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# Prayer – a Manifestation of Faith and an Expression of the Love for God

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## **Abstract**

Prayer is essential in knowing God, is a way of communing with Him, and perfect help for spiritual progress. God descends to us by His uncreated energies, and we, by prayer, let ourselves be filled with the fruits of these divine energies. For the Orthodox Christian, each prayer occasions the entering into dialogue and the confession of the faith in the Holy Trinity. For the Orthodox Christian, each prayer is an opportunity for entering into dialogue and confessing the faith in the Holy Trinity. Prayer is the first manifestation sprung from faith, is an answer following God's calling to collaboration. Prayer is the main means by which man has drawn God's revelation of Himself and by which man has expressed the thirst for dialogue with God. The Christian prayer has in Christ an eternal foundation, because He ascended with the human body and made it eternal on the right side of the Father, remaining eternally God and eternally man. The One supporting the relationship between the rightly-glorifying faith and prayer is the Holy Spirit. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, in the Orthodox Church, *lex credendi* and *lex orandi* constitute an entirety expressed in different forms. All the Church prayers are expressions in a doxological (meaning: of maximal glorification) form of the rightly-glorifying faith.

## **Keywords**

prayer, God, man, revelation, confession of faith

## I. General Considerations

The confession of man's faith in and love for God is the highest form of human communication and assumes the form of prayer. There is no better way for man to support his faith in God and grow in his love for God than prayer.

Prayer is essential in dogmatic knowledge and in assuring the real progress of theology so that the Orthodox Dogmatic Theology cannot be conceived ignoring prayer as its support. Prayer is one of the ways the theologian progresses into the knowledge of God, and prayer, in its turn, reveals to the believer *Who* he is praying to. Prayer is the "channel by which we receive the revelation from Above"<sup>1</sup> if in our prayer we express the rightly-glorifying faith, the faith of Christ's Church, made explicit in the Church dogmas.

The aim of prayer can be summed up as follows: "To become what you are". To become, in an aware and active manner, what you already are potentially and mysteriously by virtue of your creation in God's image and of your creation through the Baptism. To become what you are: more precisely, return in yourself, discover the One Who is already Yours, listen to Him Who never stops talking to you from within you, make the One Who now is ruling over you, Your Own. This is God's message to whoever wants to pray: "You would not be looking for Me if you had not found Me already"<sup>2</sup>.

Our prayer to God is motivated, is justified, and has sense because God the One in Being and subsisting in Three Persons descends to us through His uncreated energies. So, He is not "beyond" and is not entirely transcendent, but makes Himself known and accessible to our experiencing Him in His works. The fruits of our prayers show us that God reveals His goodness in innumerable nuances, corresponding to the innumerable works coming from the unchanged and unchangeable divine Being. While our prayers cannot penetrate the divine Being, they are the fruit of the penetration in man of the divine energies and, in their turn, cause infinitely

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<sup>1</sup> SOFRONIE, *Rugăciunea – experiența Vieții Veșnice*, translated by deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2001, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Kallistos WARE, *Rugăciune și tăcere în spiritualitatea ortodoxă*, translated by Gabriela Moldoveanu, Editura Christiana, București, 2003, p. 21.

varied manifestations of the divine being, that gigantic symphony of actions of God in the world, meant to lead to the fulfillment of God's plan regarding man and the cosmos.

Prayer is the expression of the high sense of human existence, of the calling to the infinite that man has, inscribed in his being, and of his capacity, as a finite being, for the infinite.

