

COMMEMORATION IN ORTHODOX WORSHIP AND LIFE¹

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For a person objectively and impartially researching the disputes and rivalry which have emerged in Church Administration from time to time – between the Autocephalous and Autonomous Churches – especially in recent years, there is perhaps no notion more distorted and misunderstood than that of the so-called ‘Canonical Commemoration’.

The Leaders of jurisdictions frequently quarrel regarding the notion of this Commemoration and they do so not only in relation to those fellow bishops around them who make up the single and undivided Hierarchy of their own See, but also in relation to those Leaders of other parallel Sees, so to say, irrespective of whether these Heads are called Bishops, Metropolitans, Archbishops or Patriarchs.

If one were to consider, even for a moment, that the order of seniority within the so-called Pentarchy was a given, and secured in perpetuity by concrete Sacred Canons from the first common Christian millennium, yet the state of the historical development and creation of newer Autocephalous and Autonomous Churches has unfortunately often turned into an entirely scandalous and volatile state of disorder.²

Without doubt, as it will be shown below, this has to do with a grave form of secularisation within the sacred ministry of the Bishop, which we nonetheless claim shamelessly to preserve, even in its truly Apostolic purity and simplicity, in contrast supposedly to every form of Papism or Protestantism in the West.

It is clear - even for the person who only has an elementary understanding of Orthodox Ecclesiology – that both this foundational misunderstanding (whether this be deliberate or not) and the entirely dogmatically unfounded theory, related to this, of dependency, subordination and submission of those around the First amongst equals (*Primus inter pares*), is due to a frightful ecclesiological degradation bordering on the limits of heresy, or more correctly speaking, constituting an audacious and incarnate heresy. Furthermore the appeal to titles of seniority which arose only for historical reasons, but are in no way Apostolic in origin, gave rise indeed to parallel but not successive Leaders in the various local jurisdictions.

Unfortunately this situation has come about because the ecclesial administration has been cut off from worship which is its familiar and primordial root and source, and which inspires, leads and sanctifies the Church. Moreover, the dogmatic validity of worship is certainly not exhausted in the few hours spent in the beautiful Churches praying almost in a magical and ritualistic way today.³

If the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, ‘pray without ceasing’ (1 Thess. 5:17) constituted from the very beginning the golden rule of the life and action of the Church in the world, to the point that the famous monastery of Studium in Byzantium evolved into an exemplary Centre of Sleepless Brothers, then it is self-evident that worship offered to God 24 hours a day, which is in complete harmony with doctrine and the common Faith, announces, as a confession in deed, the very same nature and character of the Christian Church. In this way, the Church is most clearly and fundamentally distinguished from every other form and structure of spiritual communion of human persons.⁴

As a result of this, for many years, the need for a special treatise on this entirely contentious theme has become all the more urgent. However it is certain that this special treatise would not have been able to provide any assistance, or at least essentially shed some light on this relevant problem, if it were to be conducted only by the Church historian or the Canon lawyer. It is known to all that Church History, and the Holy Canons

which are gathered from time to time in history, in an honourable attempt to find solutions for many people for the sake of peace in those things for which strictly speaking there is no solution, are hardly ever able to find any positive indicators towards a stable course in history, in which the institution of the Church is always sorely tried.⁵ Therefore only a dogmatic, and indeed, strictly speaking, ecclesiological treatise on this topic would be more appropriate to identify the fitting and proper points through an evaluation of the entire nexus of dogmatic co-ordinates in this case, which we will also attempt to develop below in at least the following four sections:

- (a) Relationship between worship and administration in the Orthodox Church;
- (b) The importance of communion and lack of communion in the relationships between local Churches (within each, with others and for the whole Church);
- (c) The eloquence of certain liturgical customs concerning communion and the common vocabulary regarding Commemoration for the living and those who have fallen asleep; and
- (d) The related and occasional special weight of the sacred Canons regarding the topic.

It is self-evident that we will examine the above doctrinal co-ordinates, not only separately but also in their relation to each other.

Relation between worship and administration in the (Orthodox) church.

If the Church of the New Testament constitutes – as we believe and confess – the mystical and definitive union (unconfusedly and indivisibly) between God and human persons, as the Body of Christ, formed in history once for all out of absolute love (that is unreciprocated grace), which was shown on Golgotha as part of God's pre-eternal and divine will, then, at the moment when Christ said 'it is fulfilled' on the Cross⁶, we are not justified in simply seeing the pinnacle and fulfilment of the sacrifice which alone is able to

offer eternal redemption. At the same time, and indeed following from this, we have to recognize in this cry of 'it is fulfilled' an announcement of the perfected work of Christ, the *Theanthropos*.

