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Cult, Liturgy and “Trinitarian Culture” as mirrored in Father Dumitru Stăniloae’s Vision

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to outline the relationship between cult, in general, and the Holy Liturgy, mainly, and how these realities have influenced the spiritual and historical lution of the Romanian people, aspects also contained by the work of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. Thus, as a complete model of love and ion, the Holy Trinity has been continuously revealed in the orthodox ritualic act while it has integrated each Christian in a spiritual and dialogic dimension, meant to describe the process of the iconic becoming in God. In this respect, each Holy Sacrament, especially the Holy Eucharist, integrated into the Holy Liturgy’s service, brings the consecrating grace of the Holy Trinity as the expression of



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Christ's gifts. Therefore, by communing with the Eucharistic Christ, Christians have always kept alive the consciousness of his participation to the life in God, manifesting as personal attributes the love and sacrifice as guides in acquiring and keeping the unity of the Romanian people.

Keywords

Holy Liturgy, Cult, Holy Trinity, Holy Sacrament, Unity, Virtue

1 Introduction

Father Dumitru Stăniloae, born in Transilvania, through his representative and extensive writings has become one of the most important reference sources of the international Theology, living in this way the complete communion with other great and well-known theologians from different Christian spaces, a peculiar state surprised through the light of the Holy Trinity which became the essence of his teaching, the unique model of togetherness and love.

In the same time, always aware of the idea that redemption cannot be achieved in another way rather than through the communion with the Holy Trinity, Father Dumitru Stăniloae has dedicated hundreds of pages in his work precisely to this authentic encounter between God and man, creating a true synthesis of dogmatic theology where the Bible and the consecrating dimension of the Orthodox patristic remain the main structure of a way of being "imprinted by the Holy Spirit".

Believing that human life can be only fulfilled through Christ, as an endless act of completion, Father Stăniloae underlines in a very particular manner the spiritual significance of dogmas. He has expressed them as realities of the Christian's soul, in this way offering the image of the experience with God as a supreme state of communion.

Father Stăniloae configured the dialogic state between the Christians and the Holy Trinity and this state originates in Christ's existence as a man born by Virgin Mary – the primary condition for *theosis*. His principles are filtered through the teaching of the Holy Fathers which help the human soul to quench his thirst for sanctification/consecration immensely affected by contemporaneity. In this regard, the Romanian professor's vision has responded to Christians' spiritual needs by permanently adjusting the message of his work to the cultural structure of the present, without leaving the dogmatic space or the Orthodox and ecclesial one. In other words, he ultimately combined the Patristics – an always living evidence of the *pneumatic* experience the Holy Fathers of the Church have had, with the biblical *Λόγος*. He managed to offer these two fields not only to his time's knowledge but to ours, as well, as a source of ennoblement through the cultural praxis' grace.

This aspect became possible as a consequence of his constant awareness that praying had an eternal meaning, in this way, combining the Christian values with the cultural ones.

By previously understanding that only through the Church and Its cult the practical-spiritual dimension of dogma can be surprised and by assuming the Holy Liturgy as the center and the living heart of the Christian Orthodox cult, Father Dumitru Stăniloae captures in his work the perfect image of the consecrating power of the Eucharist where the perfect communion between God and man can be achieved. "The Bread of Life"¹ becomes the gift of togetherness among people² as an expression of love for God and all people³.

¹ John, 6:51.

² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2004, p. 9: "We are getting used to these during the Holy Liturgy: our transcendence or our arising over the selfish and material interests which bound us to the world and our communion with Christ through our sacrifice, and through Him, with our Father in the Holy Spirit. Also, by gathering around in the Holy

Starting from this experience, knowing the transfiguring power of the Holy Sacraments and mainly of the Holy Liturgy, Romanian dogmatism gathered an impressive amount of studies meant to emphasize the Romanian *ethos'* profile – the one which, after assimilating the eucharistic sacrifice, manifests its purpose of unity while writing its history – mainly these two moments: January 24th, 1859 and December 1st, 1918, among countless others, when the Romanian Orthodox faith was sorely tested. Every victory was possible under the consecrating grace of the Church, where the archetypal image of love and communion reciprocally manifested between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit get expressed in their entire plenitude.

Thus, taking into consideration all these aspects, we intend to host in our study the factual reasons of the already mentioned ideas, as seen in Father Dumitru Stăniloae's work, not before stating that the whole writing of this Romanian priest and professor has become a real *charisma*, reference mark of Romanian culture and universal theology, as well.

2 The Holy Trinity as Paradigm of Faultlessness and Unity through Love

Considered by Father Dumitru Stăniloae, according to the Tradition's treaties, as "structure of the Supreme Love," the Holy

Trinity's togetherness we reinforce the togetherness among us", p. 9; *Ibidem*, p. 8: "The Orthodox Liturgy feeds the spiritual communion among Christians."

³ *Ibidem*, p. 32: "The real communion of all of us in the One Who is giving and Who is the spring of all things is fulfilled through love. And this love is seen in all the grace is being given. We must answer to God's gift and love in the same manner. But our gift is His and we return it to Him through our love and commitment. This love must be shared among us through the same gifts we manifest towards the others from the ones God has given to us."

