

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
77 (4), pp. 103-127, 2018

THE RULE OF HOLY COMMUNION: Hymnographic Meanings, Theological Significance, Ecclesial Applications

Lucian Petroaia

Lucian Petroaia

“Justinian Patriarhul” Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Bucharest

Email: lucianpetroaia@gmail.com

Abstract

In any Orthodox Christian life, the most important moment is when he receives the Holy Communion. In the Orthodox religion, the Christian approaches to the sacred vessel to get his Communion, only after he undergoes a serious and thorough preparation: he must have the Sacred Holy Confession, a time for fast and praying, for merciful deeds and the day before taking the Holy Communion, he has to read the Holy Canon in order to receive the Sacred Eucharist.

The present study refers to this precise Canon and it tries to “read” its theological, mystical, monastic and poetic meanings. Despite its importance in the Orthodox cult, nevertheless, this Canon has not been assigned in the entire Romanian Theological Literature, at least until the present moment, an analytical study that would be helpful for an accurate understanding of it. Why do we have to understand this hymnographic text?

Firstly because its authors are among the greatest Theological Saints of the Orthodox Church and the most faithful living souls. Secondly, this Canon has to be understood as it enables us to perceive the “Sacred Mystery”, the Holy Communion that is the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are offered to us as a gift for our deification, they are divine and deifying as the text itself tells us. Thus, in order to assert to this astonishing peak of holiness, the Christian needs a secure path which is this Canon precisely.

It is structured in two parts (one that includes the Canon itself and 9 odes or “canticles” and another one made up of 11 prayers), and it is composed on a double dialogue basis (the Christian talks to Our Lord Jesus Christ directly, but he also speaks to himself, to his soul). The Canon has to be comprehended better, it must be read carefully and it must be filtered through the spiritual life of each Christian who dares to approach “with fear and trembling” to receive the Holy Eucharist.

Keywords

Canon, Repentance, Forgiveness, Holy Eucharist, Divine Liturgy, Communion, Saint, Deification.

I. Introduction

The meaning of Christian life in Christ and in Church is the acquisition of the grace of the Holy Spirit, a wonderful, real, and transfiguring act that happens to every person, especially through participation at the Church’s services. However, the fulfilment of the believer’s participation in the worship of the Orthodox Church is the reception of the Sacrament of the Holy Communion. The Body and Blood of the Lord sanctify the Christian, deify him, and prepare him for the great meeting with Him Who Sacrificed Himself, the Saviour Jesus Christ, when he will partake of Him “*more perfectly, in the never-ending day of thy kingdom*”.

Given the dizzying height that the believer is called to, the divine solemnity of the moment of Communion and the invaluable and unfathomable gift the Christian receives at the time of communion - Lord’s own Body and Blood, they motivate each of us to prepare to receive Christ with great attention. The “steps” of this preparation are found in every Catechism or book of popular piety: the believer fasts at least five days in advance, first he confesses, he fulfils the canon, and gets forgiveness from the confessor, he prays more and reconciles with all who trespassed against him and whom he wronged, and in the pre-day of attending the Divine Liturgy and communion, he reads “The Sacrament of the Holy Communion”¹.

¹ *Liturghier*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București (abr.: EIBMBOR), 2012, pp. 333-366. Next, for all citations related to the texts in the Canon of Communion, this last edition of the Euchologion in Romanian will be quoted, using the abbreviation “*Liturghier*, 2012, p...”. On the correct and complete preparation of the priest for Divine Liturgy and Holy Communion, see

However, in the dynamics of Church life many believers come to the Confession and Holy Communion unprepared for receiving the Divine Mysteries: some are completely non-catechized, others seem a little aware of these great moments and gifts, counting them as a common thing, others sometimes neglect them their whole life!

Also for these reasons, the present study seeks a foray into the theological-liturgical and spiritual meanings of the text of the “Sacrament of the Holy Communion”, a valuable hymnographic-euchological work of which, so far, nothing has been systematically written in Romanian theology.

II. “The sacrament of eucharist”, in the economy of the “euchologion”

II.1. The structure and content of the studied euchological text

The “Canon” or “The Sacrament of the Holy Communion” - as rightly called this text, forms a distinct chapter in Euchologion, the book of worship. It is ordained by the Church precisely because of its importance for the preparation of the priest for the service of the Holy Liturgy and the communion with the Most-Pure Mysteries. This duty of preparing for reading the Canon and observing some other spiritual, moral, and physical norms for the priest and, largely, for any believer heading for the Holy Chalice is well-defined in the holy canons² and in other Church rules, being a work of great wisdom and inspiration of the Holy Fathers³.

This ordinance has a very well defined structure in the Euchologion in its present form, which is completed liturgically, typikonally and hymnographically:

the study pr. prof. dr. Petre VINTILESCU, “Pregătirea sfinților slujitori pentru oficiul Liturghiei”, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXXVII (1959) 2, pp. 141-176.

² Canon 13 of the First Ecumenical Synod, Canons 23, 58, 83 and 101 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 4 of the Synod of Gangra.

³ St. BASIL THE GREAT (†379) – Canon 16; St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (†407); St. TIMOTHY OF ALEXANDRIA (†385) – Canon 3; St. NICEPHORUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE († 828)– Canon 4; St. NICHOLAS GRAMMATICUS OF CONSTANTINOPOLE (†1111) – Canon 4; St. NICHOLAS CABASILAS († 1371); St. SYMEON OF THESSALONICA († 1429); *Pravila de la Govora* (1640) – glavele 35, 89,149, “Îndreptarea legii” or “Pravila de la Târgoviște” (1652), glavele 167, 170,320, 377,

The Rule opens with the beginning prayers and Psalm 50.

“A canon” follows which consists of 9 odes and 34 hymns. At each ode the first two hymns are preceded by the verses: “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me...*” and “*Cast me not away from Thy Face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me...*”. These are the verses 10 and 11 from Psalm 50. The last two hymns of each ode are preceded by the Lesser Doxology – “Glory to the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit” and the last part “both now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen”. After the 34 hymns we utter “Truly you are worthy to be blessed...”, the small prayers and the troparion of the day or the kontakion of the feast.

If this canon is read in the evening – as it should be after going to the service of Vespers (possibly with Litya or at Vigil) and after the personal rule of prayer – it is followed by a series of 40 “Lord, have mercy” and the prayers of Great Compline - Prayer of Paul the Monk (“O spotless, unstained...”) and of Antiochus the Monk (“And grant to us, Master...”), followed by the troparion of humility.

