is built on Christ's sacrifice, which represents a communion, it has the most pronounced character of communion, with the divinity, as well as with humanity; it being, by excellence, the mystery of love and unity, because it repeats Christ's iconomy, by which all were united. The very elements of the Saint Eucharist, the grains from which the bread is made and the grapes from which the wine is made, are symbol of unity¹⁸. Father Bria, starting with the words of the Holy Parents, says that, through the existence of only

(1959) 7-8, p. 417. In this sense, Saint John from Kronstadt says that through communion "the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, Jesus Christ as well as their Cause and Origin, God the Father, are close to us like nothing else in the world. They are above us, in us and through us", IOAN DIN KRONSTADT, *Liturghia, cerul pe pământ. Cugetări mistice despre Biserică și cultul divin ortodox*, translated by Boris Buzilă, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, pp. 165-166.

¹⁷ Ion BRIA, "Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistiei", p. 423. The idea of communion is for father Bria a fundamental coordinate of the orthodox doctrine, cult and spirituality, because it is present "in the liturgical aspect of the prayer, in the communitarian aspect of the material possession, in the synod aspect of the churchly organization, in the bishops collegiality, in the ecumenical dogmatic unity, in the sacramental intercommunion, in the diversity of spiritual experiences, in the social solidarity"- Diac. Asist. Ion BRIA, "Ecleziologia comuniunii", in: *Studii Teologice*, XX (1968) 9-10, pp. 674, 680.

¹⁸ Saint John Chrysostom comments on the words of Paul the Apostle: "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many" (I Cor 10, 17), says: "As the bread is made of many grains, it is united in a single whole, without the grains to be seen in some part- although they make- in the same manner we unite one another with Christ". In the same context, Saint John Chrysostom affirms that in the words: "The bread that we split is not the communion with Christ's Body?", Paul the Apostle uses for the communion the word "Koinonia", in order to show that not only the communion itself, but the fact that through communion the unification with Christ is realized - SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Omilia XXIV*, in: *Tâlcuri la Epistola întâi către Corinteni*, translation from Ancient Greek by Arhim. Theodosie Athanasiu, Editura Sophia/Cartea Ortodoxă, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 250-251.

Eucharist's Ontologically-Sacramental, Community-Social and Mystagogically...

one bread, Christians are bond in a holy unity, because, beside the soul's communion with Christ, a new bond between Christians is born; Eucharist, being "the power which places the spirit of love and brotherhood into Christian's life" or "the power of the parts' communion in the Body"¹⁹. Also, the Eucharist, being made through Christ's sacrifice for everybody, equally, stops, at its turn, any discrimination, or any nationality, ethnical or social differences, making all to be brothers. Father Bria says that "the liturgical moment realizes the man integrally, reconsidering the close one's signification, and appreciating its value as God's creature"²⁰. Existing only one Cup, the one who communions gains communication with all those who did it, having through this, a jointly feeling²¹. Thus, it is unconceivable that the Eucharist, beside the communion aspect not to have a communitarian-social aspect, which regards the catholicity between believers through the unification with Christ²². In this sense, Father Bria affirms that the Liturgy

"shows, the most evidently possible, the idea of brotherly bond that exists between Christians, from all times and places. It is the expression of prayer for the neighbor and for the whole world, the image of a soul that is not selfish, of a heart which prays together with the others and for others. In it the calls from here and the edge of the earth meet, from now until forever"²³.

The communitarian dimension of the Eucharist comes as well from the fact that on the Holy disk the entire Church is represented: Virgin Mary, the angels, the saints, the alive, and the dead. The two worlds, heavenly and earthy, become one in the Eucharist. In fact, this is the Eucharist's aim, which emphasizes its missionary dimension as well, because on the holy disk the eschatological icon of the Church is represented, together with the icon of how Church is seen, what will historically become through Eucharistic remaking. The Liturgy's mission resembles to that of the Church, because, both of them have the mission to transform

¹⁹ Ion BRIA, "Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistii", p. 421.

²⁰ Magistrand Ion BRIA, "Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii", p. 426.

²¹ Magistrand Ion BRIA, "Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii", p. 426.

²² Magistrand Ion BRIA, "Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii", pp. 423-424.

²³ Ion BRIA, "Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistii", p. 425.

everything into Eucharist²⁴, which is to make the human being capable of the Communion with Christ²⁵.