Trinity – Father and Son and Holy Spirit – represents for each of us the archetypal dimension of the existence.

Regarding the Holy Trinity, one of the most excellent teachers of our Church, Saint John of Damascus⁴ appreciated that we "have faith in our Father, Who is the principle and the cause (τὸ αἴτιον) of all things"⁵, we believe in "the Son of God, Who was born, our Lord, Jesus Christ"⁶ – τὸ αἴτιατον – and we also believe in „the Holy Spirit, our Lord of life, Who comes from the Father and Who rests in the Son, together worshipped with Them, as they have the same essence, equally eternal"⁷ – the faultlessness (τὸ τέλειον) of the divine existence, One God Who is „the cause of all goodness and Who knows all things before they came into presence"⁸.

In this respect, a first detail which explains the Holy Trinity's thoroughness is God's plenitude, which exists through itself⁹, an aspect which must be understood as all the knowledge achieved by man about existence and beyond it while nothing superior to the Holy Trinity does exist. The constant thorough existence of God described by a conscious gladness of it, but also by the lack of any other existential details upon which it should depend; without this attribute, the divine existence can be tainted at ease.

This immensely and always self-aware joy of God can be felt by the human being, even if at a secondary and limited level, but in

⁴ Saint John of Damascus, *Dogmatica*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 26: "The Holy Trinity is the light Herself, the kindness HERSelf, the life Herself, the being Herself because She does contain the existence of something belonging to someone else. It is the source for everything, for the life for the living, for the reason of those who share it and the cause of all goodness for all people".

⁵ Ibidem, p. 27.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 32.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 26.

⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu. Opere complete V*, Basilica Press, Bucharest, 2013, p. 434.

this way the man is more conscious about his existence and knowledge, both found under the immediate influence of the Holy Trinity¹⁰.

At the same time, God's state of thoroughness is wholly based on the existence of the mutual love manifested by the three Persons. According to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, God's kindness is the same as His love (ἡ ἀγάπη), meaning that "this goodness is praised by the Saints Who are God speakers as beautiful and as beautiful, as love and as loved."

Through this faultless love, which is manifested among the Persons of the Holy Trinity, love which is also the main reason why the entire creation was brought to life, God embraces His creation, and He calls it to rise and to reach Him in this process of faultlessness.

Without "the existence of the true and eternal love we cannot explain the love among people, nor the purpose of this world can be seen," as God is "the mystery of the interpersonal and perfect love."¹¹

When referring to God, Saint Gregory of Palamas concluded that only the plurality of Persons determines His existence. A monoperpersonal God could manifest His love only towards Himself, and not towards other persons. In this respect, according to the same authority, "there is one God thorough-paced in three true and unalloyed Hypostases without being threefold, but simple. Neither good nor the Trinity is threefold, as the greatest goodness is a Holy Trinity"¹². "The same outpouring of love among equal Persons"¹³ can always be found in God.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 436: "Regarding human consciousness, even what is known for it does not belong to it. Neither all the functions of the body which define the human being".

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² *O sută cincizeci de capete despre cunoștința naturală, despre cunoașterea lui Dumnezeu, despre viața morală și despre făptuire*, cap. 37, in *Filocalia*, VII, IBMO Press, Bucharest, 2013, p. 528.

¹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu. Opere complete V*, Basilica Press, Bucharest, 2013, p. 445.

"The divine hypostases are transparent One to Another and through the interiority of the faultless love" for, according to our Tradition, They can be similar to "three extra-luminous and ultra-translucent suns which contain and shove themselves in reciprocity as the bearers of the same infinite and complete light."¹⁴

The mutual inclusion and the rest of each Hypostasis in the Other two are the effects of what Saint John of Damascus¹⁵ called "perichoresis," defined as a state of "coalescence and reciprocal transparency"¹⁶ or "mutual habitation"¹⁷.

Together with Saint John of Damascus, the perichoretic state of the Holy Trinity is also studied with the same level of theological thoroughness by Saint Maximus the Confessor, who affirmed that "the Father is undiminished in the Son and the Holy Spirit thoroughly; and undiminished is the Holy Spirit through the Father and the Son, thoroughly. Hence, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. As the same is the being, the power and the work of the Father and the Son and the Holy

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Saint John of Damascus, *Dogmatica*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 49: "The hypostases live and settle One in the Others, as They are undivided and unsecluded, and Their coalescence is unaltered, not because They might contract or interfuse, but because They are united among Them: the Son is in the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is in the Father and the Son, and the Father is in the Son and the Holy Spirit, without being mistaken One for Another, without being mingled or syncopated".

¹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 1st vol., p. 306.

¹⁷ Daniel Munteanu, *Dumnezeu-Tatăl-izvorul iubirii și al vieții veșnice. Impulsuri trinitare pentru o cultură a păcii și a comunicării vindecătoare*, in *Dumnezeu Tatăl și viața Preasfintei Treimi*, coordinated by Father Professor Ștefan Buchiu, Father Assistant Professor Sorin Șelaru, Trinitas Press, Bucharest, 2010, p. 124; Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor. Jesus Christ and the transfiguration of the world*, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 146-156.

Spirit, without existing and considered One in the absence of the Others”¹⁸.