## **II. The Trinitarian Basis of Prayer and its Dogmatic Character**

Prayer was born out of man's inner impulse *to ask, to thank and to praise* by words, to address the One from Whom everything comes, Who supports everything and to Whom we need to thank for everything. And the One Who gives us everything, the One Whom we thank for everything, the One Whom we praise for everything, the One Who gives Himself to us in the completeness of His Almightyness and to Whom we can give ourselves in an absolute manner, must be a person like us, yet able to give us everything and on Whom we depend totally. He addresses man via all things, he can create and support all things for this purpose. He is, consequently, the Supreme Person, the Supreme Self, comprising all, yet above all things,<sup>3</sup> He can draw us to Himself, He can call us by all things to Himself, and we can communicate by all things with God. In all things, there is God as the One supporting everything and in all things we see Him, this is why the things in the world remind us of Him, exhort us to think about Him, and address Him. We can use all the created things as means of advancing to God if we receive them with gratitude (1 Timothy 4, 3-4).

God is the One Who addressed us first. So we are called or addressed. Man has the impetus to draw close to God and the words addressed to God are the expression of his longing after the communion with God, but the words are not only of man, because he is inspired by God. Saint Gregory of Sinai even says that prayer is God Himself active in us. "You, Yourself, pray in Me", was the constant invocation of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow<sup>4</sup>. Long before that, Saint Paul the Apostle had confessed the same truth:

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<sup>3</sup> Dumitru STANILOAE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia ortodoxă*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (abbreviated: EIBMBOR), București, 2004, p. 507.

<sup>4</sup> SOFRONIE, *Rugăciunea – experiența Vieții Veșnice*, p. 57.

“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, «Abba, Father!»” (Galatians 4, 6). All the psalms and innumerable prayers in the Scripture attest to the collaboration of God with the one who is praying. The prayers’ words seem to be the words of God Himself since they contain revelations of the divine mysteries; they are words about God, which God Himself puts in the mouth of the praying person since they contain revelations of the divine mysteries; they are words about God which God Himself puts in the praying person, for the prayer to also be a means of knowing God and, by this, a factor allowing closeness to God, allowing experiencing the Trinitarian communion.

For the Orthodox Christians, each prayer occasions the entering into dialogue with the Holy Trinity and the confession of the faith in the Holy Trinity. As Karl Christian Felmy notes, “for the Orthodox Christians, the faith in the Holy Trinity can be experienced not just in the authentic icons of the Holy Trinity, but also in the celebration of their faith in prayer and the divine cult”<sup>5</sup>. The Orthodox Christian “practices” his faith in the Holy Trinity and, at the same time, the soteriological significance of the teaching about the Holy Trinity, in the fact that when he marks himself by the sign of the cross “again and again”, he unites three fingers as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, consequently marking himself by the redeeming sign of the cross. The two natures (divine and human) united in the single hypostasis of Christ are expressed by the other two fingers put together. In the liturgical texts, the dogmatic confession of the faith in the Holy Trinity is so present that even if only from this perspective we could call the Orthodox divine cult a practical dogmatic theology, a dogmatic theology of the experience of the Holy Trinity.

In the Orthodox Church is understood in a Trinitarian sense the prayer known as *Trisagion*: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!”, uttered or sung in the framework of many divine services, always repeated as a true refrain which, just like the words accompanying the sign of the cross, have the role of increasing the communion between the praying people based on the invocation of the Trinitarian communion<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Vasile CITIRIGA, *Cunoașterea lui Dumnezeu prin rugăciune*, Editura Asab, București, 2008, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Dragoș BĂLAN, *Menirea comuniunii în societatea contemporană*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, Constanța, 2014, p. 234.

### **III. The Meaning of Prayer in the Old Testament and the Importance of the Participation of the Humanity in Christ to Man's Expressing Himself by Prayer**

God's communication with man and man's answer by prayer made out of the Old Testament a history of the dialogue between God and man, composed of God's Self-revelation and respectively, of testimonies and requests of man, substantiated in true masterpieces of inexhaustible and inestimable richness. The Psalms illustrate most comprehensively the role of prayer in man's knowing God and his effort to draw close to God, but also the role of prayer in calling God to manifest Himself by a new kenosis to man.

“I spread out my hands to You;  
My soul longs for You like a thirsty land.  
Answer me speedily, O Lord;  
My spirit fails!  
Do not hide Your face from me,  
Lest I be like those who go down into the pit.  
Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,  
For in You do I trust;  
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,  
For I lift up my soul to You  
Teach me to do Your will,  
For You are my God...”

