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Formation For and Through Liturgy: An Overview of the Liturgical Formation in Contemporary Romanian Orthodoxy

The categories of the sacred are an integral part of the ontology of the human being and cannot be removed from within it. In this regard, from a liturgical and ecclesial point of view, the fact that Mircea Eliade, the Romanian historian of religions, defines human being as ‘Homo religiosus’ is essential.¹ Thus man, being a religious being, which displays religious manifestations,

¹ M. Eliade, *Sacrul și profanul*, transl. B. Prelipceanu, Humanitas, Bucharest 2017, p. 122–123.

is a *liturgical* being; these religious manifestations can be seen as the point of origin for the worship.²

For the celebration of the New Testament, the liturgical manifestation means the celebration of the Mysteries of the Faith. Therefore, it is essential that one becomes familiar to the ethos of the Church, since the teachings of the Church and the celebration of the faith are critical for our destiny in the eternity. And this very fact implies a stringent need of liturgical education and formation, liturgical celebration being the very fundamental activity of the Church.³

In this regard, Fr. Andrei Scrima – a Romanian priest who lived for many years abroad – used to define the Orthodox Church as a “Liturgical Church par excellence.”⁴ Evidently, this statement must not be understood as a denial of all other aspects of the activity and of the mission of the Church in the world. However, if other activities – e.g., philanthropy, social activities, etc. – can be performed also by other specific groups or societies, the intercession for the salvation of the world – until it will become ‘a new Heaven and a new earth’ (Isaiah 65, 17; cf. Revelation 21, 1) – cannot be undergone by anyone else, but by the Church.

The highest expression of this intercession is the Divine Liturgy of the Church; thus the Church, in equal measure, prays and celebrates (*Ecclesia orans et celebrans*). The worship of the Church is Her very life; it is a public act which renders actual the very nature of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.⁵ In this regard, the worship of the New Testament is the highest and the most noble form of liturgical expression and manifestation: “worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4, 23), as defined by our Saviour Jesus Christ in His dialogue with the Samaritan woman.

2 E. Braniște, *Liturgica generală cu noțiuni de artă bisericească, arhitectură și pictură creștină*, vol. 1, Basilica, Bucharest 2015, p. 69.

3 E. Braniște, *Liturgica generală cu noțiuni de artă bisericească, arhitectură și pictură creștină*, p. 124.

4 A. Scrima, *Biserica liturgică*, transl. A. Manolescu, Humanitas, Bucharest 2005; cf. A. Schmemmann, *Introducere în teologia liturgică*, transl. V. Bârză, Sophia, Bucharest 2009, p. 81.

5 Cf. A. Schmemmann, *Introducere în teologia liturgică*, p. 85; cf. A. Schmemmann, *Celebration of Faith*, vol. 2: *The Church Year*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Nowy Jork, Crestwood 1994, p. 13–17.

Thus, liturgical life is the very centre and the best expressions of the Orthodox Church. The Liturgy of the Church is a re-presentation or an actualization of the entire divine economy which becomes effective and redeeming in the life of the universe and of the man, in each epoch. Due to the complex history and structure of its liturgy – which evolved and was occasionally influenced by various persons and places –, the Orthodox Church tried to explain its liturgy. The explanation of the liturgical life varied through ages; it was influenced by the cultural developments and by the political conditions in the Romanian territories, until an autochthonous liturgical tradition finally emerged.⁶

1. Liturgical formation today

During the last decades, the central ecclesial authority – i.e. the Holy Synod – expressed an increased and positive preoccupation to intensify the genuine Christian life of the laity and to render them aware of their ecclesial belonging; to make all church members – clergy and laity – realise that they belong to the one Mystical Body of Christ.⁷ This preoccupation aims to deepen the liturgical life theoretically and, foremost, practically, by actively involving also the laity in a genuine liturgical life. In this regard, the *Foreword* to the newest edition of the *Menaion for September* concludes:

6 The liturgical life of the Orthodox Church in the Romanian territories was influenced by both Greek and the Slavic Orthodox Churches; liturgical practices came along with several cultural influences. However, the Romanian Orthodox Church was able to accomplish a synthesis “between Greeks and Slavs”, to add several local peculiarities and to produce a genuine autochthonous tradition; cf. C. Login, *Between Greeks and Slavs: Ingenuity or Misunderstanding in Present-Day Romanian Liturgical Texts*, in: *Studies in Oriental Liturgy: Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy*, New York, 10–15 June 2014, eds. B. Groen, D. Galadza, N. Glibetic, G. Radle, Peeters Publishing House, Leuven 2018, p. 329–334 (Eastern Christian Studies, 28).

7 Patriarch Daniel, *Ceaslovul – mistagogia sfințirii timpului zilnic (The Horologion – the mystagogy of the sanctification of the daily time)*, Ceaslov, EIBMO, Bucharest 2014, p. 5–8.

the present edition [...] is intended for all those who love the beauty of the house of God, first the priests and the church singers, but also for [...] all the orthodox believers who love the Saints and the sanctity.⁸

Liturgical formation includes the effort of the entire Church and of everyone of her members – every believer – to be actively and consciously involved in the celebration of the Sacraments, in the celebration of the liturgy of hours, and in every liturgical action. The liturgical formation implies a very serious formation of the clergy as well as of the laity, which perform different liturgical roles.

From a theoretical point of view, in order to have an efficient liturgical formation, multiple aspects have to be analysed: the object and the purpose of the worship, which the encounter with the Resurrected Christ and His redeeming grace; the celebrants and their roles, i.e. laity and clergy, in order to better involve the entire community in the celebration, and, the way in which the service should be performed (the ritual and the rubrics, the symbols used during celebrations, biblical figures, the responsibility of all participants, etc.).

In order to achieve these aims – for the formation of the clergy and the laity –, several means might be identified, among which the following one might be mentioned: the periodical printing of new, revised and improved service books, which usually include lengthy introductions and forewords, in order to explain the purpose of the volume, the content of the volume and the principles used for the revision; the proclamation of specific commemorative years for essential Christian topics (e.g., Baptism, Marriage, Unction, Eucharist, Confession, etc.), systematic liturgical and mystagogical catechesis, and a very serious academic formation of the clergy and of the laity.

8 Patriarch Daniel, *Prefață, for Mineiul pe septembrie*, EIBMO, Bucharest 2015, p. 6. September is the first month of the liturgical calendar of the Orthodox Church; therefore, the foreword to this volume is one of the longest and contains multiple explanatory notes.

2. Pedagogy and liturgical formation

Efficient participation requires understanding; understanding requires knowledge; and knowledge should be conveyed in an accessible, demonstrative way, especially for the present day Christian, who is frequently caught in the 'noise' of the surrounding world. Efficient formation resembles both a lecture – operating with large groups – and a seminary or practical session – interacting with small or very small groups. No matter which method is used, there will always be a trinomial, consisting in the one responsible with the formation (e.g., the professor in the university, the bishop in the cathedral, priest in the parish, etc.), those receiving the formation (e.g., students, parishoners, etc.) and the curriculum.

Beside the theoretical and practical information, those charged with the formation should be well trained in teaching methods, and the various methods of teaching can be improved; there is a specific training in pedagogy and teaching. According to the type of program and formation, the group receiving the formation might be an entire community or parish, but also certain smaller groups, consisting in people who voluntarily chose to be part of a specific liturgical formation program. Finally, there is the curriculum, which should be very well prepared.⁹

3. Liturgical formation of the clergy and of the laity

In order to contribute to the formation of the laity entrusted to them in every parish, the clergy should be trained from the theoretical and practical point of view. In the Romanian Orthodox Church, contemporary formation of the clergy takes place in Seminaries, of High School grade which are part of confessional High Schools, or are located in monasteries, or are independent entities, under the direct supervision of the diocesan bishop. These seminaries used to have five years of studies, during which student studied general topic – as in any high school – and also specific theological topics. Even if there was a period when one could be ordained after graduating Seminary, today seminary studies are no longer required in order

9 Cf. Patriarch Daniel, *Prefață*, n. 9.

to become a member of the clergy, since a bachelor degree, offered by a Faculty of Theology of University grade, became compulsory.