As the main reason is love, the Persons of the Holy Trinity become the quarry of the absolute faultlessness, a state which implies a multiple emergence in mutuality, in this way justifying and defining the plenitude of God’s existence as “He is kind and loving not only because there is a Father and a Son Who love Each Other, but also because Each communicates His love’s joy to a third One”, reality which also becomes “the experience man as God’s icon.”¹⁹

The man’s communion with the life of the Holy Trinity in a state of togetherness through grace is possible as a consequence of the fact that each human being was created in ‘His likeness, in this way our “God’s knowingness being engrafted naturally inside our souls.”²⁰

The love shared in complete mutuality by the holy Persons becomes the ambiance of our human faultlessness while giving our existence its purpose – by offering his love to God as his most precious gift, the man should be able to identify himself with the eternity’s light. Only “through the love and plenitude of the supreme Persons the conscious beings can find their rest; by their dynamism, they transcend the created and the finite beings, including themselves.”²¹

This love, which exists in the Holy Trinity and is shared with man, explains the communion among people²², but also the

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 125.

¹⁹ Saint John of Damascus, *Dogmatica*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 18.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Dumitru Stăniloare, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 1st vol., p. 295: “As only in the eternal and perfect communion of the three Persons, where lies the unique supra-essence of God, the infinity and the accomplishment of the loving life of the Trinity and of each Person can be found. Thus, only through it, our endless communion with the infinite life of God and the unmistakable communion among us as parts of this infinity are

fieriness and joy of the souls when they reciprocally share affection feelings²³, the persons being "a source of relationships"²⁴, reality which puts the human being on the infinite path of his faultless in his Trinitarian God.

Considering this image of life existing inside the Holy Trinity, we understand that She always overflows Her gifts towards the entire creation, but mainly towards Her icon – the man – in a descendant dynamic where "the kindness, the holiness, and the monarchical dignity originate in the Father, go through the Son and reach to the Holy Spirit²⁵, in this way inviting the human being to dialogue, for whom the "apophatic uprising turns into a path of the cross"²⁶.

It is imperative to mention that this reality is exclusively manifested each time a Christian communion with the Holy Sacraments practiced in the Church's cult, where the Trinity is revealed.

granted. In this way, it forever ensures our persistence and our faultlessness as persons. By being revealed and, therefore, beyond comprehension, it represents the foundation, the unlimited reservoir, the power and the model for our endless and progressive togetherness and, in the same time, it calls us to a continuous thinking and spiritual growth while it helps us to ceaselessly overcome every single step of our personal communion with God and among us".

²³ Ibidem, p. 294: "The whole-heartedness of the different relationships comes from the existence of a God Who knows from within the affection of such bounds. And these relationships are consecrated by God through the Holy Spirit".

²⁴ Daniel Munteanu, *Dumnezeu-Tatăl-izvorul iubirii și al vieții veșnice. Impulsuri trinitare pentru o cultură a păcii și a comunicării vindecătoare*, in *Dumnezeu Tatăl și viața Preasfintei Treimi*, coordinated by Father Professor Ștefan Buchiu, Father Assistant Professor Sorin Șelaru, Trinitas Press, Bucharest, 2010, p. 109.

²⁵ Constantin Cornișescu, *Despre Sfântul Duh*, PSB 12, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 1988, p. 62.

²⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie Mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*, Aubier Press, 1994, p. 64.

3 The Church's Cult – a dialogic Relationship between the Holy Trinity and the Human Being

Through the Liturgy of the Church, we live “in grace and truth.”²⁷ In this context, by power of the Holy Spirit Who “prays for us in wordless sighs”²⁸ and by acquiring the absolute perceptions according to which “God is love”²⁹ through the mysterious embodiment, each Christian – the carrier of God’s grace due to his iconic likeness also as a baptized person – is bearing Christ’s cross³⁰ in order to enter the inner dialogue also fulfilled by the prayers of the Church, in relation with the Holy Trinity. The ecclesial space represents for all of us not only a context of our accomplishment and communion³¹ but also the dimension where God reveals Himself continuously using each liturgical act, in the name of His love.

Through its entire cult, which represents an “ecclesial and personal celebration committed to our Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit”, “the Church is fully impregnated by the Trinity”³², aspect which implies the Christian’s participation to the new life offered to us by God, as His most precious gift.

In this context, each liturgical gesture is imprinted by the Holy Trinity’s touch³³, which overflows the gifts of the Holy Spirit

²⁷ John, 4:24.

²⁸ Romans, 8:26.

²⁹ John, 4:28.

³⁰ *Molitfelnic*, IBMBO Press, Bucharest, 2013, p. 48: “For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ”, source for translation: <https://biblehub.com/galatians/3-27.htm>.

³¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Comunitate prin iubire*, in “*Ortodoxia*”, XV (1963), no. 1, pp. 52-70.

³² Boris Bobrinskoy, *Taina Preasfintei Treimi*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 178.

³³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Relațiile treimice și viața Bisericii*, in “*Ortodoxia*”, XVI (1964), no. 4, pp. 503-525.

over the entire creation through each blessing, plain song and prayer"³⁴.