*(Psalm 142/143, 6-8.10).*

Prayer was in the Old Testament, the main means by which man drew God's Self-revelation and by which he expressed his longing for dialogue with God. This form of communication with God was keeping in man the conscience of his quality of person and the faith in the personal existence of God. The Old Testament prayers highlight the fact that man was addressing God the way one addresses a person, not an object. For him, God was neither an idea, nor an illusion, but a concrete, personal and cooperative existence. Aware of God's greatness and the distance separating him from God as a consequence of sin, man always asked for the manifestation of

God's providence with a view to salvation and to overcoming the state of sinfulness. The Old Testament prayers express, consequently, directly or indirectly, man's conviction concerning God's willingness and availability to descend, to manifest Himself in a kenotic manner.

In the New Testament, Christ prayed to the Father to reveal Himself to the world as a man and a Son submissive to the Father, and to reveal to the world by prayer the will of God, God's plan regarding the world and the purpose of prayer in man's life. By means of prayer, Christ revealed to the world that he needs prayer as a man, that in everything He is doing He is calling for the Father to help Him as He is an obedient Son and as each man can get to God and can get to know Him, by prayer.

In Christ, God has a human face, and people can meet His eyes, His light, and the goodness of His being. They can listen to God and speak with God, to enter in dialogue with Him. They can now sit down at His feet, listen to His words, find in them the meaning of His wonderful acts, think and follow Him, but they can also refuse Him, and remain closed in their selfish individuality<sup>7</sup>. People can hear the Son of God praying with his mouth of man and through His prayer, they can find out Who He is, where He comes from and where He is going. Because the purpose of the prayers pronounced by Christ was that of revealing. People can hear the Son of God commanding with His mouth of man, but also see Him accomplishing in His body the things commanded<sup>8</sup>, which constituted for the witnesses of those said and done by Christ a great privilege: "blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13, 16). In all His words – prayers and words of teaching – uttered with His human mouth and passed through the philter of His thinking of Man, to be adapted to the human level of understanding, one could feel the divine power and wisdom, as His listeners note: "And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority" (Luke 4, 32), and some of them affirmed: "No man ever spoke like this Man!" (John 7, 46).

Christ used prayer to show His humanity and teach people. In the Garden of Gethsemane, before His passion and death, "He fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26, 39).

<sup>7</sup> Nicolae DASCALU, *Comunicare pentru comuniune*, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 2000, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> CLEMENT ALEXANDRINUL, *Pedagogul*, translated by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* (abbreviated *PSB*), vol. 4, EIBMBOR, București, 1982, p. 223.

“By the words: «*if it is possible, let this cup pass...*» He showed His human nature – Saint John Chrysostom says -, and by the words: «*nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will*» He showed the virtue and the wisdom, teaching us to follow God even when our nature draws us elsewhere”<sup>9</sup>.

The love for the people, the pain for their tribulations and sufferings motivated His prayer and prepared His conscience to accept as a man the Passions and Death. Prayer was for Him also a means of preparing His Own interior to acquire victory over death.

The words of the prayers uttered by the human mouth of the embodied Son of God acquired a new value in people’s consciences after His Resurrection, because they became the words of Him Who defeated death. Now, those who had been witnesses in His passions and death, but also in His vigil before them could note that His prayer was a remedy against pain, weakness, and death as He had suggested to them in the Garden of Gethsemane when He told them: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26, 41). Now, after the Resurrection, the same prayers uttered by Christ had a different resonance and this significance in the Apostles’ consciences, because the body that had uttered them defeated death. The mouth who had uttered them before death reacquired voice and life and was speaking to them in truth: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” (Luke 24, 39).