However the deeper and more substantial reason for thanksgiving towards God the Father, upon the announcement of the salvific phrase of Christ the Theanthropos, which is of immediate concern, certainly does not express, psychologically speaking, any sentiments of satisfaction for the achievement of the desired goal on the part of the 'Lamb that was slaughtered' (cf. Rev 5:12). Such a psychological interpretation would be unfamiliar, if not also a blasphemous kind of anthropomorphism with reference to the Theanthropos.

As a result, the primary reason for thanksgiving which the phrase 'it is fulfilled' expresses is the very super-substantial quality itself – if we can speak like this from an objective perspective – of the free and absolute harmony towards the will of the Father along with the co-assistance of the Holy Spirit in the sacrifice that was offered.

Therefore the aforementioned thanksgiving immediately expresses both the absolute and final events of redemption, that is it expresses two eschatological dimensions which also comprise the character of the triumph to which the historical and militant Church aspires in God on that very day.

Western scholastic theology tried to express these two soteriological truths just mentioned above with the characterisation *ex opere operato* apparently to avoid all pious and magical notions of personal merit in relation to the mystery of salvation generally, so that all glory and honour could be conferred in a God-pleasing manner to the All-Loving God.⁷

From all that has been said above, the immediate and deepest relations come to light clearly between the phrase 'it is fulfilled' on the one hand – as a term stating in history the already perfect deposit of the expected eschatological fullness in God, even if in the form of foretaste -

and Eucharist on the other, as the founding and decisive Sacrament of the Church which fully expresses the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church acting for the salvation of the world.

The sacramental, that is, the eucharistic nature, structure and function of the Christian Church can be seen primarily in, but is also panegyrically proclaimed by, one of the most ancient documents coming from the immediate company of Jesus, the Lord. Certainly no one is able to deny that the original nucleus, around which the remaining orders of men and women from the wider circle of the people of God were formed, like concentric circles, as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, was the sacred Society established by the Lord Himself, which characteristically bore the name 'the Twelve'. And with all the profound symbolism associated with the Twelve, as a binding link of both Testaments of divine Revelation, they perpetuated the sacramental and eucharistic nature of the Christian Church not only eschatologically but above all on account of the unity, continuity and identity of the militant Church⁸ in the world.

Since the witness of the Exegetes from the first Christian centuries until today remains constant, that the Gospel according to Matthew was the first and oldest record of the life and words of the Lord - first composed in Aramaic and translated into Greek virtually at the same time – we are legitimately justified to take the characteristic conclusion of the first Gospel as a stable guide of the ecclesiological thoughts which follow from the certainty that it has to do with an authentic historical witness of what was handed over by the Risen Lord to the Eleven after the fall and tragic suicidal end of Judas.

Let us see therefore immediately the most synoptic passage of Matthew's witness, a passage also most drastic in its frugality, which we are well able to characterise as the Protoevangelion of the New Testament, analogous to the one recognised to be such in the Old Testament.

It must firstly be said that verses 16 and 17 of the twenty-eighth and concluding chapter of Matthew, are to be considered not only as the

organic framework but also the necessary explanatory introduction to the most crucial passage, to which we now turn to consider.

It must also be said that verse 18 can in no way be separated from the following verses 19 and 20. The reason for this is that in verse 18 one finds the phrase recorded from the very lips of the risen Lord 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me', without which the expression 'go therefore' would remain in mid-air and terribly mutilated.

After these brief remarks, the full mission and salvific program of the Church for all of humanity until the end of the ages is before us, having come directly from the mouth of the risen Lord and having brought with it all the characteristics of catholicity and finality, through the superlative and absolute degree in which they were given:

Go therefore and make disciples of all (πάντα) nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything (πάντα) that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always (πάσας), to the end of the age (Mt 28:19-20)

Analysing this dense passage word for word, we are amazed at the truly insurmountable richness of the characteristics of the coming Kingdom into which the Apostles are called to play a leading role.

Already the participle in Greek *poreuthentes* [go] alludes most clearly to the dynamism of the journey, which has to correspond to the range of action into which the Apostles were called in order to preach the Gospel 'to all nations'.

During the mid twentieth century, German Biblical exegetes (Prof. Schlier *et al.*) appropriately noted that the adjectives 'all' (πάντα), 'everything' (πάντα) and 'always' (πάσας) which are interspersed throughout the two concluding verses are entirely homologous and equivalent to the assurance of the Risen Lord that to Him was given 'all authority in heaven and on earth'.