Due to this, we can emphasize that the Orthodox ritual, by means of its Christological character³⁵, substantially reveals our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, as the "Head of the Church"³⁶. Through Christ, we join the communion with the Father³⁷ and the Holy Spirit. Our Lord Jesus Christ offers us His own icon of His togetherness with the Father through love, obedience and prayer, in this way revealing the relational model between God and the people. We see God praying for the entire world, as "Christ contains inside His person all humanity, he iterates it, He bears its sins, He brings upon His Father's eyes this burden of injustice and evil as "this world and the humanity are the object of our Redeemer's divine prayer"³⁸.

³⁴ "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" – Galatians, 5:22-23.

³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Modurile prezenței lui Hristos în cultul Bisericii*, in "*Mitropolia Banatului*", XXXII (1982), no. 7-9, p. 429: "The consciousness of the orthodox Church is aware of Christ's presence in Its cult in the following aspects: a. the eucharistic sacrifice; b. the other Sacraments; c. the hierurgies, other praises, prayers and blessings of the priest; d. the word of the Holy Scripture read by the priest in the Church; e. the preaching of the priest; f. the prayers sung and uttered by the Christians in the Church, the dialogue between them and the priest during the cult; g. the lines the Christians read from the Holy Scripture outside the Church, their prayers and their lecture of other orthodox books; h. the discussions among Christians regarding God, in the spirit of their faith, their good deeds made in their faith's name. In this way, the entire life of the Christians is a cult brought upon God's eyes or a liturgy, in the broad sense of the word".

³⁶ Ephesians, 5:23.

³⁷ Boris Bobrinskoy, *Taina Preasfintei Treimi*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 183: "Christ and only Christ is the One where the connection between the mankind and the Father is fulfilled; it is a relationship of warmth, of eulogy, of gratitude, of knowledge, of communion, of love, of obedience".

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 184.

At the same time, the Christological attribute of the whole ecclesial cult subsists in its essence meant to continue God's conveyance and prayer, in which it practically integrates the whole world. Through all the ceremonials of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ becomes a living and real presence, Who shares the world His redemption and healing gifts, through which the entire humankind is restored, reacquiring in this way the iconic and primordial likeness, realities which involve simultaneously an immediate establishment of the Christian community in the state of eschaton, capable of ousting any man's tendency to praise the material side of his existence. In other words, through His presence inside the Church, the Son of God raises all of us to the life of the Holy Trinity.

Thus, through our communion with Christ, we find ourselves in direct relationship with God and with the Holy Spirit, the same Grace which overflows "a waterfall of pledges upon all believers"³⁹ by the priests' blessings, according to Father Dumitru Stăniloae.

From this point of view, the Church becomes a continuous Pentecost, offering us the possibility to feel the joy of our inwardness and familiarity through grace with God, as an outgrowth of the Holy Sacraments; this can always be experienced every time we utter the Lord's Prayer, "always addressed to our Father⁴⁰, Person "Who becomes exclusively the aim of the Christian prayer of the Eucharist"⁴¹. This reality is enhanced by the Lord's prayer during each Holy Liturgy, a short time after the bread and the wine are turned into the Body and Blood of Christ. Therefore, it is quite certain that the liturgical prayer is only trinitarian, a fact also confirmed by the abundance of texts of the Orthodox services.

³⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe, mediu al lucrărilor Sfântului Duh*, in "Ortodoxia", XXXIII (1981), no. 1, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Boris Borinskoy, *Taina Preasfîntei Treimi*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 187.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 186.

Therewith, we can find the doxological icon of the Church's prayers permanently completed by each ecphonesis accompanying the liturgical act as an expression of the belief that ministration manifests absolutely in, through and towards our Trinitarian God. This icon is present in every blessing⁴², which is a condition for all orthodox liturgical acts, even if we are referring to the Holy Liturgy, the Holy Sacraments, to the Hierurgies or even to the simple prayers addressed to God.

Moreover, the Church's Praises host in their structure compositions which describe a part of the Holy Trinity's profundity, sharing only as much as the human mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit's grace could have understood up to now.

All these realities have always woken the thirst for God and the communion with Him in the consciousness of the orthodox people as a profound gesture of love and commitment for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In order to keep this feeling in the light of God's consecrating grace, by Its everlasting glint, Christian has also understood that similar to all who love the Holy Trinity, he cannot participate in the complete communion with the Divine Persons if he had not embraced Christ's cross through christening if he had not hosted inside his soul the Holy Spirit through Chrismation and if he had not assumed the thorough power of sacrifice by the faultlessness of his initiating state in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Through all of these, the Romanian Christian can enter the "Holy Trinity's togetherness", following the steps of the other Christian fellows.

For each Christian, the christening represents the moment when he becomes the bearer of Christ's cloth of light⁴³, as a consequence of being identified as a member of the Church. In this way, he is given the gift of entering the thorough commun-

⁴² "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever, ever and forever and forever and ever" and "Blessed is our God, forever, ever and ever, and forever and ever".

⁴³ Galatians, 3:26.

ion with the Holy Trinity⁴⁴, in the name of Which all the Sacraments are effected.