Usually – even if there is no absolute uniformity – liturgical studies are part of the curriculum for the last two years (of a total of four years) of study. In order to improve the formation of the potential future clergy, an official curriculum is available on the site of the Patriarchate,¹⁰ covering all essential topics which must be studied: and introduction and general aspects of liturgical theology, the Divine Liturgy, the Liturgy of Hours and the study of the Sacraments from the point of view of the liturgical theology.

The formation is sustained by the printing of revised and updated edition of the classical Romanian manuals of Liturgical Theology; the most recent ones are the *General Liturgics* and the *Special Liturgics* elaborated in the last half of the 20th century by late professor of liturgical theology at the University of Bucharest, Fr. Ene Braniște, and revised during the last decade by his successors there.¹¹

Alongside with the theoretical formation, there is also a practical formation, which supposes multiple aspects: church ritual and rubrics study (which focuses on the rubrics concerning the choir), church music, practical liturgics (which focuses on the rubrics, practical aspects, liturgical ‘choreography’, attitudes, etc.), pastoral theology and practice.

Among the multiple aspects of the general program of the liturgical formation undergone by the Romanian Orthodox Church, mostly during the last two decades, two aspects of the extended curriculum must be mentioned: the revision and improvement of the liturgical books as well as the commemorative years with liturgical topics.

¹⁰ [https://patriarhia.ro/images/pdf/Invatamant_pdf/universitar/3134_\(2015\)_Anexa_14_Teologie_liturgica.pdf](https://patriarhia.ro/images/pdf/Invatamant_pdf/universitar/3134_(2015)_Anexa_14_Teologie_liturgica.pdf) (20.10.2022). Cf. *Teologia ortodoxă în secolul al XX-lea și la începuturile secolului al XXI-lea*, ed. V. Ioniță, Basilica, Bucharest 2011; liturgical theology is discussed at p. 503–591.

¹¹ E. Braniște, *Liturgica generală cu noțiuni de artă bisericească, arhitectură și pictură creștină* (*General Liturgics with Notations and Ecclesial Art and Christian Architecture and Painting*), vols. 1–2, revised and supplemented edition by N.D. Necula, Basilica, Bucharest 2015; E. Braniște, *Liturgica specială* (*Special Liturgics*), revised and supplemented edition by N. D. Necula and Ch. Lovin, Basilica, Bucharest 2015; cf. N. Necula, *Tradiție și înnoire în slujirea liturgică*, vols. 1–2, Trinitas, Bucharest 2014.

The performance of the divine services in the Orthodox Church requires the use of the more than twenty services books intended for the use of the clergy, of the choirs/reader or both.¹² Since the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries, the Romanian Orthodox Church has all its liturgical books in the vernacular. These volumes underwent several translations, revisions, and improvement, using Greek or Slavonic originals. In many cases, the editions have extensive forewords which explain the content and the importance of the respective volume – its mystagogy.

After 2008, an extensive program consisting in the revision of all services books took place. Most of the editions have comprehensive forewords, introductory texts which concern the clergy (Introduction to the *Liturghier – The Missal*) or the laity (Introduction to the *Ceaslov – The Book of Hours*). Also it should be mentioned the fact that these new books are printed in a large number of copies and became available in multiple bookshops, thus allowing even the laity to obtain a copy of the services books in order to improve their understanding of the celebration and to improve their active participation by reading the services at home, before going to church.