And so we see the nature of the catholicity and finality of the Church established by the blood of the Theanthropos witnessed panegyrically, something which also precisely constitutes the reason why the Church must address itself to the whole world. Besides, with this dynamic finality the Lord gives the added assurance that He will journey together and remain with the Apostles always, to the end of the age.⁹

Another important element arising from an analysis of the passage is the double character of the mission stated as a maxim and expressed by 'baptizing' on the one hand and 'teaching' on the other, which constitute the content of the commandment 'go therefore and make disciples'.

From this axiomatic combination of word and action, that is to say Preaching as a 'ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18), and Sacrament¹⁰, springing forth from the side of the crucified Lord for the regeneration and preservation of the 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17), it becomes clear that the Eucharistic Assembly gathered in time and space does not simply constitute a part of the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church' but is, as Theandric Body, its full manifestation.

Just as the incarnate God, who takes flesh in history, is not only a perfect human being, but also perfect God (according to the Chalcedonian doctrine), in the same way the Body of the faithful, which ceaselessly remains eucharistic, is never able to stand as some means and organ in the world without being structured and functioning theandrically.

Therefore we are able to say that, from this sacramental, life-giving and formative centre of the divine Eucharist, and worship in general, there arose organically, in the historical life of the Church throughout the ages every other form – institutional or transient - whether this had to do with Administration, Monasticism, Mission, Philanthropy, Education or anything else.¹¹

Consequently the whole life of the Church, to the last detail of its work, constitutes an incessant, continual and devotional epiclesis so that

the world can be transformed gradually into the Lord's Body, that is the Church.¹²

The importance of communion and lack of communion in the relationships between local Churches

Through the above description of the sacramental nature of the Christian Church, as the Body belonging to the Lord - the crucified and risen Lord - it became entirely clear that the bishop as the Successor of the Apostles in 'the place and type' of Christ, the First Shepherd and Sacrificial Priest, in celebrating the divine Eucharist in each place, gathers the Clergy and laity in a concrete place and time, constituting the entire mystery of the One undivided Church.

As the 'One who Presides' at the Eucharistic table, since 'he does in remembrance' of Christ only those things as He ordered¹³, the bishop is justified in good conscience, that is to say without condemnation, in believing and confessing with whom, and on behalf of whom, he offers the precious Gifts of the Anaphora, that Christ Himself is 'the one who offers and is offered, and is distributed...'¹⁴

At first sight these comments are sufficient in order to state that beyond and above the divine Eucharist there cannot exist in the entire Church a more authentic criterion of truth and life!

Precisely because these are the foundational givens of the Christian Church as Eucharist, the Leaders of each place are shown to be equal and parallel, but not successive to others. And precisely for this reason, the honours of seniority given for the sake of propriety and service¹⁵ derive from clearly historical reasons (Rome, New Rome, *et al.*), and in no way from supposed Apostolic sacredness, gravity or priority, as the Roman See¹⁶ audaciously dared to argue from very early on.

That the communion of all members of the Eucharistic Assembly is self-evidently given in the one and unified Eucharist (in heaven and on earth!) since it is performed in remembrance of Christ, compels us to see the notions of communion and remembrance with greater attention. And

then we will also certainly recognize these, not simply as correlative notions, but rather as a presupposition (*sine qua non*) of the promised mystical presence of the Lord.

If of course the verse 'for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them' (Mt 18:20) stands, then, even moreso the promise of His life-giving and deifying presence during the celebration of the divine Eucharist in the remembrance of Him must also be valid.

With the above, we must immediately make the following clarifications: firstly, that the communion of the members of the Body of Christ referred to, is not confined only to those living, but also includes undividedly those who have fallen asleep in God. Secondly, since this communion is only made possible in the name and in remembrance of the Lord, it is primarily also a communion with Him (schematically it could be possible to speak here about a horizontal communion in the first instance and a vertical communion in the second).

However the more integrally we conceive the deepest causal relationship between remembrance and communion which primarily establishes the abiding need for prayer, in terms of supplication and remembrance the more we will be surprised and grieved that today the astonishing importance of this liturgical commemoration about which we are speaking, and the due brotherly commemoration (said either in a low voice or aloud according to the situation) for all and by all, has been entirely forgotten.

What is still worse and more depressing is that this remembrance or commemoration has now simply been reduced to a canonical and indeed juridical obligation of almost mechanical ritualism. And more often than not the act of commemoration has been reduced to saying out aloud the name of each Leader even though it is most characteristically prefixed by the words 'Remember first of all....'¹⁷ by which it is clearly confessed – for those of course who have their mind and ears to hear – that together with the Leader others, and indeed all (in a low voice) are also brought to mind,

both clergy and laity, those alive and those who have fallen asleep in the Lord.