Regarding the relationship between the newly baptized Christian and Jesus Christ, Father Dumitru Stăniloae affirmed that the grace we receive through baptism is “really a relucant cloth, is Christ Himself. This cloth is not only visible at the surface, like regular pieces of clothing, but it also imprints itself in our entire being⁴⁵”. Thus, a “special connection, unique and personal of each of us with Christ is created”⁴⁶. This kind of relation between the new son of the Church and the Son of God, and through Him, with the Holy Trinity, is justified by our name, as through our name we become aware of the fact that when we are called by it, it is a calling for our entire being and we have to answer “with all our heart”⁴⁷.

The calling by one’s name is God’s appeal for us, addressed “through the preaching of the Apostles and of the Church’s servants”⁴⁸, and it aims to touch our consciousness and our

⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu. Opere complete V*, Basilica Press, Bucharest, 2013, p. 412: “There are three reasons why we are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity and why we claim Her work in all the Sacraments we receive: a. for the persistence of the three Persons forever and ever – fact which represents the foundation for the endless duration of every created person; b. As in the Holy Trinity each Person is eternal, in His unicity or identity, in the same manner lasts every person who participates to the infinite happiness of the Holy Trinity after the creation and lives in a permanent state of togetherness with Her through the faith in the timeless unity of the Persons [...]; c. the human beings’ happiness which lasts forever in relationship with the Holy Trinity lies in the love shared among them and the Holy Trinity and Their reciprocal love. This communion with the Holy Trinity and among us all through love is brought by One Who belongs to the Trinity, the Son of God”.

⁴⁵ Christ Himself tells us about Him: “I am the light of the world” – John, 8:12.

⁴⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, IIIrd vol., IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2003, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 55.

fellows' who need our help. However, this calling might manifest. It still remains how "Christ speaks to us and through this dialogue and positive answers, His icon and our personal icon, as well, become more accurate"⁴⁹.

In the Sacrament of Christening, water is used as a matrix of life, and Its consecration is fulfilled through a prayer addressed to the Father, prayer, which is "a memorial of Christ's baptism in the Jordan river"⁵⁰, accompanied by a pneumatological invocation⁵¹.

At the same time, while being "incorporated in Christ" through the death and resurrection of the triple immersion in the Church's baptistery, we are touched by the Holy Trinity through the anointing with the "oil of joy"⁵² which opens us the entire knowledge towards God⁵³.

From these short references regarding the christening, we can notice two fundamental aspects which are essential for our study. The first one aims to emphasize the practice of this orthodox ritual in the name of the Holy Trinity; the second one perfectly shows how each person born in God receives the grace of communion with the Holy Trinity, through Christ, Who transforms our being by resting inside us as real and living churches.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Boris Bobrinskoy, *Taina Preasfintei Treimi*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 190.

⁵¹ *Molitfelnic*, p. 43: "Therefore, O King, lover of mankind, be present now too through the visitation of your Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. And give to it the grace of redemption and the blessing of Jordan" (<https://www.monkisaac.com/2018/01/06/blessing-of-water-at-theophany/>)

⁵² Idem, p. 45: "The servant of God (N) is anointed with the oil of gladness in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen" (<https://www.royaldoors.net/2012/07/order-of-holy-baptism-and-chrismation/>)

⁵³ John, 2:20: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge" (https://biblehub.com/1_john/2-20.htm).

Once receiving God through christening, the Church has immediately established the Sacrament of Chrismation, when we receive the “seal of the “Holy Spirit’s grace”, through which our bodies become “His temples”⁵⁴, according to Saint Paul.

The Sacrament of Chrismation is bound to the sacrament of Baptism, and this fact is suggested by the absence of any liturgical text in the beginning, as we can find in the ritual structure of the other Sacraments, but also by not pronouncing the name of the newly chrismated Christian. It is considered that precisely through this sacred bond between the two sacramental acts, pronouncing the name at the person’s descent in the water is enough in this case, as well.

Once joining the life of Christ through christening, the neophyte rejoices a personal Pentecost through chrismation, and he is also introduced to the “life of the Spirit”⁵⁵.

This special bond between baptism and chrismation is also present in the first part of the “Prayer for Anointment with the Holy Chrism”⁵⁶ when we can also observe how the Church, through the voice of the priest, prays to God for the new-born out of “water and Spirit”⁵⁷. All these appeals have an ending which illustrates the entry and the communion of the newly Christian inside this new life lived through our Trinitarian God; this reality expressed by all these previous requests which, once materialized through grace, offer the newly Christian the possibility of becoming “son”, therefore brother with the Lord and son of the Father, through the Holy Spirit, and in the same

⁵⁴ I Corinthians, 6:19.

⁵⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, IIIrd vol., IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2003, p. 68.

⁵⁶ *Molitfelnic*, p. 47: “[...] You Who now also have well-pleased to bring to life this newly illumined servant through water and Spirit, giving him/her forgiveness of his/her voluntary and involuntary sins: You, Lord, merciful King of All, grant upon him/her the seal of Your Holy and omnipotent and consecrated Spirit”.

⁵⁷ John, 3:5.

time, "heir of the Divine Kingdom"⁵⁸. In other words, by taking part to this live in God since our earthly existence and by achieving "the Holy Trinity's reflex" through a synergic act, the Christian will be able to manifest from this very existence the joy of his personal communion in love, with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and through This, with the entire world. Hence, by sharing the love he receives from God, he can gain the redemption of his soul – the eternal rest in the light of the Holy Persons.