The above mentioned aspects are illustrated by several introductions to the new editions of the service books. In this regard, the foreword to the *Missal (Liturghier)* develops multiple levels: *historical* (a short history of the service book, the first editions printed in the Romanian Countries, Divine Liturgy as the source of Romanian unity and continuity, Divine Liturgy

12 The revision of the service books is a contemporary project of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate. The process of editing, printing, translating and improving the service books used during liturgical celebrations has its roots five centuries ago. The entire revision project follows certain general principles: fidelity to the Greek original text, continuity of the tradition of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and the clarity of the text for the present day faithful. The aim of the revision activity is first and foremost practical. Since the Divine Liturgy is a λογικὴ λατρεία, the Church has to do everything in its power to help the priest to better understand and to celebrate better the Liturgy and, also, to equally help the faithful to better understand, to better experience the Liturgy and to embed in their lives the worship acts; see C. Login, *L'utilisation de la langue vernaculaire pendant les célébrations liturgiques et son importance pour la communication adéquate de la vérité divine: l'exemple de l'Église Orthodoxe Roumaine*, in: *Liturgie et communication*, eds. A. Lossky, G. Sekulovski, Aschendorff, Münster 2016, p. 301–311 (*Studia oecumenica friburgensia*, 61).

as the source of universal orthodox community), *theological* (Divine Liturgy as the source of sanctity for the orthodox people, Divine Liturgy as the source of eternal life, Divine Liturgy as the source of universal orthodox community), and *cultural* (Divine Liturgy as the source of Christian culture) and concludes: "Since the Divine Liturgy is the heart of the spiritual life of the Church, it is important that its text must be as correct as possible from the dogmatic and liturgical point of view;" also, from a pastoral point of view, "the revisions should be introduced gradually [...] since the clergy and the laity are used to certain traditional formulas..."¹³, which explains the reason for which the 2012 of the *Liturghier* was printed as a temporary edition.

Similarly, the foreword to *The Book of Hours (Ceaslov)* is addressed to the clergy, to the monastics and to the laity in equal manner and is entitled: 'The Book of Hours – the mystagogy of the sanctification of the everyday time'. The text shortly presents the history of the book, explains its content and insists on the *mystagogy* of the Liturgy of the Hours, through each every participant "become part of the entire history of salvation, from the creation of the world and the fall of the man into sin, to the salvation of the human kind through Christ, and to the His expected return in glory."¹⁴

The commemorative years are an excellent mean to improve the formation of the clergy (meetings with the diocesan bishop twice each year, participations to scientific conferences, etc.) and of the laity (various manifestations dedicated to a certain topic, translations and publishing of various books, and, recently, the *Pastoral Letters of the Holy Synod* read during the Liturgy of the first Sunday of the Nativity Fast).

Even if in various local Orthodox Churches there were certain annual specific topics, in the Romanian Orthodox Church this became a tradition after the election of HB Patriarch Daniel. Many of the commemorative topics focus on the liturgy and represent a part of a larger liturgical formation program. The liturgical topics were the following:¹⁵ The Holy Scripture and the Divine Liturgy (2008), The Baptism and the Matrimony (2011), The Anointing of the Sick (2012), Confession and Eucharist (2014), The mission

13 Patriarch Daniel, *Prefață for Liturghier*, EIBMO, Bucharest 2012, p. 5–12.

14 Patriarch Daniel, *Prefață for Ceaslov*, EIBMO, Bucharest 2014, p. 5–8.

15 <https://basilica.ro/ce-tematici-au-stabilit-bisericile-ortodoxe-pentru-anul-2020/> (20.10.2022).

of the parish (2015), The religious education and formation of the youth (2016), The icons and the icon-painters (2017), The translators of the liturgical books (2019), Pastoral care for children and parents (2020), The prayer and the hesychast fathers (2022) and the topic for 2023 will be Liturgical Hymns and hymn writers.

Conclusions

All above mentioned instruments are placed in the service of the formation – liturgical, but not exclusively – of the clergy and of the laity. In the Romanian Orthodox Church there is a constant preoccupation concerning the continuous liturgical formation of both the clergy and the laity. The liturgical formation of the laity is absolutely necessary since many Christians do not fully understand the mysteries of the faith, thus living their Christian life in a rather superficial manner. In order to accomplish an excellent liturgical formation, besides the theoretical training it is essential to actively implicate the laity in the liturgical life of the Church.