#### IV. Faith and Prayer

Faith without prayer makes no sense just as prayer without faith. “The first reason of prayer – says Ignatie Briancianinov – is faith: *I believed, therefore I spoke*” (Psalm 115/116, 10)<sup>10</sup>. Yet the power of faith grows as

<sup>9</sup> Sfântul IOAN GURA DE AUR, *Omilii la Matei*, translated by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. PSB, vol. 23, EIBMBOR, București, 1994, p. 939.

<sup>10</sup> IGNATIE BRIANCIANINOV, *Despre rugăciunea lui Iisus, experiențe ascetice*, vol. I, translated by Adrian and Xenia Tănăsescu-Vlas, Editura Humanitas, București, 2001,

the intensity of prayer grows and the latter in its turn is motivated by faith.

*Only he who has faith can pray and only he who prays remains faithful.* In this sense, the most eloquent example in the Holy Scripture is that of the woman of Canaan (Matthew 15, 21-28). The woman of Canaan convinced Christ that He must listen to her, that He must listen to Her, and that she is worthy of His listening to her. But such a prayer can only spring from faith like the faith she had. For this reason, doubtlessly, *prayer and faith are interdependent*. Similarly, regarding the blind man of Jericho (Luke 18, 35-43), the Savior healed him for the faith confessed by the blind man, through prayer. The blind man wanted to see, so Jesus told him: “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well” (Luke 18, 42). The deep meaning of the story reveals to us the purpose of faith in the vision with the eyes of the soul. The faith that gives us the spiritual and just meanings of the divine revelation, that faith is redeeming. The rightly-glorifying faith and the correct prayer are redeeming because, thanks to the rightly-glorifying faith, “we know Who we worship” (John 4, 22), while thanks to the correct prayer we advance in the knowledge of Him Whom we know.

Prayer is our talking with God, the way by which we get, in the most direct way, in touch with God. Prayer does not make the soul yield the fruit of the just faith in God unless it starts from the heart and is accompanied by the fulfillment of God’s commandments and by love. Saint Macarius the Egyptian says: “Drawing near to God, one ought, first of all, to endeavor to do good... and wait always, with adamant faith, His love, to be gentle, albeit possessing no gentleness in himself; to endeavor to be meek and have a merciful heart (albeit not having these attributes in him); to endeavor to be longsuffering when disdained, and when mocked he should not get outraged. He ought to endeavor towards prayer, albeit having no spiritual prayer yet. Therefore, God, seeing someone fighting like this and coming, by force, against the will of his heart, to the Lord, He will give him the true prayer of the Spirit, He will give him the true love, in one word, He will fill him with the fruits of the Spirit”<sup>11</sup> and with progress “in the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 1, 9-10).

*Neither good deeds, nor faith, nor knowledge of God, nor closeness to God, nor love can be reached without prayer.* This is why an old hermit

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p. 70.

<sup>11</sup> Sfântul MACARIE EGIPTEANUL, *Cele cincizeci de omilii duhovnicești*, (XIX, 3), translated by Constantin Cornișescu, coll. *PSB*, vol. 34, EIBMBOR București, 1992, p. 188.

said: “Just as sight is bigger than all the senses, similarly prayer is bigger than all the good deeds” (*Paterikon*).

Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which turns in us into desire and awakens in us an unbeatable impetus towards the Son of God. Just as the newborn baby starts crying as soon as he is taken from his mother’s bosom and does not stop crying until given to suckle again, similarly faith is in us an unquenchable hunger and thirst for Christ. The call of prayer, similarly, will only be quenched by the milk of the Holy Spirit reassuring us from the spring of His delights<sup>12</sup>. So, if faith is in us even before knowing and being able to pray, it feeds our will to pray. Prayer becomes, in its turn, the way of expression, of confession, of repentance, of glorification, of request, of thanksgiving of the one who believes.

A true Christian is like a soldier. Prayer is his “wall of faith” and “his weapon of defense and attack”<sup>13</sup>. Faith is helping us to orient our action, our concrete act, our will to the quest of Him about Whom we know that He exists and to Whom we tend.

