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The Holy Communion over Time - Short Liturgical Presentation-

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Abstract

Today's problems, which are not very different from those of any other period, more or less difficult in the life of the Church, should not be of particular concern to us, in the sense that it is not an absolute priority, but rather we should care how to remain completely faithful to the Tradition of our Church in such circumstances.

Keywords

Eucharist, ordinance, teaspoon, tradition, actuality, canons, reform

I. General Presentation

The current situation we are going through is a unique one due to the rigors imposed in society, and our Church is forced to **temporarily** "rethink" some of its liturgical practices, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to render the dogmatic meanings most appropriate to these practices, because the cult in its entirety, as a lived expression of the dogma, maintains "close, lasting and unbroken connection with the past, evolving strictly along the lines of a healthy tradition"¹.

¹ Fr. Prof. PhD. E. BRANIȘTE, Archim. Prof. Ghenadie NIȚOIU and Fr. Prof. Gheorghe NEDA, *Liturgica Teoretică. Manual pentru Seminariile Teologice*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1984², p. 22.

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Being aware, therefore, of these challenges, the Church is obliged to approach these measures wisely, with the utmost care and in-depth, following the example of the Savior (“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”, Matt 10, 16), having experienced many “epidemics” and much more serious humanitarian catastrophes², but also the ability to manage responsibly such situations.

Undoubtedly, every crisis that came and went over the Church had serious consequences and left deep “wounds” and significant changes in its bosom, but nevertheless, the Church never ceased to be a “Church of Tradition”. It would be wise to show the same caution and wisdom during this time of crisis, in the sense that it should allow this “epidemic” (and its problems) to pass, which anyway will pass sooner or later, with the comfort the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Come, my people, enter you in to your chambers, and shut your doors about you: hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isaiah 26, 20).

Speaking about the most serious crisis that the Orthodox Church went through (the iconoclastic crisis), Fr. Prof. Robert Taft († 2018) would define in just a few phrases the position that the Church had then, an attitude that should inspire us too:

“What do we know about the liturgy during this period of decline? As for the liturgical rites, this was a period of continuity. The rite of the Great Church continued to be celebrated, albeit in more tense circumstances. However, it was also a period of consolidation and regrouping, forced by the decrease of public and municipal activity, a period of realignment in response to iconoclasm”³.

In other words, we would like to point out that the reason for this analysis is to see how some rites have evolved, the liturgical practice itself, but especially the way in which the Church, to the detriment of these changes, has remained completely faithful to the Apostolic Tradition.

² R. F. TAFT, *Ritul bizantin-scurtă istorie*, translated from English by Dumitru Vanca and Alin Mehes, Reîntregirea Publishing, Alba Iulia, 2008, pp. 50, 51.

³ R. F. TAFT, *Ritul bizantin*, p. 52.

We consider that for a well-founded wording of this presentation, we cannot ignore two of the fundamental principles of the evolution of liturgical rites, repeatedly stated by the great liturgist of our times, Fr. Prof. Robert Taft (mentioned above), causes that we will refer to punctually during the presentation:

- “The church is never run according to a retrospective ideology. The past is always instructive, but never normative”⁴;
- “The practice [liturgical, o.n] is not determined by the past, but by Tradition [Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus traditur est, o.n.]⁵, which includes not only the past and the present, but the theological reflection on both”⁶.

However, as regards the nature of the measures to be taken, things are indeed very delicate and do not fall within the limits of this analysis, although there are some observations:

a) these measures will be **exceptional**, due to the rigors imposed in society (rules that “contradict” and “disagree with”, on the one hand, our teaching of faith, and on the other, the liturgical practice, both inscribed on the line of the Tradition of our Church); therefore, it is necessary (required), adopting and applying these measures, **to remain** as close as possible to the traditional liturgical practice of our Church and to the teaching of faith (dogmatic);

b) the liturgical practice to be adopted or any other way (solution) to be only for this period of crisis and **not permanent**;

c) The Holy Eucharist **is given** to the faithful and is not taken⁷, although there have been some exceptional practices (some recorded, others known by older priests), which we will indicate later;

d) to try **not to diminish** in any way the faith in the power of the divine Eucharist, which has healing power over diseases and passions (“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching

⁴ R. F. TAFT, *A partire dalla liturgia. Perché è la liturgia che fa la Chiesa*, Edizioni Lipa, Rome, 2004, p. 25.