For Father Bria, the Church as gathering (*ecclesia*) is a realization of the Eucharistic Liturgy, it is the event in which the community participates in the sacramental Life of Christ. Starting with the Pentecost, the Christian community constituted itself around the Eucharist (Acts 2, 42). From here, it is noticeable that the Church's identity has a Eucharist nature. The Church, having as a paradigm the communion with the Trinity, is called or, has the mission to reproduce in its life, through the Holy Mysteries, trinitarian communion and unitary of the God²⁶. Without the Eucharistic structure, the Church would abandon its starting vocation, missing its fountain of existence, mission, and divine-human unity²⁷. The Church, by the nature of the Eucharistic liturgy (that of revelation and mediation of the Holy trinity's communion), has the mission to transmit the divine Trinitarian mode into the communitarian human mode. This determined Father Bria to consider the Eucharistic Liturgy as a structure of community²⁸. Even though the Liturgy takes place in a local community, through the Eucharist, the local community is in touch with all existing local liturgical communities, because it is the strongest bond²⁹. Eucharistic Synaxis of a particular place, on one side, is, in that place, the full manifestation of the

²⁴ Pr. Dr. Ion BRIA, "Biserica și Liturghia", in: *Ortodoxia*, XXXIV (1982) 4, p. 485. In this sense, Saint Nicholas Cabasila says that the Church can be seen in the Eucharist, because the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of God, as well as the truth nourishment and drink of the Church, and through communion, it is not the Church that transforms them into human body, but the Church is transformed into Christ's Body (Col 1,24; Rom 12, 5; I Cor 10, 17) - Saint NICHOLAS CABASILAS, *Tălcuirea dumnezeieștii Liturghii*, XXXVIII, translated from Greek by Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, ediția a II-a, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 2011, p. 83.

²⁵ Magistrand Ion BRIA, "Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii", p. 419.

²⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, p. 36.

²⁷ Pr. Dr. Ion BRIA, "Biserica și Liturghia", pp. 481-484.

²⁸ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, p. 56. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite says that from all mysteries, the communion character is specially proper to the Eucharist, being thus named, communion and unity - *Ierarhia bisericească*, III, 1, translation and introductory study by Cicerone Iordăchescu, Institutul European, Iași, 1994, p. 91.

²⁹ Pr. Prof. Ion BRIA, *Comentariu la Catehismul Ortodox*, Editura "Oastea Domnului", Sibiu, 2000, p. 84.

Eucharist's Ontologically-Sacramental, Community-Social and Mystagogically...

universal Church, on the other hand, it attracts the community into the eschatological community³⁰.

IV. The mystagogically-missionary character of the Eucharist

Father Bria is one of the Romanian theologians who managed to give of the Eucharist its missionary dimension, according to the model of the early church. He puts so much emphasis on the fact that the eucharistic unity need not be ideal, subjective, it is not only a symbol, but should feel objectively and active in Christian life; with other words, it has to extended in the life, translated into action and realized in the society³¹.

Father Bria gives the mission a liturgical dimension, speaking, often, about the Liturgy as being “a missionary event”:

“The eucharist liturgy is the full participation of the faithful in the salvation brought about by the incarnation of the divine Logos and through them into the whole cosmos. By the mutual self-giving of Christ and of his people, by sanctification of the bread and wine and the «christification» of the communicants, it is the place where we experience the fullness of salvation, the communion of the Holy Spirit, heaven on earth ... It is the function of the liturgy to transform us as individuals into «living

³⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, p. 84.

³¹ Ion BRIA, “Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistii”, p. 421. Thus, he speaks about a current of the orthodox theology which emphasizes the central role of the Eucharist liturgy for evangelization and Christian testimony. A major contribution in this thing had the Worldwide Missionary Conference from Melbourne from 12-25 May 1980, which took into consideration the bond which unites the Christian mission of the Church with the Eucharistic community. Here they talked about Eucharist as “the bread of the pilgrim” or “the nourishment given by God to us, who are the pilgrims of the Kingdom to come”- Rév. Prof. Ion BRIA, “L’Orthodoxie et le Mouvement Œcuménique. Contribution orthodoxe au domaine de la mission”, in: *Les études théologiques de Chambésy, 6 - Orthodoxie et Mouvement Œcuménique*, Collection publiée sous la direction du Prof. Dr. Damaskinos Papandreou, Editions du Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, Chambésy-Genève, 1986, p. 202. For more detaild about the conference, see Cornel Coprean, “«Vie Împărăția Ta» – Repere teologice în cadrul Conferinței Misionare Mondiale de la Melbourne (1980)”, in: *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai*, Teologia Ortodoxă, LVII (2012) 1, pp. 145-154.

stones» of the church and as a community into an authentic image of the kingdom”³².