The next day, after the service of the Hours, the Canon is re-started with the beginning prayers and the Psalms 22, 23 and 115, followed by the ending formula similar to reading the Psalter (“Glory...Both now...”, “Alleluia – thrice”) and the three troparia: “Disregard my transgressions, ...”, “Glory..., How can I who am unworthy dare to come to the Communion of Thy Holy Things...”, “Both now... Greatly multiplied, O Theotokos, are my sins...”. In addition, after as many as desired prostrations we utter the small prayer “Lord, have mercy” 40 times.

The central part of “The Rule of the Holy Communion” is composed of the 12 great prayers, which are read before receiving the Holy Communion and the 5 great prayers that are read after the Communion. The seventeen prayers have several saints as authors. The prayers before receiving the Holy Communion have the following authors: the first prayer - St. Basil the Great; the second, eighth, ninth, tenth and twelfth - St. John Chrysostom, the third and fourth - St. Symeon Metaphrastes; the fifth and eleventh - St. John Damascene, the seventh - St. Symeon the New Theologian. The prayers of Thanksgiving after the Holy Communion have the following authors: the first and the second prayer - St. Basil the Great; the third - St. Symeon Metaphrastes; the fourth - St. Cyril of Alexandria; the fifth - unknown author.

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Before the preparatory prayers, a few verses are read “with attention, to our correction”: “If thou desirest, O man, to eat the Body of the Master...”.

Between the two sets of great prayers there are the verses of Saint Symeon Metaphrastes – “Behold, I approach the Divine Communion...”, the prayer “Of Thy Mystical Supper...”, two other verses (“Be awe-stricken, O mortal, beholding the deifying Blood...” and “The Divine Body both deifieth and nourisheth me...”) and two troparia: “Thou hast sweetened me with Thy love...” and “Into the brilliant company of Thy saints...”, ended by the prayer “O Master, Lover of mankind...” and again “Of Thy Mystical Supper...”. After the thanksgiving prayers we utter “Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,...”, the small prayers and three series of troparia, each specific to the Liturgy that has been celebrated: St. John Chrysostom’s, St. Basil the Great’s or the **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts**.

After the small prayer “Lord, have mercy”, uttered 12 times, we say “More honourable than the Cherubim ...” and the ending: the small dismissal, or the faithful say “Through the prayers of our holy fathers...”.

II.2. The authors of the prayers from the Canon

The Canon of the Holy Communion is the common achievement of a number of Church Fathers. This work was made definitive in time with the structure process and the crystallization of the Rule of the Holy Liturgy and with the “born” and “ascension” of the Euchologion, from the manuscript stage to the printed one. We know most of the biographical information about the authors of the Canon above mentioned; this Holy Fathers are the “evening stars on the sky of the Church”, enthusiastic defenders of the Orthodoxy, great liturgists and those who practiced the life in Christ, fiery defenders of the right faith, authors of canons and rules meant to keep the Church united and the spiritual and liturgical discipline.

a) **St. Basil the Great** was born in Caesarea of Cappadocia in a Christian family that offered many saints to the Church: Macrina the Elder (his grandmother), Emily (his mother), Gregory of Nyssa, Peter of Sebaste (his brothers) and Macrina the Younger (his sister); next to these there is also his brother, Elder Naucratis. He had a high education in Caesarea, Byzantium, Athens, studying humanities (Rhetoric, Grammar, Philosophy) and exact sciences (Astronomy, Geometry, Medicine), experiencing and

offering those next to him the theology in a unique way as life in Christ and not just talking or doing Philosophy about Him. As Archbishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia he established canonical order in his diocese and around, by his Small and Great Monastic Rules, and by founding the great complex of social assistance called “Basiliade”. He is also the author of an impressive work containing doctrine, Ascetics, and Mystics, Exegesis, Pedagogy, encomium and letters. The Holy Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great stands in the centre of his work and in the Orthodox Church it is still served 10 times every year⁴.

b) Saint John Chrysostom was born in Antioch and he is like a shining star among the other saints of the Church by his sermons, deeds and life. He had great education in Antioch of Syria. His huge work containing doctrine, exegetic writings and letters, but especially the Holy Liturgy that bears his name and is served today in the Church, with the named exceptions of Typikon and which is served nearly on a daily basis during the Church year, all these make St. John Chrysostom a contemporary and an alive face and model as hierarch, by his complete life in Christ⁵.

c) Saint Symeon Metaphrastes lived in the 10th century and is the author of one of the most complex work made by the Church at the limit between the first and the second millennium: the collation of the Saints’ lives (aprox. 122), drafting the services for the saints and the Menaion, his work being completed by other Fathers later.

d) Saint John Damascene lived in the city named with his name: Damascus, Syria. He had great studies and experienced a high rank in the administration of the Umayyad Empire, but he preferred to give his life to Christ becoming a monk in Saint Sabbas monastery near Betlehem. His major work is the first “Dogmatics” from the patristic literature, drafted as a result of his implication with all his heart in the monothelit and iconoclast quarrels, by defending Orthodoxy. The Church reminds him as a composer of Hymns since he wrote many services for the Great Feast Days, for Theotokos and some saints⁶.

⁴ About St. Basil the Great see his latest form of honor, in our Church, the triptic volume “Studia Basiliana”, under the title “*Sfântul Vasile cel Mare. Închinare la 1630 de ani*”, Editura “Basilica” a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2009.

⁵ See the book *Viața Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur în relațiile istoricilor bisericești Paladie, Teodor al Trimitundei, Socrates, Sozomen și Fericitul Teodoret al Cirului*, EIBMBOR, București, 2001.

⁶ One of the most recent papers on the theme is a pr. Andrew LOUTH, *Sfântul Ioan Damascinul. Tradiție și originalitate în teologia bizantină – cu câteva scrieri inedite*,

He was the one who embellished and systematized the singing of the Resurrection, editing the Octoechoes.

e) **Saint Symeon the New Theologian** is at the same time the mystical ascetic who attended the best schools in Byzantium and, paradoxically, he was an officer from the emperor administration, being a member of the Senate. As he was the disciple of an elder – St. Symeon the Pious and he nourished himself daily from the Holy Scripture and St. Mark the Ascet’s works but especially because he lived the ascetic life at Studion and St. Mamas monasteries, he was shaped in this way for this approach of Theology. He is the theologian of the light and grace, being the forerunner of the great hysichaste theology and teaching. He composed hymns that impress by their density and literary and theological beauty⁷.

f) **Saint Cyril of Alexandria** is the author of the fourth prayer of thanksgiving and reminds us about the time of the “*wooden chalice and the golden hearts*”, the time of Christological disputes (let us just remind his dispute with Nestorius on the Eucharist Theology⁸) and of the great doctrine victories of the Orthodox Church. His Dialogues and exegesis made him a thorough connoisseur and refined interpreter of the biblical texts.