Hence, the important need for all to realize as quickly as possible the fundamental importance of remembrance as begetting but also declaring, the communion of the members in all and with all, along with their only head, for the good of all and to avoid condemnation.

This will be achieved only when we bow our heads kneeling, so to say, in humility and repentance to these things which we celebrate in worship and which we confess in common with words.

For this reason, after such a devout awakening, it has to be said emphatically that we cannot but appreciate easily that this renowned communion, which we have often invoked (even within this huge contemporary hotchpotch known as the Ecumenical Movement), and which has occasionally even threatened others in various positions and functions in the Church, is not some magical or inherited privilege secured once and for all by way of conquest, or indeed because we commemorate aloud the name of the Leader, which frequently occurs only with our lips. Entirely contrary to this, there is the truth regarding the supplication and epiclesis of all and for all the local Heads and Leaders of each place, irrespective indeed of whether they are Abbots of Monasteries (including the female gender), Bishops, Metropolitans, Archbishops or Patriarchs.

And of course there is no doubt that this liturgical phrase 'among the first' immediately flows from the words of the Apostle Paul, 'Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account' (Heb 13:17), and clearly contains within it the notion of the free obedience manifested in love. This however can never degenerate into a juridical notion of disciplined submission or servile dependency since the communion of love within the life of the all-Holy Trinity, through the equality and indivisibility which is the prototype of the communion of persons for the Orthodox, is never confessed as subordination but as perpetual interpenetration.

After the above necessary clarifications, we are certainly able to appreciate more easily the fullness of communion as a gift from above through our relevant supplications and petitions made 'again and again', in exactly the same spirit in which we ask that the general characteristics of the Church which we generally confess in the Nicene Creed (as 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic') be preserved and continually advanced simultaneously as givens and postulates.

And since all sectors, without exception, of the Church's action or suffering within the world remain mystically unbreakable and open between themselves through their continual and fuller unity and communion of the Holy Spirit¹⁸, this dynamism of Worship impregnates everything in an homologous way, which is declared not only through words spoken, but also through symbolic gestures and customs generally speaking, samples of which we will specifically see below entirely.

The eloquence of certain liturgical customs on communion and the common vocabulary regarding Commemoration for the living and those who have fallen asleep.

In saying liturgical customs, it is clear that we do not refer to general habits of popular piety, developing for the most part on the margins of Worship, according to the local and national traditions of the various Orthodox peoples. Rather we primarily mean almost exclusively formal words and phrases which are accompanied by gestures and actions in the Divine Liturgy eloquently declaring the communion of the Holy Spirit petitioned in prayer.

Firstly we must remember that, since the name and the act of remembrance constitute – as we explained above – integral elements of the desired sacramental communion, precisely for this reason are the liturgical prayers and ceremonial gestures, already taken from Old Testament forms, absolutely dominated by the mystical power of the 'name of the

Lord'¹⁹ and the related act of remembrance in everything by the entire people of God.

This is the reason why the personal name of each faithful person (whether they be initiates or long-standing members) taking part in the life of grace (the Church) through each Sacrament, is never omitted or suppressed by the Celebrant, while conducting all the holy Sacraments and other ceremonies²⁰.

Another important liturgical element – which is not only characteristically distinguished from the worship of the Old Testament, but also from that of the Western Christians, who uphold the unleavened bread – is the fact that all ancient Eastern Liturgies, even up until today, never used the unleavened bread of the Old Testament in the divine Eucharist. Indeed, entirely to the contrary, the Eastern Christians considered the use of the unleavened bread as a detail not without particular importance. And this only because the common and daily bread supporting and nurturing all human persons throughout their whole life on earth, is able to symbolize the catholicity and definitive communion of all human persons, for whom Christ died (Rom 5:8). Indeed Christ said about Himself *'I am the living bread that came down from heaven'* (Jn 6:51).

Having spoken about the Bread of the Anaphora, it is worth noting a characteristic and entirely instructive detail from the Rubric of the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople. When the Ecumenical Patriarch celebrates together with other Hierarchs - whether from the Throne or not – during the moment when he exclaims 'among the first remember...', when each Hierarch remembers the name of the Patriarch in turn and according to seniority, he holds the whole holy Bread, and not only his portion, in his hands and remembers with a low voice the one who is being commemorated, a supreme indication of unity, mutual prayer, communion and honour.²¹

Furthermore, it is also worthy of note that at each divine Liturgy of the Orthodox, when the clergy, irrespective of rank, are in front of the holy Chalice, seeking forgiveness from all the faithful in Church from the Holy Doors, or from each other within the altar, they respond invariably

with the following prayer: ‘may the Lord God remember your High-Priestly office, Priesthood, or Diaconate in His kingdom now and ever, and to the ages of ages’.