⁵ According to https://ro.orthodoxwiki.org/Sfânta_Tradiție (accessed on 02.05.2020).

⁶ R. F. TAFT, *Oltrel'oriente e l'occidente. Per una tradizione liturgica viva*, Edizioni Lipa, Rome, 1999, p. 12.

⁷ This topic was discussed in detail in R. F. TAFT, *Oltrel'oriente e l'occidente...*, pp. 141-151.

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the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of diseases among the people”; Matt 4, 23; 9, 35), nor by the adopted measures neither by a ruthless explanation or revelation of the Mysteries of our faith, such as those performed on the Holy Table (“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”; Matt 7, 6):

“Uttering these words of the Seraphim⁸ after the communion with the Holy Eucharist, the priest expresses his faith in the saving power of the Holy Mystery of Eucharist, for it cleanses the soul from sins and enlightens it in this way, just as the metal is cleansed by the heat of the coals in fire. This saving work of the Holy Mystery of Eucharist on the soul is also pronounced in the prayers before the Holy Communion, namely in the 5th ode of the canon of this ordinance and in the 2nd prayer of this ordinance”⁹; “The Mystery of the Holy Communion must remain on the altar. Its public discussion, except for the desire to glorify Christ and reveal His great love, is inappropriate”¹⁰.

e) **let us not in the least harm** the secretive character of the communion of the Holy Eucharist:

“...and the lay Christians, sharing the body and blood of the Savior in front of the Holy Doors and together, means the body of Christ reddened with blood on the cross”¹¹;
“Through this ritual [of the Communion, o.n.], the group of believers enters into communion, each of them becoming part

⁸ “He has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged”, Isaiah 6, 7.

⁹ V. MITROFANOVICI and Teodor TARNAVSCHI, *Prelegeri academice despre Liturgica Bisericei Dreptcredincioase Răsăritene*, Societatea Tipografică Bucovineană, Chernovtsy, 1909, pp. 534-535.

¹⁰ Fr. Savatie BAȘTOVOI, “A teaspoon soaked in the Blood of the Lord is no longer a household item good to be put in the dishwasher, but a liturgical object that must remain on the altar”, acc. <https://www.producemanastiresti.ro/blog/articole-duhovnicesti/oligurita-inmuiata-in-singele-domnului-nu-mai-este-un-obiect-casnic> (accessed on 02.05.2020).

¹¹ C. VENIAMIN, *Novaea Skrijalā*, 1870, p. 260, cf. V. MITROFANOVICI and Teodor TARNAVSCHI, *Prelegeri academice...*, p. 535.

of the whole ritual fragment, reconstituting a mystical body formed exactly from them. Believers thus became closer than a family..."¹².

f) **let us not** in any way **instill doubt** in the souls of the faithful already tried and tense by this crisis;

g) any decision to be taken should take into account the principle enunciated by the great canonist of the Eastern Church, Teodor Balsamon (sec. XII)¹³, quoted by Fr. Prof. P. Vintilescu precisely in the context in which he talks about sharing **“the Holy Eucharist to the lay faithful”**, that is, as **“he preached the righteous faith, the fear of God, and true godliness”**¹⁴, or as Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite says († 1809), **“in any way, one could, without harm and canonically”**¹⁵.

II. Punctual Presentation from a Historical Perspective

Returning to the historical presentation of the practice of the Holy Eucharist in the Orthodox Church over time, we would like to mention first a conclusive and noteworthy aspect, namely that today's problems, which are not very different from those of any other period, more or less difficult in the life of the Church, should not be of particular concern to us, in the sense that it is not an absolute priority, but rather we should care how to remain completely faithful to the Tradition of our Church in such circumstances¹⁶.