Orthodox people have always been aware of this spiritual reality and experience and the primary pursuit has been living according to an uninterrupted togetherness, coming from the certainty of his faith. In this way, by assuming the icon of the sacrifice, but also the hope of Christ's resurrection, covered in the Holy Spirit's grace who has shaped his consciousness, which loved Heaven and his kind, the Romanian christian got closer through this felling to Christ's Vessel. This is the origin of the Holy Eucharist, but also how he finds once again the state of communion with his Father and with the Holy Spirit and also with his ancestors together with whom he lives his Holy Liturgy, through sacrifice.

4 The Holy Liturgy – the Mystery of the People's Unity through the Holy Trinity

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the final step in the consecration of the Christian as part of the Church, but the intention of our study is not to describe only the initiating process mentioned in our previous lines. We aim to enhance the Holy Trinity as the source of the ceremonial light of the Holy Liturgy – this moment when the bread and the wine become the Body and the Blood of our Redeemer.

⁵⁸ *Molitfelnic*, p. 48.

In order to prepare the bread and wine to become the Blood and Body of Christ during the Epiclesis, the Church established throughout the years a broad practice well-known today as the Proskomidy, or "the sacrament of bringing these Gifts before God's eyes"⁵⁹, according to Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae.

Regarding the practice of Proskomidy, we will stress several aspects which describe the power of the sacrifice of the orthodox people through Christ - τὸ ἄμνός του Θεού - and the icon of an "earlier projection" of Romanians' unity, marked through their saints on the "Heaven's Paten".

Thus, many saint people (hierarchs⁶⁰, martyrs⁶¹, or devout persons⁶²) belonging to the orthodox people through their commitment are mentioned and find Themselves around the Holy Wafer - the One becoming the body of Christ by the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

In this image where the ecclesiological and the eschatological character⁶³ of the Holy Proskomidy can be utterly surprised, the Romanian people confirm entirely their desire for unity, coming from the "Eucharistic will" as an echo of the immediate communion with Christ, Who in His essence "brings together the

⁵⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Proskomidia sau rânduiala producerii darurilor pentru Sfânta Jertfă a lui Hristos*, în "Mitropolia Banatului", XXXIV (1984), nr. 5-6, pp. 261-277.

⁶⁰ Saint Calinic from Cernica, Antim Ivireanul, Iosif cel Nou from Partoș, Iorest and Sava, Iosif Mărturisitorul, Ghelasie from Râmeș, Leontie from Rădăuți, Petru Movilă, Andrei Șaguna, in *Liturghier*, IBMO Press, Bucharest, p. 121.

⁶¹ Saint Ioan Valahul (martyr) and Oprea from Sălișteța Sibiului, Constantin Brâncoveanu and his sons; Saint. Filoteia from Curtea de Argeș (martyr), Tatiana from Craiova, Idem, p. 121.

⁶² Saint Dimitrie cel Nou, Ioan Casian, Grigorie Decapolitul, Nicodim from Tismana, Ioan from Prislop; Saint Parascheva from Iași, Teodora from Sihla, Idem, p. 121.

⁶³ Cf. Braniște, *Liturgica specială pentru facultățile de teologie*, Lumea Creștină Press, Bucharest, 2008, p. 248.

whole mankind from every place and from all the realms of time – past, present and future”⁶⁴.

In this way, by taking part in Christ’s life, our ancestors shared this state of sacrifice as reverberation of His Cross in which their holiness can be witnessed, and they also shared the communion with other people before the Holy Trinity.

Therefore, we can see how the Romanian Saints offer us their martyrdom perceived as their love sprung from this state of togetherness with God during the moment of Proskomidy; in this way, they help us believe the history of our people can be written through this ideal of sacrifice.

In the same terms, we consider the presence of Romanian Saints in Christ’s Liturgy as the unequivocal evidence of this nation’s Christian identity, as it has written its history in the light of God’s sacrifice.

Our following lines intend to focus on several aspects that confirm the Holy Eucharist as a trinitarian cult. The Holy Trinity’s dimension imprints the entire cult of the Church. The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist becomes a liturgic act where, through prayer, “the Church and the man manifest their true identity in a state of communion with the eternal Trinity”⁶⁵.

Living the trinitarian dimension of the Eucharist “is to discover and to herald that there is no distance between Trinity’s mystery and man’s faith since the Embodiment of the timeless *Logos* and since the Holy Spirit’s Descend”⁶⁶.

The eucharistic prayer is addressed to our Father, but in complete solder with the Son and the Holy Spirit⁶⁷. The eucharistic

⁶⁴ Boris Bobrinskoy, *Taina Preasfintei Treimi*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p. 200.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 193.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁷ Liturghier, p. 172: “You are the one God, unspoken and unadulterated by thought, unseen, shortcoming, always being the same: You and the One-Born of Your Son and Your Holy Spirit”.

memorial's centrality is bound to Son's work of redeeming our world, in complete obedience towards the Father, in the Holy Spirit.