II.3. A few landmarks about the presence of “The Canon of the Holy Communion” in the history of the Euchologion printed in the Romanian language

In the structure of the Euchologion printed on our territory, the Canon of the Holy Communion is present gradually. Both the first edition printed at Târgoviște in 1508, and that from Brasov in 1570 do not contain this canon. In the Euchologion printed at Dealu, in 1646, there is no Canon for the Eucharist.

Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2010, translation by pr. prof. Ioan Ică SN. and diac. Ioan I. Ică JR. See also the work of Sf. JOHN OF DAMASCUS *Trei tratate contra iconoclaștilor*, EIBM-BOR, București, 1998, traducere de pr. prof. dr. Dumitru FECIORU.

⁷ See the work of Sfântul NICHITA STITHATUL, *Viața Sfântului Simeon Noul Teolog*, Editura Herald, București, 2003 and of Ilarion ALFEYEV, *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog și tradiția ortodoxă*, Editura Sofia, București, 2010.

⁸ See the book drd. Ion CARAZA, “Doctrina euharistică a Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei”, in: *Studii teologice*, XX (1968) 7-8, pp. 528-542.

In the Euchologion Saint Hierarch Dosoftei printed at Iași in 1679, there is only the prayer of Saint Basil the Great – the first from the Canon⁹. The original text has a beauty of his own and there it is: “...*Acel prin covârșitoare bunătate, în ceale de apoi zâle, Trup a iîmbrăkat și pre krule Te-ai răstignit, și Te-ai pus pentru noi, nemulțămătorii și zăluzii, și ku al Tău Sânge de iznoavă ai înformuit acea strikată de păkat firea noastră, Însuț, nemuritoriule Împărate, priimeaste și a mea, a unui păcătos pokăință și pleakă ureakea Ta mie și auz graiurilor meale. K-am greșit Doamne: greșit-am la ceriu, și înaintea Ta și nu sunt vrednik să zăresk la naltul slăvii Tale...*”¹⁰. In the second edition from 1683, Saint Dosoftei put the same prayer under the title “Molitva la svânta Priceaștanie a svântului marelui Vasilie”¹¹.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the Euchologions contained this chapter as well. Bishop Mitrofan of Buzău printed a Euchologion in the Episcopal printing house in 1702, that contained “Molitvele de Preceștanie”. In the edition from Râmnic – 1706 (neither in volume I that is a Great Euchologion or in volume II, that is a Small Euchologion where at page 451 it is written that all the services are included except for “Pricestania bolnavului”) and in that from Târgoviște - 1713, both edited by Saint Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul, we could not find any prayer from this Canon; but there is in the Horologion printed by Saint Antim in 1715 and called “Slujba Sfintei Kuminekături”¹². The Euchologion from Iași – 1715, București – 1728 and 1729, Râmnic - 1733 did not include the Canon either.

For the first time the edition from 1741¹³ included this canon completely (without the short prayer “Not toward judgment or condemnation ...”) and is entitled “Slujba Sfintei Priceștaniei”; the edition from Bucharest in 1746 included it completely, even the text and the pagination.

⁹ See the original edition Iași, 1679, f. 147 v și 148 r-v and the printed edition with critics by N. A. URSU, at Iași, in 1980, pp. 293-295. For data related to this edition and all the others quoted further in: this study, I recommend the doctoral thesis of the undersigned, entitled *Liturghierul, tezaur de cultură și spiritualitate ortodoxă*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2014.

¹⁰ *Liturghier*, Iași, 1679, f. 147 v.

¹¹ Short references to Ion BIANU, *Bibliografia românească veche*, 1903, vol. I, p. 262.

¹² Ion BIANU, *Bibliografia românească veche*, p. 497.

¹³ *Liturghier*, București, 1741, f. 231– 246.

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After the two editions from Bucharest in 1741 and 1746, the Euchologies edited in our territory contained the full version of this Canon. The exceptions are a few newer editions “de p \hat{o} che”, that do not contain the whole canon¹⁴. Others offer the alternative of a partial one, made by the priest through confusing notes¹⁵. Other editions of the same format offer to the clergy only the prayer of this rule without the preliminary canon¹⁶, the prayer of thanksgiving after receiving the Holy Communion¹⁷ or nothing from this Canon unfortunately¹⁸.

III. Theological meanings in the text of the Rule of the Holy Communion from the Euchologion

The authors of these prayers from the Canon made true doctrinal, ascetical-mystical, liturgical and disciplinary synthesis in the text of the Canon,

¹⁴ For example, the edition appeared at Galați, in 1990 (excerpt from *Cartea de rugăciuni*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1987) which, in addition to the text of the Liturgy and Canon offers the faithful, especially, but also the clergy the beautiful, clarifications and teachings, made by Rev. dr. Nicolae GROSU, referring to the Liturgy. Let’s recall here the edition from Buzău, 2001, which also includes the entire Canon.

¹⁵ See the small “Liturgier” printed at Cluj, in 1995, which has been particularly successful thanks to its slim format and elegant print, qualities for which it was later printed in several editions. Inside, at p. 90-91, before proceeding to read Canon’s great prayers, the priest finds the following phrase: “If you have time, zeal and power, it is good to read all the twelve prayers that follow. And if not, at least on the sixth, seventh, eighth, eleventh and twelfth”. Where does this “counsel” come from, which was repeated in subsequent editions (eg 2005 and 2006), and especially on what criteria the selection between prayers (which is to say and which not!), we can not know. Certainly, we can speak of a regrettable error that erodes the priest’s zeal for the minimum of his preparation for ministry by reading the “Canon”.

¹⁶ See edition from Iași, 2009, which, however, notes: “Receiving the blessing from the priest to share with the Holy Mysteries, it is necessary to utter the prayers for the Holy Communion. These prayers are grouped in two parts: the canon for Communion, which is read in the evening before receiving the Holy Communion and which is found in Horologion and the prayers that follow” (p. 42). In fact, in the circulation of the same edition in 2009, but in the series with a cardboard cover the entire “Canon” is included (pp. 119-172).

¹⁷ For example, the one printed at Orhei in 1992, which circulated mainly in Bessarabia, but also in Moldova, after 1992.

¹⁸ For example the one printed at Craiova, 2005.

which are inspired creations from Euchologion. Among the purposes of the present study, we exemplify: the understanding of some of these meanings, the way the priest/faithful succeeds their print in the spiritual life, the way this Canon can seriously build the consciousness of his membership to the Church in every character and of the ecclesial unity in Christ through the Holy Communion.