Prayer is the first manifestation sprung from faith, it is the first manner of expression of the faithful man and the first step which, the man who believes, takes to collaborate with God; it is man’s consent which he gives to God as a consequence of God’s call to synergy. If faith – especially the beginning one – is a passive form of adhesion to God, consisting in the acceptance of God’s existence and in taking Him as a reference on the level of conscience, by prayer man realizes the dialogical relation with God. Remaining at the incipient faith we can have *an idea about the existence of a supernatural force, we can think or meditate, philosophize* about this, yet without acting in any way to acquire interpersonal relations with that existence. But, prayer is turning faith to good value on the level of conscience, freeing it from the state of strict interiority, and accomplishing the need for communication with the object of faith. When he starts praying, he who believes in God stops philosophizing about God, as it is only then that he speaks with God. His prayer is the act of attesting that for him God is real, living, and personal.

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<sup>12</sup> EMILIANOS, in: *Convorbiri duhovnicești*, vol. III, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 1995, pp. 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> Gabriel BUNGE, *Practica rugăciunii personale după Tradiția Sfinților Părinți*, translated by deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1996, p. 85.

## V. Repentance and Prayer

*Salvation is communion, and communion supposes the communication among people and between them and God.* Therefore, no one can get saved without prayer, it goes without saying, no one of those who have reached the biological age necessary for communication. The thief crucified together with Christ realized the state of sinfulness in which he was, being sensitized by the presence of Christ, about Whom he knew that “this man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23, 41). Attracted by Christ’s holiness, the thief becomes immediately preoccupied with his salvation and enters in dialogue with Christ, begging Him: “Remember me, Lord, when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23, 42-43).

Certainly, the difference between the two thieves crucified with Christ consisted first of all in the fact that one *repented* and the other did not, the first had a mocking attitude to Christ, while the second confessed his faith in Him<sup>14</sup>.

That repentance leads to salvation only with prayer can be seen very clearly from *The Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Luke 15, 11-32). The son, who arrived by his own accord in a hostile world, fully felt the absence of people’s communion and God and consequently wanted to return to “the parental home”. His repentance was sincere, his determination unmovable, and his transformation, total. However, he did not repent only in himself, but also expressed his repentance and confessed his faith openly: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants”. Both the prodigal son and the thief on the cross obtained forgiveness because their repentance was accompanied by prayer. *Neither prayer without repentance redeems, nor repentance without prayer.*

The prayer motivated by the desire to get out of the state of sinfulness is valuable being borne by the praying person’s humility. Because the most zealous prayer, the clean prayer not mixed with transitory, material desires, is that of the believer fallen into sin who wants to free himself, ascending by prayer to God. For this reason, it has been said that “prayer has been

<sup>14</sup> Dragoș BĂLAN, *Sfintele Taine ale Bisericii – probleme fundamentale*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, 2016, p. 94.

since all times a sigh of the soul fallen into sin”<sup>15</sup> and that “the foundation of prayer lies in the fact that man is a fallen being. He hopes to receive the happiness which he had, but which he lost, and, for this reason, he is praying”<sup>16</sup>.

The relation between prayer and repentance is seen by Mark the Ascetic as a condition of salvation from the tribulations generated by sin. Therefore, the believer needs to choose between accepting the effort to repent and the tribulations brought about by the lack of repentance. “The enemy – he says – knows the justice of the spiritual law and this is why he looks only to win the consent of the mind. Because so, either he will make the one fallen in his power to submit to the endeavors of repentance, or, refusing to repent, he will burden him with undesired tribulations... Regarding the coming tests, many have withstood them in many ways. But without prayer and repentance, no one escaped the oppression”<sup>17</sup>. Prayer and repentance are interdependent because the purpose of prayer is to attach us to Christ, a thing that man cannot achieve except separating himself from sin. “When you hear the Lord saying: «Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple» (Luke 14, 33), you should understand this word as referring not only to treasures but also to all the things of sin”<sup>18</sup>; this is also the reason why it was said that “the true prayer is the voice of the true repentance”<sup>19</sup>.