From his approaches regarding the missionary dimension of the Eucharist in the contemporary world, the idea that comes out is that, the father considers that the union with Christ, through the Holy Eucharist, is an act which “affects” the Christian’s entire life, both inside the Church, and especially outside it. He considers that Eucharist has to have its effect beyond the liturgical moment and beyond the church door, as were the brotherly meals in the primary Church, which emphasized, very well, the prolonging of the Eucharist Liturgy in the community’s social life³³. This thing shows that the union between the Christian and Christ in the Holy Eucharist is not only an individual union, but it has to realize a communitarian communion with the other Christians, with the entire Church³⁴. In this sense Bria affirms:

“the Liturgy is the Christian’s starting and returning point, who are sent to sanctify in the name of God, to preach the Gospel, with the blessing and the power given by the Baptize, having as nourishment in their pilgrimage, the Eucharistic bread”³⁵.

Father Bria understood the Orthodoxy’s existence’s necessity over the liturgical presence of the Church all over the world, for the learning of the Gospel project and in order to form the present world after the image of a future world³⁶. Thus, he understood that in a multi-confessional world, the saints’ communion is human community’s unity’s paradigm. This determined him to be the promoter of the common prayer, but also of the solidarity social facts, developing a worldwide missionary typology, relatively new, named *The Liturgy after Liturgy*.

³² *Go forth in peace. Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, compiled and edited by Ion BRIA, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1986, p. 17; Ion BRIA, “The Church’s role in Evangelism. Icon or Platform?”, in: *International Review of Mission*, LXIV (1975) 256, p. 248.

³³ Magistrand Ion BRIA, “Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii”, p. 427.

³⁴ Ion BRIA, “Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistii”, pp. 426-427.

³⁵ Pr. Prof. Ion BRIA, *Liturghia după Liturghie. Misiunea apostolică și mărturie creștină - azi*, Editura Athena, 1996, p. 38.

³⁶ Pr. Dr. Ion BRIA, “Biserica și Liturghia”, p. 490.

Eucharist's Ontologically-Sacramental, Community-Social and Mystagogically...

In his vision, the Eucharist reveals Christ as being the missionary by excellence, who gives his own life for his sheep (John 10, 11.15), but shows as well the Eucharistic sacrifice's universal aim: the sanctification and acquisition of eternal life. He notices that in the institution act of the Eucharist, Christ repeats the words and gestures of the bread multiplication³⁷ (Ion 6, 11), identifying Himself with the alive bread, which came down to earth, from which, he who will eat, will not die anymore (John 6, 41.50-51). This is why, for him, the Eucharist is the necessary nourishment by eternal life or the pilgrim's bread³⁸; the bread of all who became witnesses, but also confessors of Christ's death and resurrection. For this reason, the Liturgy's final words – Go forth in peace - shows that the Liturgy does not end with the departure of people to their homes, but it continues beyond the walls of the Church, by the fact that each Christian or the whole community has the mission of an apostle, to let the world know about the Christian faith³⁹.

Starting from the words of the Savior: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22, 19), he considers that, the Eucharist's sacrament, on one hand, updates, experiments and heralds Christ's death and resurrection⁴⁰, and on the other hand, makes us missionary witnesses of His resurrection, but, also, the confessors of the reality to be in Him⁴¹. It is a form of acknowledgment of Christ's presence between people⁴², offering the Eucharistic community members the power to confess that Christ is the Savior, Who gave His life for the redemption of the world⁴³. In this sense, Paul the Apostle says: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe

³⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, p. 160.

³⁸ Pr. Prof. Ion BRIA, *Comentariu la Catehismul Ortodox*, p. 83; Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, pp. 38-39.

³⁹ Ion BRIA, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1996, p. 30; See also, Ion BRIA, "Liturgie et Mission", p. 192.

⁴⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, p. 155.

⁴¹ Ion BRIA, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, p. 28. The priest affirms that the liturgical community itself gathered together for the communion with Christ's Body and Blood becomes a community which is testimony (witnessing community), as well as a point of departure into the world to share the joy of resurrection; Ion BRIA, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, p. 31.

⁴² Ion BRIA, "The Church's role in Evangelism. Icon or Platform?", p. 248.