In the same time, the Epiclesis Itself becomes a prayer addressed to our Father, its primary purpose is to transform the Gifts (the bread and the wine), as well as our consecration; in this manner, our Lord Jesus Christ is present through the Spirit, uniting and making us more like the Father. The Father's centrality Who works through the Son in the Holy Spirit is attested by the anaphora⁶⁸ and also by the Lord's Prayer, at a short time after the Epiclesis – in this way, the Ecclesia confesses Its complete communion with our Father.

Even though God – Father – is “the ideal and the principle of the ecclesial cult's redemption”⁶⁹, in the descending dynamic of sharing His gifts to the world, the Son and the Holy Spirit become our intermediates before our Father. This principle is also contained in the prayer uttered from the pulpit, which is read by the priest every Liturgy⁷⁰.

Although the Holy Liturgy is a service of the Trinity, our study aims to highlight the trinitarian reality using the liturgic anaphora, reality, which is continuously manifested as a continuous present every eucharistic sacrifice.

Therefore, within Its hidden essence, the Holy Eucharist becomes the archetypal icon of unity by loving the Persons of the Holy Trinity; in this way we are all introduced through the

⁶⁸ *Liturgier*, p. 176-183: “We call you, we pray and we humble ourselves in front of Your sight (...), let us commune, having a pure conscience, with Your heavenly and misterious Sacraments of this holy and spiritual table, for leaving our sins, for the forgiveness of our mistakes, for the communion with the Holy Spirit, for the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven (...) and make us worthy, Lord, to dare to call You, our God-Heavenly Father, and to say...”.

⁶⁹ Boris Bobrinskoy, *Taina Preasfintei Treimi*, IBMBOR Press, Bucharest, 2005, p.195.

⁷⁰ *Liturgier*, p. 198: „Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, Who does not change like shifting shadows.”

eucharistic Christ in a state of sacrifice and love, inside the godly life, "God's Lamb" making possible "our union with the other Christians in which Christ is present with His same body"⁷¹.

It is entirely certain that these theological realities have been surprised by the Romanian people, not only through word but mainly through the authentic experience, renewed and enhanced through grace every time a Christian takes Communion from the "Chalice of Eternity", attributes on which we are going to insist in our following lines.

5 Main Features of the Eucharistic Love as Experience of Living in God's Light

Sublimely rejoicing his unity with Christ using the Holy Sacraments, mainly through the Holy Eucharist, as well as through the other ceremonials of the Church, in this way participating directly to the life in God, as we have tried to describe in the previous sections of our paper, the Romanian Christian has lived continuously the joy of sacrifice, but also the one of the resurrection together with our Lord, Christ, as a personal eucharist. In this state, every Romanian's certainty that his entire united icon was based not only on the principle of speaking the same language but also on sharing the same values in terms of faith has become more natural.

This aspect became possible as an authentic dialogue between man's heart and God, felt as an inner presence through the entire cult⁷² of the Church – the chief guardian of the nation's soul,

⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. III, p. 93.

⁷² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Liturghia și unitatea religioasă a poporului român, în Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român. Opere complete IX*, Basilica Press, Bucharest, 2018, p. 330: "cultul constituie partea externă prin care se revărsă harul dumnezeiesc și darurile cerești în sufletele cerdincioșilor".

manifesting “a warm knowledge and an endless love for its treasures”, also imprinting it “the suffering and the ideals”⁷³ of this kind.

The ecclesial space became the place where “the Romanian people were consecrated and transfigured”, as the Church “was lighting up the life of the people with a sort of beauty beyond our comprehension”⁷⁴.

Wrapping around in grace the entire human being, the Church contributed through Its clergy – bishops⁷⁵, priests, and deacons to accomplish and to maintain the national unity of all Romanians. However, the most significant power through which “the Church of the Romanian people manifested Itself as one and helped to keep the unity of this nation has been the identity of the church service, its center being the Holy Liturgy”; therefore, the cult is “the one feature which unites all Romanians”⁷⁶.

Experiencing through the cult and mainly through the Holy Liturgy, the joy of the love communion with God – our Father and Son and Holy Spirit, the Romanian people, have gained the power of sacrifice, representing the foundations of this nation’s unity and faith.

The incorporation in God at the Holy Liturgy imprinted to this “*stavrofóros* nation” two of the spiritual attributes of the Liturgy: the power of transfiguration and the spirit of togetherness.

A first transfiguring effect could be noticed in the sound of the canticles “influenced by the accents of the folk songs which were even more beautiful and filled with a sacred purity”⁷⁷. At the same time, the words of the Romanian language “set in dif-

⁷³ Ibidem, p. 324.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 325.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, p. 327: “Romanian bishops, according to the tradition from Ardeal, were not only the preachers and the guardians of the Orthodox faith, whereas this was not ignored either, being defended with great sacrifice. They were also the rulers of the people in their wish for justice and freedom”.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, p. 328.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 333.

ferent combinations during the Liturgy were also vested in holiness even in the common use, avoiding the inappropriate contexts"⁷⁸.

Another transfiguring consequence of the Liturgy over the Romanian consciousness can be found in the sacred dimension of the bread, the one which becomes through the liturgic epiclesis the Body of Christ. The ritualic gesture of the priest of blessing the bread used for taking out the Holy Wafer during the Proskomidy is repeated by each Christian as a holy sign each time it is consumed. Also, the bread and the wine used as matters for the Holy Liturgy have a sacred meaning for every Romanian. Although their usage is necessary for survival, through their consecration and by becoming the Body and Blood of Christ, the eternal "power of the divine" is present as an implicit attribute of the Romanian consciousness.