According to liturgical sources and specialized studies written on the subject of the sharing the Holy Eucharist to believers (works that we will

¹² Petre GURAN, *Lingurița, ultima redută*, cf. <https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/din-polul-plus/articol/lingurita-ultima-reduta> (accessed on 02.05.2020).

¹³ This is a commentary on Canon 101 of the Trullan Synod (692), according to Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe - insoțite de comentarii*, Volume I, 2nd part (*Canoanele Sinoadelor Ecumenice*), translation by Uroș Kovincici and Nicolae Popovici, Diocesan Printing House, Arad, 1931, p. 487.

¹⁴ Fr. Prof. P. VINTILESCU, *Liturghierul Explicat*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1998, p. 326, note 992.

¹⁵ NEOPHITUS, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Pidalion (Cârma Bisericii Ortodoxe)*, “Credința strămoșască” Publishing, Iași, 2004, p. 262, note 205.

¹⁶ See also R. F. TAFT, *A partire dalla liturgia...*, p. 381.

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list later), but not only¹⁷, in the Orthodox Church we encounter over time only two general practices regarding the sharing of the Holy Eucharist to the “inferior clergy and laity”¹⁸, all others being special customs, such as the sharing the Holy Eucharist to the sick, children, etc.

Before presenting these customs, we consider it opportune, if not really necessary, to reproduce in full the commentary (note) of Saint Nikodemus the Aghiorite from *Pidalion*, on how to share the Holy Eucharist to the faithful during an epidemic, given, on the one hand, the current context, and on the other hand, the fact that most Orthodox liturgists refer to this clarification today, but no one presents it in full:

“Therefore, both priests and bishops must, in time of plague, find a way to share the Holy Eucharist to the sick, to not violate this Canon, putting the Holy Body in a wrong place, but in some Holy vessel, and from there to give it to caretakers, or the sick, with the teaspoon. Then the vessel with the teaspoon should be placed in vinegar, and the vinegar should be poured where the priests wash themselves after the Holy Liturgy, or in any way they could, more harmless and canonical”¹⁹.

It should also be noted that the intention of this analysis is not to discover a so-called “original” tradition or practice of the way of sharing the Holy Eucharist to believers in the Orthodox Church, this being in vain, because such a practice does not exist²⁰, but it is tried only diachronically rendering the practice of sharing the Holy Eucharist to the lay faithful in the Orthodox Church, being presented at the same time, the causes that led to the generalization of one or another of these practices, but also the way in which the former got out of use, not too early though.

To facilitate an easier understanding of realities we thought to render the entire content of the analysis on three levels, namely: a) **the premises that led to the emergence of the practice**, if they are known; b) **the**

¹⁷ Many of the clues are also found on the subject of the teaspoon as a liturgical object.

¹⁸ Badea CIREȘEANU, *Tezaurul Liturgic al Sfintei Biserici Creștine Ortodoxe de Răsărit*, volume II (General Liturgical Study) with 112 illustrations, “Gutenberg” Printing, Joseph Göbl S-sori, Bucharest, 1911, p. 445.

¹⁹ This is a commentary on Canon 28 of the Trullan Synod (692), according to NEOPHITUS, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Pidalion*, p. 262, note 205.

²⁰ See R. F. TAFT, *Oltrel'oriente e l'occidente...*, p. 49.

practice itself (with some peculiarities) and its evolution over time; c) the causes that led to the obsolescence of the primary practice and some of the “adjacent” practices.