The prayer of repentance happily combines man’s effort to set himself free from sin with the effort of advancing towards God; the crying of the heart, with the will to overcome the state of disgust for sin; the living of the pain caused by the separation from God, with the longing after the union with God; the regret for the sins committed, with the joy of the meeting with God in prayer. The impetus to prayer, caused by the horror of having sinned, brings in man God’s grace, in which there are present the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, prayer and repentance are means by which man gets to the personal relationship with God, to seeing Him and knowing Him.

<sup>15</sup> ANTONIE PLAMADEALA, *Tradiție și libertate în spiritualitatea ortodoxă*, f.e., Sibiu, 1983, p. 301.

<sup>16</sup> IGNATIE BRIANCANINOV, *Despre rugăciunea lui Iisus, experiențe ascetice*, p. 186.

<sup>17</sup> MARCU ASCETUL, “Despre legea duhovnicească” (91, 92), translated by Dumitru Stăniloae, in *Filocalia*, vol. I, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005, p. 225.

<sup>18</sup> MARCU ASCETUL, “Despre legea duhovnicească” (109), p. 226.

<sup>19</sup> IGNATIE BRIANCANINOV, *Despre rugăciunea lui Iisus, experiențe ascetice*, p. 187.

## VI. The Man of Our Days and Prayer

The world secularization process has its origin in the anthropocentrism promoted by a significant part of Christian theology. Man's growing focus on himself and the visible world has had, however, many stages and has been encouraged by some teachings that have no foundations in the Revelation. For example, by his teaching, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation seriously deformed the revelation regarding the rapports between human nature, God's grace, and man's liberty, annulling man's role in his salvation. In this way, in most of the Western world, spirituality received a heavy blow, and the consequences of this blow have grown over the centuries and generated the spiritual crisis the postmodern man and the present society are faced with. Simultaneously to the elaboration of the doctrine regarding nature, grace, and liberty, and in concordance with it, the reformers renounced the Holy Tradition, minimalized the Church, abolished the Mysteries as sacramental acts in which Christ's Person and work are prolonged; they deprived the divine cult of the Liturgy and, in general, they impoverished the activity and the sacramental and doxological function of the Church. One can justly say that the Reformation stood out by its reductionism in the cult, Mysteries, ecclesiology, and in the domain of Christian spirituality.

The believing man's need for prayer goes without saying and needs no demonstration. And the lack of prayer proves the lack of longing after God or the stifling of this longing. In today's society, the indifference to prayer is growing and spreading more and more as an effect of the weakening of the faith.

“Maybe the notion of secularized society does not indicate an entirely unbelieving society, but a society where most of the members no longer practice prayer except very rarely, during exceptional moments”<sup>20</sup>.

The secularized society is not just the society whose people no longer have a conscious and ceaseless connection with God but is also characterized by God's absence from it, not in the sense that He is absent from the world or separated from it, but in the sense, that man's losing his

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<sup>20</sup> Dumitru STĂNILĂOAE, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus și experiența Sfântului Duh*, translated by Marilena Rusu, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1995, p. 29.

habit of looking for God creates to him the illusion, becoming a certainty, that God no longer takes care of the world and, consequently, He has left the man in the care of his human powers and of chance.

One of the reasons why the post-modern man no longer prays (or prays too little) is also that he has stopped considering the things, the persons, and the events in the world as having to do with God in His quality of Creator and Providence. If man were to see God in all these, this would motivate him to think about Him permanently and they would occasion to man, by their means, the meeting with God. And the lifting of the thought to God and the meeting with Him would become a continual prayer, a deepening in the mystery of the things, of the persons, a remaining in relation with God, thinking about more and more powers and meanings that He communicates to us and growth of ourselves by all these<sup>21</sup>.