A brief yet crowning prayer which remembers everybody is the one said during the Great Entrance of the Holy Gifts: ‘May the Lord God remember all of you...’ But also when the Celebrant simply gives the Antidoron (blessed bread) to the altar boys within the Sanctuary, he remembers each one of the them by saying: ‘remember Lord your servant (name)’.

Completing the present section, we must now turn our attention to the common vocabulary (commemoration, memorial, remember Lord *et al.*), irrespective of whether it is for those who are alive or who have slept in the Lord.

And this common vocabulary is precisely the most persuasive proof that the so-called canonical commemoration – as it has come to be known – of the Leader is primarily and significantly a prayer and declaration of ‘the unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit’ which expresses the highest vigilance and affection of all the members of the Body for all, especially for the Leader²² of each place.

Strictly speaking, the epiclesis, ‘remember Lord’ (especially when it is concerned with those who have fallen asleep, for whom we also pray that God may place them ‘with the spirits of the righteous made perfect’), is not only concerned with the persons themselves, but also their beneficial service for the whole Church (eg. remember Lord their fidelity, their hard labour *et al.*) so that the Just God may be propitious and ‘have mercy on them and us’.

The related and occasional special weight of the sacred canons regarding the topic.

Since the entire life of the militant Church in the world constitutes an unbreakable continuity of the salvific work of the incarnate Logos of God and was formed as a mystical liturgy of the Eucharistic Body, it follows that the Church would also be orientated from the beginning towards a godly introversion, so to say, of the maranatha (the Lord is near).

The book of the Acts of the Apostles describes characteristically that, immediately after the Ascension of the Lord, the eleven Apostles were in the upper room 'constantly devoting themselves to prayer and supplications together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus as well as his brothers' (Acts 1:13-15).

This mystical atmosphere of 'constantly devoting themselves to prayer and supplication' could not be changed in the slightest, during the election by lot of Matthias to fill the position vacated by Judas. For this, as soon as the day of Pentecost came to pass, we see again that 'they were all together in one place' and experiencing the miracle of 'divided tongues as of fire' during which 'all were filled with the Holy Spirit', and were informed of 'God's mighty deeds' before which the 'devout men of every nation' could not but 'marvel', 'be amazed' and 'perplexed' while 'others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine' (Acts 2:2-13).

Already from this fundamental delineated juxtaposition between devotional compunction on the one hand, and the so-called logic and soberness according to the world on the other, the stigma of the Church is given in the world, which essentially remained its specific distinction during the first centuries of persecutions and martyrdoms.

The writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers and Apologists describe at length the characteristics of the presence of this new race of people who were also called citizens of heaven.²³

In this unreserved and boundless solidarity of the brothers condemned to death, it was natural for the sacramental communion with

each other and the commemoration for each other to be manifested in as many variegated ways as there were different circumstances within everyday life.

It is self-evident that in this type of communal symbiosis, it was not possible for canons, strictly speaking, to be instituted from the beginning. Instead of these, it was the ethos of spontaneous love that prevailed generally, which is characteristically named 'generous hearts' (Acts 2:46) in the Acts of the Apostles.

Even though matters of faith and worship earlier occupied the Eucharistic Assembly (Baptismal Symbols and Liturgical schemas), canons arose only when the Christian religion, beginning in the fourth century, ceased to be a *religio illicita* for the Roman state.

Besides this, canons and laws, as known, always come into a communal life later so that they may rectify wrongdoings and prevent them from happening again. This is also the primary reason why we declared that the particular weight of the sacred canons is relative and circumstantial. That is to say, they cannot be considered valid absolutely and as a matter of principle.

Besides it is not fortuitous that the so-called 'Apostolic Canons' – including the 34th, which theologically establishes and sanctions the relationship between the Leader of each place with his fellow Bishops – appeared many years subsequent to those of the Apostles (4th or even 5th centuries). However they were characterized in this way since they betrayed an authentic Apostolic spirit and mindset under which they were actuated.

Accordingly, without wishing to devalue in the slightest the significance of Canon Law generally, and indeed the holy canons in the life of the now organized and established order of the Church²⁴, we must accept that their importance is clearly secondary when compared to the primordial devotional structure and function of the entire Eucharistic Body.