1.the ancient practice of sharing the Holy Eucharist to people in the same way as the clergy, a custom that dates back to the twelfth century

a) the premises that led to the emergence of the practice:

“And the fact that the servants of the divine sacrament share the Holy Eucharist within the altar first with the body and then with the blood of the Savior, and the lay believers with the body and blood of the Savior at once and outside the altar are explained as follows: Christ gave his disciples at the Last Supper in the form of bread first His body and then in the form of wine also His blood; and He showed the people His body and His blood, which flowed from Him. Therefore, receiving the holy servants on the altar, the body of Christ and His blood, they imagine the disciples of Christ, who thus received these sacraments and took them; and secular Christians, sharing the body and blood of the Savior in front of the Holy doors and together, means the body of Christ reddened with blood on the cross”²¹.

“And as for the fact that in the time of Valsamon (so in the twelfth century) the laity shared the Holy Eucharist as priests do today, right in the mouth, and not as shown in the present canon [101 Trulan, o.n.], Valsamon observes that this is not done because the laity would not be worthy, but because in this way he taught the right faith, the fear of God, and true godliness”²².

b) the practice itself (with some peculiarities) and its evolution over time:

“In ancient times believers received the body of Christ, watered with holy blood in their hands; or the body of Christ was received

²¹ V. MITROFANOVICI and Teodor TARNAVSCHI, *Prelegeri academice...* p. 535. See also Fr. Prof. P. VINTILESCU, *Liturgierul Explicat*, p. 325.

²² Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe - insoțite de comentarii*, Vol. I, Partea II (*Canoanele Sinoadelor Ecumenice*), p. 487.

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by the faithful in their hands, and then they drank the blood from the chalice²³;

“Initially the priest put/gave the holy body in the hands of the believer who ate it and the deacon handed him the chalice²⁴. So they all shared the Holy Eucharist as deacons or clergy priests share it today if it is a hierarchical liturgy²⁵;

“Because we know that the Holy Eucharist was given to the people in the way that priests or, especially, deacons receive it today-that is, the priest gave the Holy Body to the faithful in his right hand and, after consuming it, he offered them the Holy Chalice and they drank directly from it...²⁶;

“The reception of the holy body in the hand and the communion from the Holy Chalice remained today a privilege only of the clergy (...)The ancient practice of sharing the Holy Eucharist to the people in the same way as the clergy is attested by documents throughout the first seven centuries²⁷;

“In all the local Christian Churches of the first six or seven centuries, the use of the teaspoon is unknown. The communion of the laity was done then as it is done until today the communion of the clergy: in some parts they were given by the priest the Holy Body in the right palm, crossed over the left palm, then the Holy Blood was drunk directly from the Holy Chalice, offered by the deacon. Elsewhere, the Holy Body was given to the faithful in the palm of their hands, being already soaked with the Holy Blood, so that the Holy Chalice was no longer offered to the laity, as is still the case with Armenians²⁸. Even

²³ V. MITROFANOVICI and Teodor TARNAVSCHI, *Prelegeri academice...*, p. 226.

²⁴ See also P. VINTILESCU, *Liturghierul Explicat*, p. 326.

²⁵ I. M. ΦΟΥΝΤΟΥΛΗΣ, *ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΚΗ Α΄: ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ ΣΤΗ ΘΕΙΑ ΛΑΤΡΕΙΑ*, ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ, 1993, p. 48

²⁶ Prof. PhD. Ioannis FOUNDOULIS, *Dialoguri liturgice. Răspunsuri la probleme liturgice, vol. I (1-150)*, translation by Fr. Victor Manolache, Bizantină Publishing, Bucharest, 2008, p. 191.

²⁷ Fr. Prof. P. VINTILESCU, *Liturghiile Bizantine privite istoric în structura și rânduiala lor*, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, Bucharest, 1943, p. 116.