III.1. Theological-hymnographical phrases about the Saviour Christ – from the Eucharist

The first teaching from the Canon is asserting the fact that the Saviour Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharistic bread and the wine, with his Body and Blood: “May Thy holy Body be for me the Bread of life eternal, O Compassionate Lord, and may Thy precious Blood also the healing for my many forms of illness”¹⁹. In this respect the verses before the prayer warn the Christian that we should be very frightened for receiving the Body of Our Master because “*it is fire*”, and for receiving Lord’s Blood we should be in peace with all that trespassed against us. These divine gifts offered to the faithful are received only because of the non-bloody, eucharistic sacrifice, which is the liturgical continuation in the Church of the Sacrifice of the Saviour on the Cross, which He assumed though he had no fault. This was what Isaiah the prophet foretold (53, 7-8), and we read in the Canon: “*Incarnating Yourself, Most-Merciful, You wished to give yourself to slaughter, like a lamb, for the sins of men...*”²⁰. This expression links the moment of preparation for Communion - the personal act of every Christian - to the liturgical moment of Preparation. This is an ecclesial and communal act, during which Christ is born of His holy Mother in a mystical way and sacrifices “as a lamb” for our sins, when the priest who cuts the core of Saint Bread cross-wise: “Sacrificed is the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, for the life of the world and its salvation”²¹. These liturgical expressions configure a first hypostasis of Christ-Eucharist, the “Lamb of God”, Who is also Shepherd and who is offered to the faithful, to communion, for the forgiveness of their sins.

The second image of the Eucharist Saviour is that of the wheatear. The world is like an arid earth, thirsty after the heavenly, rich rain. The

¹⁹ Sticheron, Ode I, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 334.

²⁰ Sticheron, Ode IV, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 335.

²¹ “Rânduiala Dumnezeieștii Proscomidii”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 119.

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Mother of God lives in this inhospitable realm, and she is seen as “*a good, and blessed land*”; she produces “the unploughed Corn which saves the world”²², she gives birth to Christ. The motive of the wheatear present in the ecclesiastical art (iconography, sculpture, silverware, silverwork, the technique of the manuscript) perfectly illustrates this idea of high theological density. The Saviour Christ is symbolized by a rich, full of fruit wheatear, as the “grain” of His Body has seen death, overcame it and showed the triumph of life through His Resurrection, the advance of our resurrection. It is the very idea the believers affirm, on Good Friday, at the service of the Lord’s Funeral when singing “*Grain with two natures / Today the Giver of life / is sown in the deep earth with tears; / He rises and the world will enjoy*”²³, inspired by the very word of the Saviour in the Gospel of John, chapter 6. That is why, since its inception, the Church has used prosphora for the Liturgy, which “*is the bread of pure wheat flour mixed with natural water and well baked, leavened, not too salty, fresh and clean, tasteful and good to eat ... A different bread, other than pure and leavened wheat one, may not be the matter of the Body of Christ*”²⁴. The Euchologion teachings show theologically and liturgically that the real Body of Christ, with whom He was born, lived, suffered, died, and is resurrected, is His Eucharistic Body, which we partake with, being only prefigured by the Bread of Proskomede, which hundreds and thousands of wheat grains are contained in, made in flour, gathered in bread²⁵, as the Didache confesses: “*As this broken bread was scattered on the mountains, and being assembled has become one, so will your Church be assembled from the ends of the earth into your kingdom*”²⁶. In the hypostasis of Christ - “the wheatear of salvation”, the mystery of the Church is actually hidden, and on this foundation the theologians shows how the Christological and sacramental theologies interfere. Third, the text of the “Rule of the Holy Communion” shows us Christ Who enters into the being of the Christian,

²² Sticheron, Ode I, din “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p.334.

²³ In: *Prohodul Domnului*, Editura Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2005, p. 31.

²⁴ “Povățuiri și învățăături. Pentru materia pâinii, a Însuși Trupului lui Hristos”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, pp. 498-499.

²⁵ About Christ as “Lamb” and as “Bread” see the chapter “Pâinea și Mielul euharistic” from the book by pr. prof. dr. Dumitru STĂNILAOE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia ortodoxă*, EIBMBOR, București, 2004, pp. 684-688.

²⁶ “Didache”, IX, 4, in: *Scrierile Sfinților Apostoli*, EIBMBOR, București, 1979, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, vol. 1, p. 29.

becoming “breath”, “life”, “joy” and “salvation”. It is the expression of Saint Symeon the New Theologian: “And that I may not remain alone without Thee, the Life-giver, my Breath, my Life, my Rejoicing, the Salvation of the world, therefore have I drawn nigh unto Thee”²⁷. Why is this transformation happening in the Christian who partake of the Eucharist? Because, once infiltrated into man, Christ changes him structurally. In the abyss depths of man, a deeply intertwined intimacy with the Lord happens. This mysterious consanguinity and corporality is realized, and St. John Chrysostom often told about it in his homilies. St. Cyril of Jerusalem also taught the neophytes:

“... by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ ... you become united with Him in flesh and blood. So we come to be carriers of Christ (Christophorus) because His Body and Blood is divided into our limbs ... according to the words of the Apostle Peter, that we make partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1, 4)”²⁸.

Quoting St. Macarius the Great, Saints Ignatius and Calistos Xantopoulos point out:

“As the wine mingles in the members of the person who drinks and turns itself into the person and vice versa, so the one who drinks the blood of Christ drinks the divine Spirit and He mingles with the soul perfectly and vice versa”²⁹.

In all these expressions, a logical succession of moments is observed: The Saviour - the “lamb” sacrifices himself for the sins of men, and the Saviour - the “wheat ear” is partaken of the men, penetrating them and

²⁷ Prayer VII of St. SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 360.

²⁸ Sfântul CHIRIL AL IERUSALIMULUI, “Cateheza IV Mistagogică”, in: *Cateheze*, EIBM-BOR, București, 2003, p. 356. See the normative study of pr. prof. dr. Petre VINTIL-ESCU, “Împărtășirea la Sfânta Liturghie privită sub aspectul spiritualității creștine”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXXXI (1963) 9-10, pp. 962-976. The same author also includes this chapter in his work, *Liturghierul explicat*, EIBM-BOR, București, 1972, pp. 323-336.

²⁹ Saints CALIST and IGNATIE XANTOPOULOS, “Centuria 92”, in: *Filocalia*, vol. VIII, EIBM-BOR, București, 2013, p. 245.

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becoming one with them. Thus man breathes through Christ, lives in Christ, rejoices with Christ, is saved by Christ; he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him, as Apostle Paul teaches (Galatians 2, 20), and as the same Saint Symeon the New Theologian shows in one of his hymns:

“We become the members of Christ - and Christ becomes my members. / Christ is my hand, my foot, oh wicked me! / And the hand of Christ, the foot of Christ I am, the wicked. / I move my hand and my hand is whole Christ; / I move my foot, and behold, it shines like Christ. / If you wish, you will become the member of Christ”³⁰.