It is in this spirit, perhaps, that the valid measure which appeared very early in the Church whereby a Bishop ceased the commemoration of

another Bishop must primarily be seen, rather than as a type of disciplinary measure²⁵. That is, it was the unwillingness to commune with Brothers of questionable mindset.²⁶

By way of a brief epilogue in this liturgico-dogmatic treatise on a topic of such key importance for the peace, unity and stability of the Orthodox Churches throughout the world – more timely than ever before, as we have all been convinced by the unfortunate recent developments in the relations of Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens towards the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos – we are able, by way of conclusion, to declare the following two fundamental points from the above analysis:

(a) That only since the Commemoration of the Leader upholds his deepest optative character, is he enabled from above to function as a truly binding force, not only between Leaders of each region, but also more broadly as an inspiration and blessing for each of the local Churches, organized as ‘spiritual shepherds’ and faithful generally. If this were not the primary character of Commemoration – rather than an obligated nomo-canonical declaration of dependency and subordination - then it remains entirely incomprehensible how the ‘Leader amongst equals’ in the midst of all the Orthodox Leaders (the Ecumenical Patriarch), always personally remembers very characteristically ‘*All Orthodox bishops...*’

Who would be able to argue that the Ecumenical Patriarch, through such a commemoration, confesses dependency or submission to all Orthodox bishops irrespective of seniority and designations?

(b) After the truly catalytic importance of the words given by the Lord for the celebration of the divine Eucharist ‘in remembrance of me’, it would not be an exaggeration to say that this term precisely also sets the tone in the deepest possible way for the commemoration of each of the members of the Body of Christ, so much so that Christ particularly identified Himself with the least of His brothers (Mt 25:40).

Other very characteristic passages from the Divine Liturgy are tied immediately into such an identification, which also constitutes the highest

and ultimate summary in the Body of the incarnate divine Logos. Besides those already mentioned there are for example the following: 'and those whom each of us has in mind and all men and all women'; also the prayer said with a low voice by the Celebrant: 'and if we have failed to commemorate anyone, whether out of ignorance or forgetfulness or because of the great number of names, You, O God, will remember; for You know each one's age and name, since You have known each of us from our mother's womb' (Liturgy of St Basil).

Besides the Lord had dictated all these things clearly when He proclaimed that critical and definitive saying: 'I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd' (Jn 10:16).



NOTES:

- ¹ An earlier version of this paper appeared in Greek in *Synaxis*, No. 92, October-December 2004, 38-54. The original text was translated by Philip Kariatlis.
- ² Archimandrite Demetrios D. Papathomas gave an undeniable and tragic overview of the unacceptable situation in 'The antithetic relationship between the local Churches and the Churches of the Diaspora', (*Synaxis* 90, June (2004): 29f [in Greek]) even though he did so using foreign neologisms and occasional anomalous grammatical syntax.

In an article titled 'Orthodoxy and Modern Greek Identity', (*Indiktos*, vol. 17: 44f, especially pp. 46-56) P. Kalaitzides successfully reminded us and examined anew the transcendence in Christ of all nationalistic and cultural differences, as this is presented and extolled, not only in texts of the New Testament, but also in classic texts, so to say, immediately following those of the primitive Church.

- ³ It is entirely disappointing to see that in praxis Administration has also been entirely separated from Worship and Prayer by the Orthodox. In contrast to this, it seems that within the official circles of the Ecumenical Movement, and indeed in the Conferences of the World Council of Churches, the authentic Orthodox dogmatic language of some vigilant Orthodox theologians has gained all the more ground in the second half of the twentieth century (cf. for example Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1996).

- 4 The fact that the dynamism and the finality of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church lies in this very 'nature', that is to say the theandric essence of the Church, is seen pre-eminently by the Orthodox interpretation of *ex opere operato*, which also distinguishes the Orthodox position entirely from Roman Catholic legalism and institutionalism on the one hand, and Protestant activism on the other. The language of Orthodox Ecclesiology and Canon Law could be seen to be leaning towards this second 'diversion' in light of the motto, 'the Liturgy after the Liturgy', if this were advanced as 'mission' and 'witness' according to the socio-political programs of the World Council of Churches. Unfortunately, it seems that most contemporary Christians, and not only Western Christians, are unable to understand the immeasurable inactive 'action', that is to say action in non-movement. How many examples do we have from Hermits or Stylites whose action upon all the faithful was more influential and more beneficial than any other care, even though their action was one of lifelong non-action within cavities and in 'the crevices of the earth'? Is not the example of Martha and Mary (Lk 40:41) didactic in this case? As we know today, even lifeless metals and minerals 'in their inertia' are able to send out most active 'rays' in the various strata of the earth!
- 5 From the relativity of historical events, it is clear that it is not possible to obtain the beginnings of the transcendent absolute, which are concerned with and transcend history and the Canons composed within it and for it! In other words, the Church of the New Testament must be considered 'divine Eucharist' even before the historical Crucifixion on Golgotha since it is prefigured in "the Lamb that was slaughtered from the foundations of the world" (Rev 5:12).
- 6 This most important phrase 'it is fulfilled' is absent from the corresponding text of the three Synoptic Gospels and is seen only in the Gospel of John. However, it is in no way excluded from parallel phrases found in the Synoptics; and therefore it is affirmed (cf P. Trembelas, *Notes on the Gospel according to John* [in Greek] (Athens, 1954, 674ff). But even if this phrase were to be considered foreign, and only present in St John's Gospel, again it must not be forgotten that, even though the Synoptic writers primarily describe the historical life of the Theanthropos on earth, St John's primary aim is to describe the all-eternal quality of the Logos (cf Prologue of his Gospel) as well as the eschatological scope of the accomplished work in time and place by Christ in 'fulfilling' the law and the prophets but also the 'promises' of God.
- 7 For this reason, neither the ethical situation of the Celebrant nor that of the communicant receiving the grace of the Sacraments – that is, their supposed 'virtue' – can constitute the main cause of salvation, as this could not bind and obligate the One who has 'no need' and who created the entire universe *ex nihilo* in all goodness.