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Abstract

Formation For and Through Liturgy: An Overview of the Liturgical Formation in Contemporary Romanian Orthodoxy

The very centre and the best expression of the Orthodox Church is its liturgical life. The Liturgy of the Church is a re-presentation or an actualization of the entire divine economy which becomes effective and redeeming in the life of the universe and of the man, in each epoch. Due to the complex history and structure of its liturgy, the Orthodox Church tried to explain it. In the Romanian Orthodox Church, the explanation of the liturgical life varied through ages; it was influenced by the cultural developments and by the political conditions in the Romanian territories, until, finally, an autochthonous liturgical tradition finally emerged. During the last two decades, the Holy Synod, the central ecclesial authority, expressed an increase preoccupation to intensify the genuine Christian life of the laity and to render them aware of their ecclesial belonging, to make all church members aware that they belong to the Mystical Body of Christ. This preoccupation intends to deepen the liturgical life theoretically but, foremost, practically, by actively involving the laity in a genuine liturgical life. In order to achieve these purposes, several means might be identified: the printing of new, revised and improved service books, by estab-

lishing specific commemorative years for essential Christian topics (i.e., Baptism, Marriage, Unction, Eucharist, Confession), through systematic liturgical catechesis, through a more serious formation of the clergy. The present text will try offer a concise systematic review of the background and of the means used by the Romanian Orthodox Church to accomplish the above mentioned goals. This study will include an analysis of the different editions of the service books and their forewords, which frequently explain the text of the edition, the principles used for the revision and the mystagogy of the services; and an analysis of the commemorative years with liturgical topics (e.g., the Holy Cross; Marriage and Baptism; The Anointing of the Sick; Eucharist and Confession; the parish).

Keywords: liturgical formation, clergy, laity, Romanian orthodoxy

Abstrakt

Współczesna formacja liturgiczna w Rumuńskim Kościele Prawosławnym

Centrum i najlepszym wyrazem Kościoła prawosławnego jest jego życie liturgiczne. Liturgia Kościoła jest reprezentacją lub aktualizacją całej Bożej ekonomii zbawienia, która staje się skuteczna w życiu wszechświata i człowieka każdej epoki. Cerkiew prawosławna zawsze starała się wyjaśniać złożoną historię i strukturę swojej liturgii. W Rumuńskim Kościele prawosławnym wyjaśnienia życia liturgicznego zmieniały się na przestrzeni wieków, ulegając wpływom rozwoju kulturalnego i warunków politycznych na terytoriach rumuńskich, które doprowadziły do powstania lokalnej tradycji liturgicznej. W ciągu ostatnich dwudziestu lat Święty Synod, centralna władza kościelna, wyrażał coraz większą troskę o pogłębienie prawdziwego życia chrześcijańskiego świeckich i uświadomienie im eklezjalnej przynależności do Mistycznego Ciała Chrystusa. Celem tej troski było aktywne włączenie świeckich w autentyczne życie liturgiczne. Można zidentyfikować kilka środków zastosowanych w jego realizacji: druk nowych, poprawionych i ulepszonych ksiąg liturgicznych, omówienie w poszczególnych latach tematów związanych z życiem chrześcijańskim (np. sakrament chrztu, małżeństwa, namaszczenia chorych, Eucharystii, spowiedzi), systematyczne katechezy liturgiczne, solidna formacja duchowieństwa. W niniejszym tekście postaramy się dokonać zwięzłego, systematycznego przeglądu tych środków zastosowanych przez Rumuński Kościół Prawosławny do osiągnięcia

wyżej wymienionych celów. Opracowanie obejmuje analizę różnych wydań ksiąg liturgicznych i ich przedmów, które często wyjaśniają treść danej księgi, zasady stosowane przy odnowie obrzędów i ich mistagogię oraz prezentację wybranych lat „tematycznych” poświęconych liturgii (np. Święty Krzyż, małżeństwo i chrzest, namaszczenie chorych, Eucharystia i spowiedź, parafia).

Słowa kluczowe: formacja liturgiczna, duchowieństwo, laikat, prawosławie rumuńskie