²⁸ See also Archim. Zareh BARONIAN, *Cuvânt despre Liturghia Bisericii Armene și Liturghiile răsăritene*, Eikon, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, pp. 169-170. A similar practice is found in Roman Catholics; see Edvárd KAJTÁR, “L’evoluzione della liturgia della comunione, dai primi secoli, fino ai nostri giorni”, in: *Congiunge, non separa! Convegno Eucaristico Scientifico. Esztergom 27-29 novembre 2018*, [s.n.], 2019, p. 160: “Alla

St. John Chrysostom, in his homilies, lets us understand that in his time the same way of sharing the Holy Eucharist to the laity was in force, giving them the Holy Body in the palm of their hands. Towards the end of the seventh century, the Trullan Synod (Quinisext, 692), in canon 101, seeks to maintain the old usage, condemning those who, «instead of the hand, prepare certain vessels of gold, or other material, for the reception of the divine gift...»²⁹. Even in the eighth century, St. John of Damascus recommended that, «crossing the palms, we should receive the body of the Crucified». At the same time, Patriarch German of Constantinople also talks about λαβίς, but here the term does not indicate the instrument called *teaspoon* today, but the tongs formed by the fingers of the priest's hand holding the body of Christ, «the divine coal», offering it to believers for the cleansing of their sins”³⁰;

“We have clear historical-liturgical and archeological testimonies which show that in the first Christian centuries the teaspoon was not used in worship, because the sharing of the Holy Eucharist to the laity was done in a similar way to that of the clergy: the priest gave the Holy Body into the hands of each believer and the believer took it himself, and the deacon held the Holy Chalice and each one approached and sipped from the Chalice, as the clergy do today. Elsewhere, the Holy Body already soaked in the Holy Blood was given to the faithful directly in the mouth and less often in the palm of the hands, so that the Chalice was no longer offered to the laity, as is the case with Armenians today. However, it is not known how long this practice lasted, because the information is confusing and sometimes controversial”³¹.

comunione sotto le due specie il regolamento romano attuale offre due soluzioni: o i fedeli bevono dal calice oppure il sacerdote immerge il santo corpo nel santo sangue e così lo prge ai fedeli”.

²⁹ See also Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe - insoțite de comentarii*, Vol. I, Partea II, p. 487.

³⁰ Fr. Prof. PhD. E. BRANIȘTE, *Liturgica Generală cu noțiuni de Artă bisericească, Arhitectură și pictură creștină*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1993² pp. 595-596.

³¹ Hieromonk Petru PRUTEANU, *Liturgia ortodoxă: istorie și actualitate*, Σοφία Publishing, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 364-365.

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c) *the causes that led to the obsolescence of the primary practice and some of the “adjacent” practices:*

“«During this synod» [Trulan, 692, o.n.], – says Valsamon in the commentary on this canon [101, o.n.], – «some of the rich people, despising the poor, prepared pots (*δοχεῖα*) of gold or something similar and under the pretext of godliness and fear of God instead of hand, these vessels were used to receive the purest body of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ at the time of the Holy Eucharist. It may be that at first some did this out of piety, believing that the hand that touches some inappropriate and unworthy things is not worthy to touch the body of Christ. Over time, however, this piety changed to the detriment of the soul, because those who did this showed their superiority and their vanity over the poor. And because the Fathers of this synod found this to be the motive of many fools, they issued the present canon»³²;

“It is justified [the use of the teaspoon, o.n.] by the fact that, often, by sharing the Holy Eucharist to the laity in the same way as with the clergy, it happened that, from the negligence of the ministering clergy or of the faithful who took it, fragments of the Holy Body or drops of the Holy Blood to fall on the ground; or, what was even worse, some of the believers kept the Holy Body which was given to them in the palm of their hands, or a part of it, for use outside, for unpius purposes, or to give it to those unworthy of the Holy Sacraments. But by putting It in the teaspoon, both the Holy Body and the Holy Blood, which is immediately consumed by those who receive It, such shortcomings are avoided”³³;

“Initially the priest put/gave the holy body in the hands of the believer who ate it and the deacon handed him the chalice³⁴. So they all shared the Holy Eucharist as deacons or clergy priests share it today if it is a hierarchical liturgy. This took a long time,

³² Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe - insoțite de comentarii*, Vol. I, Partea II, p. 487.

³³ E. BRANIȘTE, *Liturgica Generală...*, pp. 596-597.