And we are speaking about 'synergy', in Orthodox theology between the divine and human factors in the mystery of salvation, so that the creation of human persons 'according to the image' of God stirring them towards 'likeness' may not be futile, without this in any way destroying the limitless difference and distinction, according to nature, between the uncreated God and the created human person. Given that the entire universe created '*ex nihilo*' was characterised, from the very beginning, as containing everything 'very good' by definition (Gen 1:31), we may well say that for this reason also – and not only on account of the absolute quality of God who is in need of nothing – we are not able, especially after the ancestral fall, to speak of 'personal merit' in any way in regards to the human contribution into the mystery of salvation. Even though, on the contrary, being worthy of punishment resulting from being distanced from the will of God is valid, according to Paul who said: "every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty" (Heb 2:2).

- 8 Regarding not only the deeper eschatological symbolism of the number 'Twelve' but also the historical and diachronic value of the work and the 'regulative' character of the structure and function of their sacred society, see our extensive Doctoral dissertation, Archim. Stylianos Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Theology* (Athens, 1965), pp. 39-49.
- 9 John Chrysostom - an incomparable example, through the ages, of a responsible Shepherd and Teacher - rightly underlines this inspiring assurance of the Lord for the Successors of the Apostles, noting characteristically: 'For he did not only say that He would be with them, but also with all those who had believed with them. For the Apostles did not intend to remain until the end of the ages, but to communicate as the one body of the faithful'. (Cf P. Trembelas, *Notes on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, [in Greek], (Athens, 1951), 528).
- 10 Regarding this axiomatic combination between *kerygma* and sacrament, refer to the extensive section with the characteristic title 'Unified and Complementary Examination of Sacrament and Word', by Archim. Stylianos Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Ecclesiology* [in Greek] (Athens, 1965), p.49ff.
- 11 Cf Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, *Liturgical Problems in the Diaspora*, (offprint from the periodical *Ekklesia*), Athens, 1995, p. 8ff.
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 Lk 22:19.
- 14 See the prayer sung during the Cherubic Hymn, Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.

- ¹⁵ Both ‘decency’ and ‘ministry’ constitute unbreakable elements not only of the God-loving and sacred presence of the Church in all of its manifestations in the world, but also convey the deeper meaning of its Apostolic exhortation “*but all things should be done decently and in order*” (1Cor 14:40).
- ¹⁶ On this matter, see a more extensive discussion in: Archim. Stylianos Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Ecclesiology* (Athens, 1965), 92-95.
- ¹⁷ It is as plain as day that this predominant Liturgical phrase “amongst the first” [ἐν πρώτοις] constitutes a corresponding similarity to another Liturgical phrase, “especially” [ἐξαιρετικῶς] since we commemorate “the most holy, pure, blessed”, and not isolated or excluded, but “with all the saints”.

The commemoration of the All Holy Lady Theotokos is shown most characteristically “with all the saints” in all the Great Supplication and Prayers in Orthodox Worship, which, as is known, come to a climax and conclude with “Remembering our most holy, pure, blessed, glorious, Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.”