This Christomorphism of the man who partook of the Communion has direct applications in his life: it must generate major decisions for the change of his life, for returning with all his being to the life in Christ for the “other part of his life”. For this reason, St. John Chrysostom warned us:

“Let us hear, priests and believers, why we were worthy of it! Let us hear and tremble! We gave ourselves to satiate with His Holy Body! He gave Himself a sacrifice! What defence do we have when, being fed so, are we sinning so? When we eat the Lamb, we are wolves! When being fed with the Sheep, we kidnap like lions!”³¹.

III. 2. Mother of God, intercessor for all to her Divine Son

The bond for eternity and the indestructible unity between the Son of God Incarnate and His Most Pure Mother are also affirmed in this “Rule” though in the Mystery of the Holy Communion the Christian receives the Body and Blood of Christ, her Son. The liturgical teachings even point to the fact that at the time of changing in Epiclesis, only the Holy Bread becomes the Body of Christ; the particle of the Mother of God, the particles for the nine heavenly hosts, the three for the church hierarchy, for the state rulers and the founders of the church, the ones for the living and asleep

³⁰ Sfântul SIMEON NOUL TEOLOG, *Imnul I*. See also the idea illustrated in the work pr. prof. dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune...*, pp. 612-613.

³¹ Sfântul IOAN GURĂ DE AUR, *Omilii la Matei*, EIBMBOR, București, 1994, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, vol. 23, p. 583.

remain blessed bread by sitting next to the Body of the Lord. The priest consumes them, and though imbued with the divine Blood of the Lord, they are not the Body of Christ.

However, the presence of Theotokos is a brilliant and providential one in the preparation of the Holy Communion, at the time of partaking of the Most Pure Mysteries and during the thanksgiving afterwards. First, the Mother of God is called “our mediator” to the One she wore in the womb³². It intercedes for us to be forgiven of mistakes, to become blameless and to receive Christ “the spiritual pearl within”³³. She, who is the “place of good fragrance” helps us through her prayers to become “chosen vessels” to partake of the Holy Mysteries. That is why the “preliminary” canon of prayer ends with the hymn “It is truly right ...” and some of the prayers before and after the reception of the Holy Communion are completed with the invocation of the help of Theotokos: the second prayer “... through the intercessions and supplications of Thy most pure Mother”³⁴; the third prayer: “... didst take on all of our substance from the pure and virgin blood of her that bare Thee supernaturally through the descent of the Divine Spirit and the good will of the everlasting Father”³⁵; the eleventh prayer: “... *For the prayers of the one who seedless bore You ...*”; the third prayer of thanksgiving: “... Your immaculate and pure Mother”³⁶; the fourth prayer of thanksgiving: “... through the intercessions of Your all-pure Mother...”³⁷.

Indeed, the last consistent prayer in the Canon is also an invocation of the Most Holy Mother of God. The believer addresses to her for having been worthy to receive her Son’s Precious Body and Blood. The text contains a queue of requests, all three to the Mother of God:

“You who gave birth to the true Light, enlighten the spiritual eyes of my heart...”; “you who conceived the Source of immortality, revive me who am dead in sin”; “you who are the lovingly-compassionate Mother of the

³² Sticheron, Ode IV, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 336.

³³ Sticheron, Ode IV, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 336.

³⁴ Prayer II of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 352.

³⁵ Prayer III of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 352.

³⁶ Prayer III of St. SYMEON METAPHRASTES, from “Rugăciunile de mulțumire după Dumnezeiasca Împărtășire”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 370.

³⁷ Prayer IV of St. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, from “Rugăciunile de mulțumire după Dumnezeiasca Împărtășire”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 370.

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merciful God, have mercy on me and grant me compunction and contrition in my heart, humility in my thoughts and the recall of my thoughts from captivity”³⁸.

Thus, the accents of the requests become mystical. The believer who had Communion aspires even more to the light, life and purity, having the Mother of God as mediator. The desire of being worthy is born in him, the desire for the Holy Mysteries, to receive them “without chastisement, to the end of life” and to the healing of the soul and the body. Here is a missionary tone: apart from the tears of repentance, the believer also asks “confessional tears” so that on the one hand he can praise the Mother of God and on the other hand he can confess to all and to the world, how great things God has done unto him.

III. 3. The saints, models of communion and unity, in Christ and in the Church

Together with the Mother of God, the saints are invoked in the “Rule of the Holy Communion”. Even that the Menaia were completed only in the 9th-10th centuries and that throughout the Christian Church the worship of the saints gradually developed and generalized, especially after the 4th century, surprisingly in these finalized prayers (the most many) early enough, the power of intercession of the saints is invoked, directly or indirectly.

St. Basil the Great refers to the saints, calling them “elected” and “those who love Christ”³⁹. St. John Chrysostom calls the power of “all the saints, who have been pleasing unto Thee from the ages”⁴⁰ or names them “*his friends*”⁴¹. Also, Saint Symeon Metaphrastes metaphorically shows that the saints are those who repented and were forgiven by the Saviour, Who is “*The God of those who repent and the Saviour of those who are wrong...*”⁴²; on the same idea Saint Symeon the New Theologian

³⁸ Prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God, from “Rugăciunile de mulțumire de după Dumnezeiasca Împărtășire”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 371.

³⁹ Prayer I of St. BASIL THE GREAT, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 350.

⁴⁰ Prayer II of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 352.

⁴¹ Prayer VIII of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 362

⁴² Prayer IV of St. SYMEON METAPHRASTES, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 357

sees the saints as Christians who have repented hotly, were cleansed with God's mercy, were illuminated and united with His light "sharers of Thy divinity without stint", becoming thus "Thy true friends"⁴³. Specifically, in the prayer of thanksgiving after Holy Communion, they are called as "supplicants" for Christians, "... all the saints, the chiefs of the bodiless hosts, Your Forerunner, the wise Apostles, ..." ⁴⁴. Not by accident, at the end of the prayers of preparation for Communion, not at all rhetorically, the second troparion interjects the one who prepares for receiving the Holy Communion: "Into the brilliant company of Thy saints how shall I the unworthy enter?"