³⁴ See also P. VINTILESCU, *Liturghierul Explicat*, p. 326.

presented dangers, especially sharing the Holy Eucharist directly from the Chalice, and it would not have been possible to be done only by the priest³⁵;

“It seems, however, that in the eighth century, through the area of Antioch, it was considered appropriate to introduce the teaspoon, to avoid a possible desecration of the Holy Sacraments, which could happen due to the negligence of lay people and servants. There were cases when some of the lay believers secretly took the Holy Body to their friends or relatives stopped from the Holy Eucharist or, what was even worse, used the Holy Body for petty purposes³⁶.”

2. the current practice of sharing the Holy Eucharist to the people with the teaspoon, a custom that dates back to the fourth century

a) the premises that led to the emergence of the practice:

“Unlike the clergy, who, as we have seen, take the Holy Eucharist, separately, first the Body of the Lord in hand and then His precious Blood from the Chalice, the laity are shared with both at once, with the help of the teaspoon. To motivate these special practices, an explanation was sought by analogy with the fact that, at the Last Supper, the Holy Apostles received from the Savior first His Body in the form of bread and then the Holy Blood in the form of wine, while the people saw on the cross, together, both the Body and the Blood that flowed from Him³⁷”; “Receiving the holy body in the hands and the sharing of the Holy Eucharist from the Holy Chalice remained today a privilege only of the clergy, the people being shared with the teaspoon. When and by whom this custom was inaugurated cannot be established. The ancient practice of sharing the Holy Eucharist to the people in the same way as the clergy is attested by documents throughout the first seven centuries. It seems, however, that by the end of the eighth century the teaspoon for

³⁵ I. M. ΦΟΥΝΤΟΥΛΗΣ, *ΑΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΚΗ Α'*..., pp. 48-49.

³⁶ Hieromonk Petru PRUTEANU, *Liturghia ortodoxă*..., p. 367.

³⁷ Fr. Prof. P. VINTILESCU, *Liturghierul Explicat*, p. 325.

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the Holy Eucharist had appeared in the church of Syria”³⁸;

“In any case, the introduction of the teaspoon into the ritual of the Holy Eucharist must be correlated on the one hand with the inauguration of the ceremony of union or mixing of the Holy Sacraments in the Holy Chalice, and on the other with the Church’s concern to remove the cases of profanation of the Holy Eucharist by receiving it in unclean hands for superstitious purposes”³⁹.

b) the practice itself (with some peculiarities) and its evolution over time:

“This liturgical odor [the teaspoon, o.n.] is believed to have been introduced into the altar by John Chrysostom...”⁴⁰;

“For the same purpose, the teaspoon is also used in the liturgical rites of some of the non-Chalcedonian Eastern Churches, namely: the Copts (Orthodox and United), the Ethiopians and the Western Syrians (Jacobites)⁴¹. From this, some older liturgists deduced that the use of the teaspoon in the Byzantine Eucharistic rite dates back to before the Fourth Ecumenical Synod (Chalcedon, 451), believing that the above non-Chalcedonian Churches had it before their separation from Constantinople and that it, according to a 14th-century historian Nichifor Calist, was introduced by St. John Chrysostom”⁴²; “We have the first clear testimony about the use of the teaspoon for sharing the Holy Eucharist to the laity from Anastasius Sinaita († after the year 700), but this is a local tradition, about which it is not known to what extent it was widespread, as we can see from the above. We have another testimony from the liturgical commentary of Pseudo-Sophronius of Jerusalem (11th-12th centuries) (...) In conclusion, we can say that the teaspoon appeared between the 8th-9th centuries, first

³⁸ Fr. Prof. P. VINTILESCU, *Liturghiile Bizantine...*, p. 116.

³⁹ Fr. Prof. P. VINTILESCU, *Liturghiile Bizantine...*, p. 116.

