

**Liturgical "Rebirth"**  
**in the Church of Greece today:**  
**a doubtful effort of Liturgical Reform**

**Events:**

We will start our presentation with the description of facts and events, and we will proceed with a critical evaluation of all these particulars on the basis of the Liturgical theology.

**Archbishop Christodoulos and  
the Committee of *Liturgical Rebirth***

One of the first actions of Archbishop Christodoulos upon his ascent to the archiepiscopal throne of the Church of Greece (09/05/1998) was to declare among his more important projects the initiative for a Liturgical Reform, which he named *Liturgical Renewal* or *Liturgical Rebirth*.

Within the framework of this objective, in 1999 Archbishop Christodoulos founded the *Special Synodical Committee on Liturgical "Rebirth"*, many from the members of which are specialized in the field of Liturgics. There are, however, also members of the Committee, who, though lacking any academic titles in Liturgical specialization, nevertheless had the skill to contribute considerably to the work of the Committee, by depositing their precious multiannual pastoral experience and wisdom, as also their knowledge from personal study of the subjects of Liturgy!<sup>1</sup>

The Committee sits 6 times per year, and organizes a Pan-Hellenic Liturgical conference every year. In those Meetings, apart from the preparation of the agenda for upcoming Pan-Hellenic conferences, it studies a variety of Liturgical issues, and submits relative proposals to the Holy Synod.

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<sup>1</sup> The following persons served in this Committee, either as regular or as provisional members:  
Chairman: Most Reverend bishop Daniel Metropolitan of Kaisariani (a suburb of Athens).

Members:

From the Theological Faculty of Athens University:

Archimandrite Nikolaos Ioannidis, Professor of Patristics,

Protobresbyter Dimitrios Tzerpos, Professor of Liturgics,

Protobresbyter Theodoros Koumarianos, Lector of Liturgics,

Mr. Athanasios Vourlis, Professor of Hymnology,

Mr George Filias, Assistant Professor of Liturgics,

Grigoris Stathis, Professor of Musicology,

Mr Sotirios Despotis, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Hymnology.

From the Theological Faculty of University of Thessaloniki:

Mr Ioannis Fountoulis, Professor Emeritus of Liturgics,

Protobresbyter Konstantinos Karaisaridis, Liturgiologist, student of the known Rumanian theologian Fr. Dimitrios Staniloae,

Protobresbyter Basileios Kalliakmanis, Assistant Professor of Ethics and Sociology,

Mr Petros Basileiadis, Professor of New Testament,

Mr Panagiotis Skaltsis, Assistant Professor of Liturgics.

Also the Archimandrite Ilias Mastrogiannopoulos, theologian and writer, and Mr Aristeidis Panotis, teacher at the Ecclesiastical Lyceum, both from Athens.

Archimandrite Serafeim Kalogeropoulos serves as a secretary to the Committee

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### 'Synaxis' Review: the pioneers

However, before we proceed into the work of the Committee, and into the various initiatives on Liturgical subjects of the Holy Synod or of the Archbishop and of other Metropolitans, in order to give a complete picture of the Liturgical movement in Greece it is worth mentioning another effort, which preceded that of the new Archbishop. This effort did not begin from some official administrative institution of the Church of Greece, but it constitutes a very serious, determined, and conscientious initiative by members of the Church. It was that pioneer work of the theological review "Synaxis".

Now, "Synaxis" is one of the most serious theological reviews published in Greece, which besides its other features, combines content which is strictly scientific, with content which is simpler, pastoral as we say, as well as journalistic. In February 1998, "Synaxis" organized a Liturgical Congress in a suburb of Athens, with the participation of eminent scholars, which embraced a variety of Liturgical subjects among which were the Holy Eucharist, Marriage, the Language of Worship, the Byzantine cathedral Rite *Asmatikos*, and the issue of active participation of lay people into the Liturgy.

Through this congress, "Synaxis" proposed to the Church to take care seriously of the Liturgical aspect of her being, give an utmost priority to the Liturgy and take care assiduously and diligently of the Liturgical issues. To that effect, Synaxis suggested to the Church to take advantage of the academic research in this field, and exploit the manuscript and Patristic Tradition. More concretely, Synaxis proposed the mending of the order of the Holy Eucharist based on the Tradition, the reintroduction of elements of *Asmaticos* into the practice of Worship, the reform of the Marriage ceremony, so as to reduce the elements of an Old-Testament type of Marriage theology, and to enrich and place emphasis on elements of the New Testament and of the Patristic theology of Marriage. Finally, this congress extensively discussed the problem of language.

The congress proceedings were published in two issues of "Synaxis" and were then circulated in all of Greece. A discussion was initiated through the review, between the contributors to the congress and the readers, which continued for over a year! Two presentations of the congress were translated into English and were published in Orthodox theological journals in Europe and the USA. Even there, an intense reaction and opposition was created through the exchange of letters and the publication of articles in the same or in other reviews. Moreover, there existed certain more intense oppositions and fierce reactions, which will be discussed later!