III.4. The "Ascension" of the believer summoned to the Holy Chalice

Reading carefully the text of the canon and the prayers reveals to the believer eager to understand better the high meaning of his call to the Holy Chalice, the spiritual path he must go through, until he receives the Holy Mysteries. The steps of this uprising are:

a) The detachment

Perceived in the Canon most often as a "wound", sin must be healed, and Christ the Great Doctor is earnestly called to heal the Christian through partaking of the Holy Mysteries: "... May Thy holy Body be for me the bread of eternal life, O gracious Lord, and may Thy precious Blood be a remedy for my many forms of sickness"⁴⁵. The "remedy" which the Saviour places upon the spiritual and bodily wounds caused by sins, is offered by us the believers, a gift from His gift: "Grant me, O Christ, teardrops to cleanse the dross from my heart"⁴⁶. Sharpened on the wound, like a cool balm, tears work by healing: they burn the "tares of sins" and shine "all over" the whole being of man⁴⁷. Essentially, St. John Chrysostom expresses this in

⁴³ Prayer VII of St. SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 361.

⁴⁴ Prayer III of St. SYMEON METAPHRASTES, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri. Rugăciunile de mulțumire de după Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 370.

⁴⁵ Sticheron from Ode I, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 333.

⁴⁶ Sticheron from Ode III, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 334.

⁴⁷ See hymn tone 8, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 334.

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the same way: “There are two things: sin and repentance; sin is the wound, repentance is the cure. As in the flesh are wounds and cure, so in the soul are sins and repentance”⁴⁸.

However healing has a soul and a bodily appearance, and this distinction of philocalical nuance is easily made by the hymnographer in the 6th Song: “O Saviour, sanctify my mind, soul, heart and body...”⁴⁹. That is why the text insists in this note, in a striking resemblance to the deep repentance demanded by St. Andrew of Crete, in his Great Canon: “*My soul, my soul, wake up! What are you sleeping for? The end is approaching and you will be troubled. Wake up, that Christ God, who is everywhere and makes all complete, will be merciful to you.*”⁵⁰ (Canon of St. Andrew of Crete). And: “O Christ Jesus, no one on earth hath ever sinned, O my Jesus, as I, the wretched one and prodigal, have sinned. Wherefore, I cry to Thee, my Jesus, have compassion on me.”⁵¹ (Canon for the Holy Communion).

In the great prayers of the “Rule” the idea of the fall of man is more emphasized: “having submitted my whole self to sin”, “made myself a slave of pleasure” and “having defaced Thine image”⁵². Moreover, St. John Chrysostom resembles this fall of man with the decay to the state of irrational life; but the most terrible picture of this collapse is made by Saint Symeon Metaphrastes, through an index of bodily and soul sins, which best describes how much humanity can dehumanize, starting with fornication and ending with “slim” sins like envy⁵³. That is why all the Holy Fathers teach the believers to cry to Christ: “*Receive me also, Lover of mankind, Christ, as the harlot, and as the robber, as the publican and as the lost son*”⁵⁴; “be compassionate also with me a sinner, as I approach

⁴⁸ Sfântul IOAN GURĂ DE AUR, *Omiliile despre pocăință*, EIBMBOR, București, 1998, p. 67.

⁴⁹ Sticheron from Ode VI, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 337.

⁵⁰ “Canonul cel Mare al Sfântului Andrei Criteanul”, in: *Triod*, EIBMBOR, București, 2000, p. 133.

⁵¹ Sticheron from Ode VII from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 339.

⁵² Prayer I of St. BASIL THE GREAT, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 349.

⁵³ See in: Prayer IV of St. SYMEON METAPHRASTES, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 354.

⁵⁴ Prayer IV of St. SYMEON METAPHRASTES, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 354.

and touch Thee”⁵⁵; “*There is still hope of salvation for me... be a Saviour to me... weaken, forgive me everything I have wrong*”⁵⁶; “*I’m wrong ... wash me ... please get rid of my mistakes...*”⁵⁷.

However, because of the endless love of God, the sick man receives healing, he receives “the only cure for sin, which is this Body of Christ and the only washing of transgression, which is His Blood”⁵⁸. The received forgiveness even shows this infinite divine love, which gives “the life of those who are broken”. In this regard, the lazy believer is offered a whole gallery of examples of sinners forgiven by the Saviour after returning to Him and casting off their sins: the harlot (Luke 7, 37-50), the prodigal son (Luke 15, 11-32), the publican (Luke 18, 10-14), and the thief on the cross (Luke 23, 43). Once healed, there happens the “alienation of passions”, in other words, the closeness to virtues, the strengthening of life, the reception or “addition” of grace and the dawn of the sanctification of the human person.

From the theological point of view, all forgiveness and the stages of the restoration of the person that are happening with us come as deeds of the moments of the redemptive work done by our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Symeon Metaphrastes shows this truth in a clear spiritual picture of his prayer: Passion and death of the Lord “*kill the bodily passion*”; the burial of the Lord “*bury the evil thoughts through good thoughts, and waste the cunning spirits*”; The resurrection of the Lord, which is life-bearer lifts “*the fallen ancestor ... and me, the one who slipped in sin, putting me before faces of repentance*”; the Ascension of the Lord brings the acquisition “*of the right side which is of the saved ones*”; Descent of the Holy Paraclete show the believer “*to be a place of His coming*”; the Second Coming of the Lord calls on the faithful to meet Christ “*the Maker and the Judge*”⁵⁹ on clouds.

⁵⁵ Prayer II of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 351.

⁵⁶ Prayer IV of St. Symeon Metaphrastes, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 356.

⁵⁷ Prayer a VII of St. SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, pp. 359-360.

⁵⁸ Sfântul NICOLAE CABASILA, *Despre viața în Hristos*, EIBMBOR, București, 2009, p.121.

⁵⁹ Prayer III of St. SYMEON METAPHRASTES, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 353.

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The Lord's work and the ascetic labour of man will bring the latter in the position of receiving the Most Pure Mysteries. Now the priest who offers (and not far from it, the believer who partakes of) must have the hand that touches the Lord's Body cleaner than the spoon for partaking. In addition, the mouth must be more honest than the cup, as Saint Theophan of Nicea teaches us⁶⁰.

b) Receiving the Holy Communion - a solemn, holy, and unifying act in Christ

The reception of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ by the believer is seen in various ways in the "Rule of the Holy Communion". The most commonly used is the image of "eating" Christ the Eucharist, since the phrase "to eat" (the Body of the Lord) and "to drink" (the blood of the Lord) is the easiest to understand by the faithful who come to the Holy Chalice. It is not an ordinary dish, but the faithful prepared to receive the Eucharistic Body, the life-giving, and incarnated Logos Himself; he receives the human incandescent body of the Son of God incarnated, and its reception (the "food") St. Cyril of Alexandria describes so: "He who eats Me, says (Christ), will also live. We eat and consume not His Godhead - far from us this impiety! - but the body of the Logos, which becomes life-giving, because it becomes the body of the One who lives through His Father"⁶¹. In another place Saint Symeon the New Theologian points that this food unites us completely with Christ, and makes us "fully co-bodily and related to Him, as also the divine Paul himself says: «we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones» (Eph. 5: 30)"⁶². That is why in the Canon Communion is also regarded as an invitation to supper⁶³. In this respect, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel teaches "the Holy Eucharist is the icon of lunch and joy in the Kingdom of God, an offering given to us as a preparation for the common Resurrection"⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ Apud pr. prof. dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Taina Euharistiei, izvor de viață spirituală în Ortodoxie", in: *Ortodoxia*, XXXI (1979) 3-4, p. 510.