⁴⁰ Badea CIREȘEANU, *Tezaurul Liturgic ...*, p. 445

⁴¹ See also Hieromonk Petru PRUTEANU, *Liturghia ortodoxă...*, p. 368 and Archim. Zareh BARONIAN, *Cuvânt despre Liturghia Bisericii Armene și Liturghiile răsăritene*, pp. 232-233 (contains a detailed presentation).

⁴² E. BRANIȘTE, *Liturgica Generală...*, p. 595.

in Antioch and Jerusalem, and then it became widespread, in the 11th-12th centuries, throughout the Eastern Orthodox, being borrowed even by some non-Chalcedonian rites”⁴³;

“In ancient times the faithful received the Holy Body of Christ, soaked with the Holy Blood in their hand; or the Holy Body of Christ was received by the faithful in their hand, and the Holy Blood was drunk from the Holy Chalice. Later the sharing of the Holy Eucharist with the teaspoon was introduced, but when and by whom it was introduced it cannot be ascertained from history with precision”⁴⁴;

“John of Damascus (De fide, lib. 4, chap. 17), German in his *Mystagogy*, as well as Balsamon in the commentary on canon 101 of the VI ecumenical synod, speak abundantly of the use of the teaspoon in the Eucharistic communion”⁴⁵;

“But as at the end of this short treatise [*Despre Dumnezeiasca Liturgie*, opusculă attributed to St. John the Faster, the patriarch of Constantinople († 595), o.n.], we speak of the communion with the teaspoon (λαβίς) -use that became widespread in the Byzantine liturgical rite only after the Trullan Synod (692), so at least a century after St. John the Faster...”⁴⁶;

“The teaspoon, which is used to offer the Holy Eucharist to the faithful in both forms [Body and Blood, o.n.] at the same time”⁴⁷. It was initially introduced for the sharing of the Holy Eucharist to the sick and infants and later became widespread for practical reasons⁴⁸, obviously, when it began out of the need for the priest to serve alone without a deacon”⁴⁹.

⁴³ Hieromonk Petru PRUTEANU, *Liturgia ortodoxă...*, pp. 367-368.

⁴⁴ V. MITROFANOVICI and Teodor TARNAVSCHI, *Prelegeri academice*, p. 226.

⁴⁵ Badea CIREȘEANU, *Tezaurul Liturgic...*, p. 445.

⁴⁶ Fr. Prof. PhD. E. Braniște, *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii după Nicolae Cabasila*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1997, p. 144.

⁴⁷ See also Prof. PhD. Ioannis FOUNDOULIS, *Dialoguri liturgice. Răspunsuri la probleme liturgice*, vol. II (151-300), translation by Lector PhD. Sabin Preda, Bizantină Publishing, Bucharest, 2009, p. 85.

⁴⁸ See also Ioannis FOUNDOULIS, *Dialoguri liturgice...*, vol. I, pp. 191, 196.

⁴⁹ I. M. ΦΟΥΝΤΟΥΛΗΣ, *ΑΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΚΗ Α'...*, p. 48.

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c) causes that led to heated discussions and controversy over the use of the teaspoon:

“We also point out the newer custom of some autocephalous Orthodox Churches to use several teaspoons, successively sterilized, for the communion of the faithful, due to the refusal of some to share the Holy Eucharist with the common teaspoon, a custom that gave rise, both in the Church of Greece and in the Romanian Church, to some heated controversies and discussions”⁵⁰.

III. Conclusions

At the end of this brief presentation, we would like to point out that there are other details, more or less significant, that can always complete a “total” look at this topic, but a thorough research requires additional time for study and work.

In conclusion, we would like to add that the purpose of the historian, be he a liturgist, is to put aside the obstacles to a fair understanding of the Church’s treasury (liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, etc.), inherited and preserved by Tradition. Therefore, he cannot tell the Church what to do. So he can’t tell the Church what to do, he can just help it see what it could do, of course, if those who are entitled to do so will think they can do it.

⁵⁰ E. BRANIȘTE, *Liturgica Generală...*, p. 597.