⁴³ Rév. Prof. Ion BRIA, "L'Orthodoxie et le Mouvement Œcuménique. Contribution orthodoxe au domaine de la mission", p. 203.

in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10, 9). Also, from Paul the Apostle’s words: “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (I Cor 11, 26) he says that the value of anamnesis is suggested, in the way that remembering all that has been done for us, “the cross, the tomb, the third day resurrection, the ascension, the staying on the right and the second and glorified coming” has, beside its historical, descriptive, commemorative aspect, a profoundly missionary one, perpetuated by the Holy Spirit⁴⁴, as it realizes the passing from a past which wears the marks of separation and death, to a present which wears the marks of life and God’s Kingdom, but also the passing to an eschatological perspective, were all the dead in Adam will resurrect in Christ⁴⁵. The anamnesis can be realized only through epiclesis (the call of the Holy Spirit), because only this way the commemoration of Christ is not just a simple memory of past events, but it is identical cu His real presence⁴⁶, because the prayer before Communion states the following: “You who in the high stay with the Father and here with the unseen face, together with us are...”. So, the objective presence of Christ give to the commemorative aspect beside its missionary and pedagogical role, a sacramental role, a sanctification role, which shows that this commemoration is not only symbolical⁴⁷.

For father Bria, the Eucharist Liturgy is the culminating point of the Church’s life, the events in which God’s people celebrates the embodiment, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sharing His glorified Body and Blood and experiencing the eschatological Kingdom⁴⁸. In his opinion, the Eucharist’s Sacrament is “the Kingdom’s image”⁴⁹ or the most important witness and experience of God’s Kingdom. The Eucharist, on one hand, projects an icon of Christian life, under her spiritual and social aspect, and on the other hand, indicates a reorganization face of the humanity in a new eschatological structure of the grace, which is, already, symbolically represented of the holy disk. From here is deduced the role and missionary power of the Eucharist: to organize spiritual and social life in accordance

⁴⁴ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, “Prezența și lucrarea Sfântului Duh în Biserică”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXX (1978) 3, p. 490.

⁴⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, p. 157.

⁴⁶ Magistrand Ion BRIA, “Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii”, p. 410.

⁴⁷ Magistrand Ion BRIA, “Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii”, p. 420.

⁴⁸ Ion BRIA, “Liturgy after the Liturgy”, in: *International Review of Mision*, LXVII (1978) 265, p. 87.

⁴⁹ *Go forth in peace. Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, p. 17.

Eucharist's Ontologically-Sacramental, Community-Social and Mystagogically...

with the model Eucharistic, which is pattern of consecration and love until sacrifice.

The Eucharist's presence inside the worship and the missionary action, determines Father Bria to consider the Eucharist as being the missionary sacrament by excellence, as it is the foreshadowing of the eternal happiness and leader of the world towards the Kingdom of God, as well as the remedy and therapy against separation and estrangement toward the Church⁵⁰. In another order, the Eucharist, being "the bread to existence" of the Church, is the condition of existence, unity, and growth of Church⁵¹. The Father speaks about the missionary mobility of the Eucharistic synaxis or about the dynamics of the Eucharistic gathering for the proclamation of the Gospel, which, unfortunately, being turned a blind eye on, is a main cause of the proselytism in orthodox countries⁵².

The Father is aware that, at a panorthodox level, the Eucharistic communion is the goal of the mission of the Orthodox Church, but this way to the full communion needs solid preparations. This is why, the Eucharist represents, for him, the means by which God unites with us and we with Him, as well as the godly space in which God's people makes itself capable of this union. In this sense, the Canon of the Holy Communion suggests, very well, that the one who will eat the body and blood of the Lord asks of God, besides the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from passions, wisdom, lamination of mind, but also communion without condemnation for full union with Him. From this point of view, the Eucharist has a mystagogic dimension, of secret initiation, which explains the deeper and deeper sense of the divine iconomy⁵³.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that Father Ion Bria understood the universality of the Gospel of Christ, through the missionary sending of the apostles,

⁵⁰ Pr. Prof., *Liturghia după Liturghie. Misiunea apostolică și mărturie creștină - azi*, p. 62; Ion BRIA, "La signification missionnaire de l'Eucharistie", in: *Service Orthodoxe de Presse* (Paris) LXII, november 1981, pp. 15-20.

⁵¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Curs de Teologie și practică misionară ortodoxă*, p. 58.

⁵² Ion BRIA, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, p. 30; Ion BRIA, "Eucharistie und missionarische verkündigung", in: *Monatlicher Informationsbrief über Evangelisation*, nr. 3-4, 1981, p. 3.

⁵³ Magistrand Ion BRIA, "Aspectul dogmatic al Sfintei Liturghii", pp. 422-423.

in order to preach the Gospel in all nations and to all the people (Matt 28, 19; Mk 16, 5) has its basis in the universality of His Sacrifice. For him, the Eucharistic assembly which celebrates the Liturgy is the icon of realization of communication between God and people, but, also, it is the icon of Christians' unity in the Body of Christ, but also the missionary factor by excellence.