⁶¹ Sfântul CHIRIL AL ALEXANDRIEI, *Comentariu la Luca*, apud Ion CARAZA, "Doctrina euharistică a Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei", p. 531.

⁶² Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, "Cuv. nr. 3", in: *Filocalia*, vol. VI, EIBMBOR, București, 1977, p. 120.

⁶³ See sticheron II from Ode I and sticheron II from Ode a IV-a, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 334 și 336.

⁶⁴ Preafericitul Părinte Patriarh DANIEL, "Învierea lui Hristos – lumina Sfintei Euharistii. Pastorală de Sfintele Paști. 2001", in: *Comori ale Ortodoxiei*, Editura Trinitas, Iași,

The second wording of Christ's coming into the human being is called "receiving" (the sacred Mysteries), a more elegant term that emphasizes the time of Christ's descent into man and His receiving by man. That is why the hymnographer expresses by showing how the Christian becomes Christ's dwelling through Communion. *By sharing with the Holy Mysteries* the heart becomes "*Church of the Precious Body and Blood*" where Christ is with the believer, "dwells" in him and "stays" in him⁶⁵. The text even speaks of a man's total annexation by Communion with God.⁶⁶ For this reason, the reception of Christ "under the covering of the house" or in the "manger" of the Christian being⁶⁷ generates in him a joy similar to that of the heavenly armies that sang at the Birth of the Child in Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2, 14). St. John Chrysostom even completes, exhorting: "... bless yourself with such a delicious joy, enrich yourself with such immense charity, and get drunk with such a sweet jam. Do not say: «Oh! How much I want to see Him, touch Him, breathe His divine fragrances!»"⁶⁸. In other words, Christ is in us, we no longer need to seek Him. The guest becomes Host, for He is the Creator of the one whom he loves dwelling in; only man can find himself!...

The third form the text of "the Rule" expresses how we receive Christ in us is "partaking of", a term that emphasizes the personal aspect of receiving the Mystery of the Eucharist. Christ is given to every Christian, completely and totally. He offers himself to us and we partake of Him, in a total interpenetration of God with man in the human person. Christ is bending on man, and the man who partook of him, is exalted to the dignity of being a companion with Him, since the Lord is now even within man!⁶⁹.

2007, pp. 202-210 – see the quotation at p. 205. The text was republished in: vol. *Făclii de Înviere. Înțelesuri ale Sfintelor Paști*, Editura Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2008, pp. 96-105.

⁶⁵ See sticheron II from Ode a IX-a, sticheron I from Ode a V-a and sticheron II from Ode a VIII-a, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, pp. 336, 339, 340.

⁶⁶ Prayer after troparia, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 366.

⁶⁷ Prayer II of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, from "Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri", in: *Liturghier*, 2012, pp. 351 – 352.

⁶⁸ Sfântul IOAN GURĂ DE AUR, apud LIVIU PETCU, *Lumina Sfintelor Scripturi. Antologie tematică din opera Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*, vol. I, f.l., 2008, p. 719.

⁶⁹ This idea is exceptionally well presented by pr. prof. acad. Dumitru POPESCU, in his study "Dimensiunea spirituală a Sfintei Euharistii", published in: *Teologie și educație*

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It is the complete union of the Lord with man and of the man with the Lord, a “personal and personalizing” union, and the result is the man “renewed by fire” and fully “new in Christ” and the communion of these “new man” which is the ecclesial community⁷⁰! Thus, the believer ascends in and through Christ, experiencing and pre-tasting the communion with God and the eternal life of the Most Holy Trinity even from flesh. Therefore, the Holy Communion is the “saving power and work of the Lord through the love of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit together in the Church for our resurrection from sin”⁷¹.

The fourth term used is “the Eucharist”, meaning “thanks to God” for the gift of His Body and Blood. Man thanks the Lord for the great and invaluable gift He receives: His Body and Blood at the Eucharistic Supper. Moreover, the Gift is the One Who offers Himself, as St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches:

“This is the Author of Magnificence. God’s gifts are put forward, the mysterious table is ready, the life-giving bowl ready. The King of glory calls, the Son of God receives, God the Incarnate Logos urges, the hypostatic Wisdom of God the Father, the one who has built His house, not made by hand, gives His Body as bread, and offers His life-giving blood as wine. Oh, frightening mystery! O, unthinkable economy! O, unquenchable condescension! Oh, unceasing goodness! The Creator is brought to the creature as food; Life itself is given to the mortal as food and drink”⁷².

la Dunărea de Jos, Editura Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2007, fascicula VI, pp. 40-47 and republished in: *Hristos. Biserică. Misiune*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2011, pp. 190-199.

⁷⁰ See the reference work, on theme, of pr. prof. dr. Dumitru RADU, “Caracterul eclesio-logic al Sfintelor Taine și problema intercomuniunii (teză de doctorat)”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXX (1978) 1-2, pp. 13-388. Beautiful senses of this reality, more recently, at ierod. dr. Paulin ILIUCĂ, “Sfânta Euharistie – taina unității Bisericii”, in: *Teologie și Viață*, XXIV (XC) 2014 1-4, p. 5-22.

⁷¹ ÎPS Arhiepiscop dr. CASIAN AL DUNĂRII DE JOS, *Hristos înviat din morți, “izvorul sfințirii” și “pâinea vieții veșnice”* (Pastorală la Învierea Domnului, 2014), Editura Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2014, p. 9.