The Christian man has been continuously learning how to pray for the entire world⁷⁹ and how to manifest in this respect a spirit of community, described by the coordinates of love as the supreme act of sacrifice. His sources have been the liturgic anaphora, more precisely Saint John Chrysostom⁸⁰ and Saint Basil the Great's diptych⁸¹.

The Light of Resurrection that embraces all creation each Holy Liturgy offered the Romanian peasant's soul the power to see the world in a different perspective, by means of a transfigured sight, making him capable "to learn how to see it gilded in the white brightness of God, filled with the mystery of the divine presence as seen in the light of Mount Tabor"⁸². This has been also the main reason why the Christian, surprised by the trans-

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p. 333.

⁷⁹ Utrenie, in *Liturghier*, p. 92: "All creation praises the Lord!".

⁸⁰ *Liturghier*: pp. 178-179.

⁸¹ Idem, p. 257-259.

⁸² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Liturghia și unitatea religioasă a poporului român, in Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român. Opere complete IX*, Basilica Press, Bucharest, 2018, p. 336.

figuration of the whole creation through the Light spread by our Eucharistic Christ, “was wearing clean, white attires in solidarity with the holy light embosoming the earth while remembering the faultlessness of the vestment which would never be torn apart from him anymore”⁸³.

The Holy Liturgy, when the priest’s request – “Let us pray to the Lord” – finds its correspondence in words such as “Lord, have mercy!” has given the Romanian peasant the faith of an actual and ongoing personal duty to pray not only for himself but for the sake of those around him. From this kind of attitude derive the compassion and love for the others, Romanians or foreigners, and in this way, Christians’ love for God has been continuously practiced.

This spirit of togetherness has also been influenced by the Church’s concern for the souls of those who do not belong to this world anymore, and it allowed the Romanian Christian the possibility to feel close to them. Even more than this, during the Holy Proskomidy, the people’s conviction that through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, one’s heart cannot feel resigned in front of death, nor believe that this separation is unchangeable, or forever-lasting has become visible and unequivocal.

In these simple coordinates can be surprised how the ceremonies of the Church, mainly the Holy Liturgy, have redefined the soul of our Romanian brothers, getting them accustomed to an active state of thoroughness⁸⁴. This cannot be experienced in solitude, but in the sense of community defined by endless love, as inside the Holy Trinity’s inwardness, a love which lies within each soul who embraces Christ’s sacrifice, through the Holy Spirit.

⁸³ Ibidem.

⁸⁴ His Eminence Laurențiu, the Metropolitan of Ardeal, *Bucuria de a trăi viața în Hristos*, Andreiana Press, Sibiu, 2012, p. 81: “We [the Romanian people] cannot accomplished anything without the Holy Liturgy. Everything is bound to the Holy Liturgy”.

6 Conclusions

Considering all the arguments we have exposed in these previous lines, we can draw a couple of conclusions.

First of all, we understand that God – Holy Trinity becomes for every Christian the archetypal spring of the virtue manifested as the reality of the communion among the Divine Persons, shared to all people as a state of complete togetherness acquired inside the Church through the Holy Sacraments.

Once a member of "the mysterious body of Christ", each Christian confirms in an authentic synergy the consecrating power of love as the sublime reality manifested in mutuality among our Father and Son and Holy Spirit, as it appears in all the ceremonies of the Orthodox cult.

By this feeling of communion with God in His love, but also with those around him, permanently supported by the holy work of the Church, the Romanian Christian gained a "culture of unity through love and faith", as a reflection of the Holy Trinity. In this manner, under the canopy of the grace of the Church, Christ's cross has become the buttress of sacrifice and resurrection of this kind which understood how to write its history by offering its blood sanctified by prayer, fasting, giving glory to God and by communing with the Eucharistic Christ. Thus, the entire ecclesial cult, mainly the Holy Liturgy, have become for the Romanian people the context of continuous consecration and of setting its ancient time underneath the sigil of eternity through the Holy Trinity, God Who has given to all of His sons the impulse of unity and mutual love.

Therefore, we appreciate that all these realities have become reflexes of Romanian consciousness, ensuring us all that the Romanian nation⁸⁵, similar to all Christian ones, has achieved a

⁸⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie și românism. Opere complete VIII*, Basilica Press, Bucharest, 2014, p. 19: "the national quality of the human ego is not incidental or shallow (...), but it belongs to each individual's essential destiny, it is contained among his eternal icon's reasons. The divine

real “culture of Heaven”⁸⁶, as an expression of communion with the Holy Trinity through the cult of the Church. Also, God has imprinted on the entire humanity and keeps imprinting on it a pure “culture of peace, justice, healing communication”⁸⁷ and unity in love until the end of time.

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pattern of each human being is the pattern of the embodied man, historically defined”.

⁸⁶ His Holiness, the Metropolitan of Banat, *Pastorală de Crăciun*, <http://mitropolia-banatului.ro/pastorală-de-crăciun-2016/>.

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