- ¹⁸ Precisely because “the unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit” always remains an “open” spiritual struggle – despite the fact that it is basically given to all the members of the Church, as it is ‘confessed’ in the Symbol of Faith – we characteristically repeat in every divine Liturgy (during the Supplication beginning with “Having commemorated all the saints...”), the following: “having asked for the unity of the faith and for the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.” That is to say we always remain invariably with the ‘having asked’ without ever daring to say, for example ‘having acquired’ or ‘having increased’, or anything else that is similar which would denote a stable perfection!
- ¹⁹ Entirely indicatively we recall the following verses from the Psalms: “*I will cause your name to be celebrated in every generation and generation*” (Ps 44:18); “*I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord*” (Ps 115:4); “*But you O Lord, are enthroned forever, your name endures to all generations*” (Ps 101:13); “*You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God*” (Ex 20:7).

Given that the creation of the human person in the image and according to the likeness of God constitutes, as known, a central teaching for both the Old and New Testaments, it becomes obvious that the sacredness of the ‘name of the Lord’ (being the Archetype), surely ‘is reflected’, in a way, also in the name of

the 'image' which explains absolutely the commemoration of all and for all in the divine Liturgy.

- 20 As we know, the number of Sacraments dogmatically speaking cannot be confined only to seven, but on the contrary, remains always 'open' since "the spirit breathes where it wills" (Jn 3:8).

And precisely the symbolism of the 'limitless', through the number seven, speaks favourably for the fact that in the Church – which constitutes the 'primeval Sacrament' of God in history – it is not possible to speak of scholastic enumeration. Certainly this was not able to prevent the listing of seven Sacraments in the twelfth century, reflecting the most significant needs of the faithful. However it is characteristic that until this arrangement, the number of the Sacraments fluctuated - sometimes funerals, the Monastic tonsure, and the Sanctification of the waters, *et al.* were considered to be sacraments which later, and until today, were distinguished from the Sacraments, being simply named 'sanctifying' actions or services (Sacramentalia).

- 21 Indeed the symbolism is essentially much deeper. Through the wholeness and through the undivided Bread, it is clearly and 'optically' shown that each of the commemorated Hierarchs represents – precisely and on account of the one and undivided divine Eucharist – the entire Church!
- 22 Refer to the extensive analysis of the original spiritual nature of the Commemoration of the "Leader" in an article by Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, 'An Ambivalent Pathogenesis', *The Vema of the Church*, Aug. (2003): p. 3.
- 23 Particularly moving is the relevant terminology in the renowned *Letter to Diognetus*.
- 24 We have evaluated at length the importance of the law, the holy Canons, and Canon Law for the Church of the New Testament, rightly considered as the place of grace *par excellence*. (Cf Archim. Stylianos Harkianakis, *The Infallibility of the Church in Orthodox Ecclesiology*, (Athens, 1965), pp.51-59).
- 25 The related 'threats' between the Bishops of the first centuries (eg. Bishop Cyprian of Carthage even against the Bishop of Rome!) are considered to be similar for reasons clearly of Faith and *phronema*. However, such sensitivity and tactic shows precisely not only the 'equality' of the Bishops from the beginning, but also the nature of the mutual commemoration by others, understood primarily as a 'prayer' manifesting the 'communion of the Holy Spirit' which they had confessed. Under no circumstance was it seen as a forced sign of administrative 'submission', or even 'subordination'.

- ²⁶ Perhaps, here, it would not be without importance to recall the month of May, 1971, some Monasteries on Mount Athos had ceased commemorating Patriarch Athenagoras I as their canonical Bishop as a sign of protest against him for his general 'ecumenical openings' towards the West. As Titular Bishop of Miletoupolis, the writer considered it necessary to restore the ethical and doctrinal order in this case, something which was achieved in the following way with the grace of God:

While celebrating the Divine Liturgy, in the main Church (the Protaton) and later in an open theological meeting in the Holy Monastery of Stavroniketa, in the presence of leading Athonite monks and Abbots, who were theologians, he brought to mind the spiritual nature of the Commemoration of the 'Leader'. He did this by reminding them that the panegyric commemoration constituted primarily a 'prayer', something which besides is clearly shown through the optative phrase '[may you] grant to your holy Churches...'

In Orthodoxy, 'the correct proclamation' of the word of truth is never considered in advance as a given, no matter how senior the 'Head' who is being commemorated. In a situation when the integrity of his orthodox mind-set is in question, all of us must pray even more intensely and more often for him, instead of arbitrarily ceasing to commemorate him officially, and becoming in this way, tragically 'without head'. Except of course unless the 'Leader' in question is already known to have been convicted of a concrete heresy under a Canonical Orthodox Synod.

And it was truly to the credit of the holy Monastery of Stavroniketa that, despite the continued counteractions of just a few monks which were without any theological basis, it paradigmatically restored the commemoration of the Patriarch for the rest, under the enlightened guidance of the then young Abbot, Archim. Basileios Gondikakis.



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