⁷² Sfântul CHIRIL AL ALEXANDRIEI, *Omilia a X-a. La Cina cea de Taină*, apud. drd. Ion Caraza, “Doctrina euharistică a Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei”, p. 541. The idea is beautifully nuanced by pr. Professor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, in the study “Legătura în-

In this sense, the Eucharist succeeds in realizing communion in Christ and strengthening the church community through the same faith in Christ, “the One who breaks himself and does not separate”⁷³, maintaining the unity of the Church.

c) The fruits of the Holy Eucharist work in the human person

Partaking of the Purest Mysteries is not just a mechanical reception of a supernatural gift. The coming of Christ the Saviour into man, His entry into the heart of the believer as in a palace, His dwelling there, and His spreading to the whole human being in all “wrists and kidneys” produces radical transfiguration of the human person, body, and soul. However, this work of Christ in man proceeds gradually, and ascendant, through a climax that starts from the material level of the human body, passes through the inner heavens of the human soul and reaches to the highest form of God’s work in man. These stages can be systematized as following: the first step is the healing of the body (healing of diseases) and of the soul (the purification of passions): “... *let these be to healing of my soul and body*”⁷⁴; the second is the removal of everything that can enchant and urge man to return to his fallen life: “... unto the consumption and complete destruction of mine evil reasoning and intentions and prejudices and nocturnal phantasies of dark and evil spirits”⁷⁵; the third is the strengthening of the believer in the fulfilment (“guard”) of the divine commands; the fourth is the filling of the Christian’s life with divine joy and peace: “... Let this Eucharist be to me for joy, health and gladness”⁷⁶; the fifth is filling the soul and the body of the one who had Communion with light: “... *adorn me, wise me, and enlighten me*”⁷⁷; the sixth is the promise or advance of “the life and

tre Euharistie și iubirea creștină”, in: *Studii teologice*, XVII (1965) 1-2, pp. 3-32, in which the author cites abundantly from Saint Cyril of Alexandria on the same theme, emphasizing the ecclesiological aspect of the Holy Sacrifice and the “sacrificial and sacerdotal” aspect of the Church.

⁷³ See the work of drd. Dorel POGAN, “Semnificația eclesiologică a Sfintei Euharistii”, in: *Studii teologice*, XXV (1973) 7-8, pp. 534-545.

⁷⁴ Prayer I of St. BASIL THE GREAT, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri. Rugăciunile de mulțumire de după Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 364.

⁷⁵ Prayer X-a of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 368.

⁷⁶ Prayer IV of St. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri. Rugăciunile de mulțumire de după Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 370.

⁷⁷ Prayer III of St. SYMEON METAPHRASTES, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri. Rugăciunile de mulțumire de după Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 369.

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the Kingdom to come”⁷⁸, that is the pre-taste of the kingdom of God; the seventh is preparing for a good response to “*acceptable defence at Thy dread tribunal, not unto judgment or condemnation.*”⁷⁹; the eighth is the acquisition of “*dare*” to God and “*love*”⁸⁰; the ninth is “*the multiplication of virtue*” and the tendency to “*perfecting life*”; the tenth is the sanctification of life: “*...vouchsafe me to partake ... unto purification and sanctification*”⁸¹; the eleventh is the deification of the human being through “*...partake of Thy spotless and most holy Mysteries, by which all that eat and drink in purity of heart are quickened and deified*”⁸²; the twelfth is the complete move of the believer’s whole life and being to Christ, to “the” theological, heavenly and infinite existence”⁸³, a condition in which he will partake of Him “more perfectly ... in the un-ending Day” of his Kingdom.

In addition, these wonderful realities happen in the believer’s being through “the holiest of the Mysteries, the perfection or the peak of the Mysteries”, as Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite calls the Holy Communion⁸⁴.

IV. Conclusions

At the end of this attempt, some conclusions can be drawn to penetrate the meaning of one of the most read texts of the Orthodox worship, which are more a suggestion for all those who receive Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy:

⁷⁸ Prayer from the end of “Rânduieii Sfintei Împărtășiri. Rugăciunile înainte de Dumnezeiasca Împărtășire”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 366.

⁷⁹ Prayer VI of St. BASIL THE GREAT, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 359.

⁸⁰ Prayer VI of St. BASIL THE GREAT, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 358.

⁸¹ Prayer V of St. JOHN DAMASCENE, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 357.

⁸² Prayer VII of St. SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, from “Rânduiala Sfintei Împărtășiri”, in: *Liturghier*, 2012, p. 360.

⁸³ Preafericitul Părinte Patriarh DANIEL, “Învierea lui Hristos – lumina Sfintei Euharistii...”, in: *Făclii de Învier...*, p. 97.

⁸⁴ Apud. pr. prof. dr. Ene BRANIȘTE, *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii*, EIBMBOR, București, 1997, p. 261.

The ordinance for receiving the Holy Communion has in its structure a “Canon” which leads to the idea and necessity of an ascetic approach to this order, in order to approach the Holy Chalice. Not only has the reading of the text made possible the “permission” of the approach, but especially the understanding of the meanings and their interiorization and living. To be able to partake of Christ-Life, the Christian (and the holy servant!) must pray so deeply that prayer will get into his life and transform it.

The guides in this gradual and difficult process of detachment and sanctification of the human person coming to the Eucharist are the Mother of God and all the saints who have experienced Christ’s dwelling in their lives and their bodies: Theotokos as His Mother, and the saints as his “friends” and “small brothers”. Here we also mention the authors of Canon, who greatly lived in Christ. Through their lives in Christ, the saints urge us to communion and unity in the righteous faith, in prayer and in good deeds, directed toward the neighbour. Especially in times of division!

The coming of Christ within the being of the Christian means sealing the image of the Lord in him, like the seal on the prosphora, uniting him definitively, and making him a son of the God-Father, who recognizes him by his image, since the man who has Communion acquires a spiritual Christ-like face; this perfect union with Christ, which also transforms him ontologically, unites the Christian with the Father in the Holy Spirit;

The reception of Christ the Eucharist makes the Christian a partaker of the Sacrifice, Passion and Death of the Lord and the forerunner of His Resurrection - the advance of his own resurrection. For the one who receives it, Holy Communion is the “wheat grain” of his own resurrection in Christ. “The First Resurrection” is the withdrawal from sin that prefigures the “Great Resurrection” at the end of the ages.

At the same time, the union of Christians with Christ generates union, unity, and ecclesial communion. The blood of Christ is the blood of the great ecclesial body, which only lives in the Lord, and the Church is His own body, as He is the head. That is why communion has not only a mystical aspect but also usage in the life and practice of the Church. Those who have Communion and are “Christophoros” share the Lord with the poor, needy, and grievous, and show Him to unbelievers, in order to find Him in them.

The “Chronotop” of these works is the Divine Liturgy. In its space, Christ sacrifices Himself and gives Himself to all: “Take! Eat! This is My

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Body ...Drink of it, all of you! This is My Blood ...In the fear of God, and with faith draw near!”

Although the Eucharist is the maximum that the Christian can receive in the flesh from the Christ God, it is an anticipation of the great, above the consciousness and mind, and of the mysterious Communion that each of us will experience “more true” beyond, “on the day without ending” of the Kingdom of God.