Knowing God for centuries through the lens of certain theologies and philosophies which presented Him as being in opposition to man and consequently inspired to man more fear than love, promised to him more punishment than forgiveness, the man started to believe that it is pointless to keep on looking – not even as *the prodigal son* (Luke 15, 11-32) – for the way of return to the Father. Olivier Clement says in this sense:

“The word *Father* sounds strange for nowadays’ man. The man of our days is an orphan. He has no roots out of space and time. This man feels lost in a universe devoid of limits, descends from the monkey, and is heading to nothingness. He was told that paternity, in the family or, in a figurative sense, in society, is absurd and repressive – and this thing is true if the family does not communicate a spiritual sense of life: so many fathers are only «genitors». He was told that God the Father is the enemy of his liberty, a sort of celestial spy, a sadistic Father. And we need to confess this fact that historical Christianity, both in the East and in the West, has made itself guilty during certain epochs, of this accusation. So, today That is why many are turning nowadays to Asian spirituality, a science of the interior, in which the notion of the divine, understood as impersonal, makes you think more of a cosmic matrix. Yes, we are orphans. Incest and

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<sup>21</sup> Dumitru STĂNILĂ, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia ortodoxă*, p. 670.

homosexuality, these two signs of the Father's absence, haunt society. The death of the father is part of the fear of the other", concludes the French theologian<sup>22</sup>.

In other words, by losing the relationship with the heavenly Father and the meaning of this relationship, man distorted the relationship with his fellows and emptied the very content of the family of its sacred burden, trivialized and demonized the notion of "father". In family, the earthly father has no longer his role established by God, because Heavenly Father Himself is renegade, and the obedience to and communication with the earthly father has become obsolete due to the fact the communication with Heavenly Father and obedience to Him are neither considered possible nor necessary.

Today's man is so subject to stress, nervousness, and fear, precisely because he lacks faith. The weaker the faith, the more anxious man is about his future and the future of his family. This is what Konrad Lorenz, a 1973 Nobel Laureate in Medicine and Philosophy, clearly states:

"We must ask ourselves what does more damage to the mind of modern man: his blinding greed for money or his enervating haste. Which of the two it may be, it is clearly the intention of the governing powers, irrespective of their political ideology, to further them both and to stimulate, to the extent of hypertrophy, every motivation that drives people to compete. As far as I know, no deep psychological analysis of this motivation has been made, but, in my opinion, it is very probable that, besides greed for property or for higher social standing, or both, *fear* plays an essential role – fear of being overtaken in the race, fear of poverty, fear of making wrong decisions, fear of not being able to keep up with the whole nerve-racking situation. Anxiety in every form is certainly the basic factor undermining the health of modern man, causing high blood pressure, renal atrophy, cardiac infarction, and other diseases. Man rushes, not only because he is propelled by greed, for this alone would not induce him to ruin

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<sup>22</sup> Olivier CLEMENT, *Viața din inima morții*, transl. Claudiu Soare, Editura Pandora, Târgoviște, 2001, pp. 182-183.

his own health, but because he is *driven*, and what drives him can only be fear<sup>23</sup>.

Man is afraid and anxious because he does not have a constant relationship with God and does not talk to Him, and then his faith also became something theoretical, powerless to save him.

“How could we overcome this modern enemy: the feeling of being overwhelmed, absentminded, nervous? – a theologian asks himself. As far as I am concerned – he says – I am saying it openly that *the great remedy is prayer. He who prays is no longer overwhelmed. He who prays acquires his oneness. He who prays has comfort. He who prays is alive*”<sup>24</sup>.

Being asked what piece of advice he would give to the people to avoid non-sense in life and find meaning to their existence. The same theologian mentions that he would advise every man, young or old, healthy or ill: 1. try to love; 2. take man seriously to find yourself on the way of God; 3. pray: “Pray any way you want, any way you can, but pray, because this is life. Prayer is the supreme human activity. When you pray you are in the supreme relation, you live with the most wonderful Being one can ever meet, namely God”<sup>25</sup>.