### Conferences by the Holy Synod and the Special Committee

After this pioneer congress by "Synaxis", followed the congresses which were organized by the Holy Synod via the Committee on *Liturgical Rebirth*.

Two representatives from each Metropolis participated in these Pan-Hellenic annual Conferences. Other interested persons participate as well, since attendance is free and open to anyone interested. In figures, we could say that roughly 150 individuals participate in each congress, from which 50 to 60 are clergy - representatives of the various dioceses, while the remainder are participating out of personal interest.

Up until now 7 such Congresses have taken place. Each congress lasts 3-4 days. During each Congress, roughly 15 presentations are made. Each presentation is followed by an open discussion and sporadic Greek-style fights! The Congress drafts a communiqué with certain conclusions. The communiqué also formulates proposals to the Holy Synod.

The proceedings of each congress are published before the next conference. Beside the fact that they circulate widely, they are sent free of charge to all the parishes of Greece. Thus at least, all clergymen in Greece have the possibility to get informed about the conclusions of the conferences.

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Until now, the following Conferences have taken place:

1st Conference: October 1999, Subject: "The sacrament of Baptism yesterday and today".

2nd Conference: October 2000, Subject: "The demand for Liturgical Renewal in the Orthodox Church today".

3rd Conference: October 2001, Subject: "The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist".

In September of the same year, this conference was preceded by a two-day congress on the subject of "the Holy Vestments and the daily attire of the Orthodox Clergy".

4th Conference: November 2002, Subject: "The sacrament of Marriage in the Orthodox Church".

5th Conference: November 2003, Subject: "The sacramental use of the Gospel".

6th Conference: September 2004, "Christian Worship and Idolatry."!!!! ?

7th Conference: September 2005, Subject: "The sacrament of Priesthood".

The following conferences are upcoming:

8th Conference: September 2006, Subject: "Christian Festal Year".

9th International Panorthodox Liturgical Congress. November 2007. This conference will take a scientific approach and not a purely pastoral one.

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## Encyclicals

### *Encyclicals of the Holy Synod:*

Within the same framework of the Liturgical movement, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece has issued a series of Encyclicals of Liturgical content amongst which the following should be particularly noted:

Encyclical No. 2784: On the way of reading the Prayers of the Divine Liturgy (31/3/2004).

Encyclical No. 2785: On the participation of the faithful in the Holy Eucharist (31/3/2004).

Encyclical No. 2786: On the time of Divine Liturgy and the possibility of its celebration in the evening (31/3/2004).

Encyclical No. 2791: On the Holy Scripture Readings and the Preaching in the order of the Divine Liturgy (30/6/2004).

Encyclical No. 2792: On the Sacramental life of the Church and the Electronic Mass Means (30/6/2004).

Encyclical No. 2793: *Εκφωνητική σημειογραφία* (Traditional ways of intonation and reading) in the Orthodox Worship (30/6/2004).

Encyclical No. 2794: On the restitution of the Order of the Sunday Matins' Gospel to its regular place (30/6/2004).

Encyclical No. 2825: On plainness and simplicity in the vestments of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons (29/11/2005).

The following Encyclicals could also be categorized as having Liturgical content:

Encyclical No. 1368: On the codification of saints and their services in the Greek Church. (6/5/2004).

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Encyclical No. 967: On the prohibition against the entry of television crews inside churches and against the live broadcasting of the Divine Liturgy (4/3/2005).

Encyclical No. 2716: On burial of unchristened children (3/7/2001).

Encyclical No. 2734: On the cremation of the dead (27/3/2002).

### *Encyclicals by Archbishop Christodoulos*

Besides the Encyclicals of the Holy Synod, Archbishop Christodoulos himself, as shepherd of the city of Athens, has issued another series of Encyclicals to the Clergy of his diocese.

Offering the Divine Worship.

The Altar-boys.

The carrying out of the "Προσκομιδή», i.e. the preparation of the Gifts.

The pontifical Liturgy.

The offering of Holy Incense.

Relations between Priests and Laity.

The recitation of the Prayers in the Divine Liturgy.

Kneeling on Sundays.

The «καίρος», i.e. the preparation of the Celebrants.

To Chanters.

Precepts to Chanters.

The recitation of Scriptural Readings.

### **Content of Encyclicals**

To be concise, we could say that the Encyclicals of the Holy Synod and the Archbishop, as well as the spirit of the congresses and the Committee on *Liturgical Rebirth*, **stress the following points:**

1. The major objective is to re-establish the Eucharist as the center of Church life. This means proceeding in a series of liturgical regulations or reforms, aiming at reinstating the Holy Eucharist as the foundation and the keystone of the Church's being.