Prayer occasions to us the reflection and thinking of God, it sensitizes us to receive Him in ourselves and consequently fortifies us from the perspective of our faith. Prayer is the act by which we offer ourselves to God with our thoughts, with our acts, and with our entire being. It is precisely for this reason that he who prays in truth is preoccupied to appear in front of God purified of evil thoughts, of hate, for the gift of prayer not to be refused to him (Matthew 5, 23-24). “The awakening of our relationship with God, in prayer, is perfected in the renewal of our relations with the others”, says bishop Kallistos of Diokleia<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Konrad LORENZ, *Civilized man's eight deadly sins*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt P, 1974, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Părintele AMEDEE, Dr. Dominique MEGGLE, *Monahul și psihiatrul*, translated by Sora Eugenia Vlad, Editura Christiana, București, 1997, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Părintele AMEDEE, Dr. Dominique MEGGLE, *Monahul și psihiatrul*, p. 91.

<sup>26</sup> KALLISTOS DE DIOCLEEA, “Postul Paștelui și societatea de consum”, translated by Doina Rogoti, in: *Cum trăim Ortodoxia astăzi*, Editura Sophia, București, 2010, p. 70.

A characteristic feature of this society is that man feels in it increasingly lonely, the more he worries about his physical and immediate needs. Therefore, in his desire to save themselves of the loneliness, which is so hard to bear, the believers feel today the need to pray maybe even more than in the past. He finds his balance in prayer, because he refers himself consciously, freely, and through the effort to God and finds again this communion to which he was feeling called. Even he who never prayed, if he manages to get used to prayer, he will admit with awe that he has found again his balance and has been set free from the absentmindedness which was causing him suffering.

The person who is praying acquires the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5, 22), managing to defend himself against the evils caused by the deeds of the body: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like (Galatians 5, 19-21).

*In this way, a praying person is a man on his way to receiving healing and can become himself a factor of healing, because the good in him will be passed on to those around him. The more numerous the people becoming people of prayer, the more the relations in society will become normal.*

## VII. Conclusions

The fundamental foundation of prayer is the Holy Trinity, the communion of the divine Persons; yet intimately united to the Trinitarian foundation, as a consequence of the Embodiment of the second divine Person, there is the Christological foundation of prayer. The Christian prayer is founded on the Person and work of Christ, has a Christological character, and its content, motivation and sense are Christological. The Christian prayer has in Christ an eternal foundation because He ascended with the human body and made it eternal on the right side of the Father, remaining forever God and man.

The one supporting the relationship between the rightly-glorifying faith and prayer is the Holy Spirit. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, in the Orthodox Church the dogmatic testimony and the liturgical testimony

constitute an entirety expressed in different forms. This is highlighted best in the Holy Liturgy and the Holy Mysteries, yet all the Church prayers are expressing in a doxological form (namely of highest glorification) the rightly-glorifying faith.

Prayer is a means of knowing God and therefore a means of salvation if, by expressing righteous faith, he who is aware of his state of sinfulness takes seriously his relationship with the personal God; on the contrary, the lack of conscience of sin reveals indifference to God. Such a man has no reason to pray because he does not relate to God. But even if he prays, his prayer is like that of the well-known Pharisee, for example, it is a cold prayer, made for momentary, material, and ephemeral interests.

Postmodern man is hardly concerned with the knowledge of God and communion with Him, and so he is not preoccupied with prayer either. By focusing too much and sometimes exclusively on earthly and transient things, man has lost the vertical dimension of his existence. His relationship with God weakened on the one hand because he no longer communicated with God, and on the other hand, it can be said that the weak relationship with God is not only a consequence of lack of communication but also a cause of it. In other words, the less man prays, the more he distances himself from God.

By prayer, man escapes isolation because he gets to know a new world and because he advances on and on in the knowledge of this world, God's world, the realm of communion, of peace, of love, a place generating optimism and light. In prayer, man learns and knows how absurd it is to rely only on himself and on the capacities of human reason, how absurd it is to refer himself exclusively to the transitory, limited, and material realities; man discovers in prayer the way of going beyond this world and experiences the Infinite and the Eternity.