2. To that effect, the efforts are focused on the active and live participation of all, clergy and laity, to the great Sacrament.

3. In order then to restore the Eucharist as a vital dialogue of life and love between God and His people, Celebrators, Bishops and Presbyters, are advised to read most of the Priestly Prayers of the Holy Eucharist with audible voice, so that the participation of the faithful in all that takes place is made possible, so that by hearing the Prayers they can actually pray through them, and reply "Amen", consciously and willingly.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Towards this end, the Priests are instructed to prepare themselves for the Holy Services by studying the Priestly Prayers in advance at home, so that they will not falter in their speech and the prayers will not be muddled when read in front of the faithful. It is also suggested to the Priests to familiarize themselves with the operation of the microphones and their settings for the optimal operation of the sound system, to avoid disturbance and confusion during the holy Services.

4. Additionally, for the actualization of this aim, it is decisively essential that the Priestly Prayers be read at their right place within the structure of the Liturgy. The Encyclicals namely stress, that the Prayers of the Liturgy should not be cut off from their proper spot and recited extracted from the structural sequence between them and the other parts of the Liturgy.

5. Avoiding the exaggerations in chanting the Biblical Readings of the Services is also recommended, so that the text will not be distorted. The chanting of the Scripture readings must be done in a way that their meaning becomes more explicit and intelligible!

6. Furthermore, the same thing is recommended to the chanters regarding the hymns (the "troparia"). Chanting is not meant to obscure the meaning of the words of a hymn. Moreover, chanters must chant in a way that would facilitate the faithful to follow and chant together.

7. It is also indicated to the Priests to give sermons, lectures and seminars for the faithful about the theology and the history of Worship. The objective is to help the faithful to participate in the Divine Worship, *firstly* with the disposition of their soul, their willing dedication to what is taking place, and *secondly* to participate by chanting, answering to the liturgical acclamations of the Celebrants, bowing, kneeling etc.<sup>3</sup>

8. It is indicated also to try at any cost to maintain the Tradition that Lay people bring bread for the Eucharist ("prosforon"), which must have been kneaded by them in their homes, with prayer and devotion. Priests are also advised and encouraged to use all the loaves brought by the people at the preparation of the gifts in Prothesis, by taking particles from all of them.

**Furthermore the Holy Synod and the Archbishop recommend and indicate the following:**

9. The Holy Synod repetitively stresses a fundamental principle of Tradition that "everything in our Divine Worship and especially in the Divine Liturgy owns its proper place, which naturally is independent of the religious or emotional or pietistic elation of the celebrating priest. Therefore celebrators are discouraged from introducing their own flavors and conduct in the Divine Liturgy and on the contrary are expected to follow the applicable orders of Church at that time."

√ 10. *The use of traditional forms of vestments is indicated as appropriate, whereas exaggerated and fancy types of material is discouraged.*

11. The observation of Tradition, and the genuineness, as much in the style, as also in the quality of the *Holy Vessels* and apparatus used for the Holy Services is indicated to be important. For this purpose, the Special Synodical Organisation with the name "*Academy of Ecclesiastical Arts*" was founded. This Organisation will aim to research historically and scientifically the Tradition of the Church as for the Ecclesiastical Arts, in order that it offers the interested parties suitable information on the production of Vestments and Holy Vessels.

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<sup>3</sup> The provision of small booklets with the Divine Liturgy in each seat is recommended, so that the attendance of the Laity in the celebration is facilitated. In addition, it should concern the Priests that the faithful have good physical conditions for prayer inside the temple. Well and comfortable seats, carpets, heating, air conditioning, cleanliness, suitable lighting, silence, absolute tranquillity etc.

12. It is suggested that in the preparation of the Holy Gifts in the Prothesis, the Lance should be used, and not a common knife, for the cutting off of the "Lamb" and the various commemorative particles.

13. The Encyclical about incense highlights the importance of the Liturgical use of incense and its symbolic strength. Nonetheless, in the same Encyclical there is an attempt to put some order in the use (or abuse) of incense so as to avoid exaggerations or frivolities.

14. Another Encyclical restores the Sunday Matins' Gospel of the Resurrection in its right place, that is to say after the chanting of Anastasima Eulogitaria. It is indicated to the Priests to wear white liturgical vestments at the reading of the Sunday Matins' Gospel, thus symbolically expressing the joy of Resurrection!

15. Also, the reinstatement of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in the evening, i.e. in its proper time, is recommended to the Priests.

16. Now, as far as the Divine Liturgy is concerned, the Holy Synod and the Archbishop moved on to the following regulations:

17. It is indicated to chant the entire *prokeimenon* of the Apostle, as well as the entire *Alleluia* (with the proper psalmic verses) before the Gospel, and that the censing before the Gospel takes place at its right place, i.e. during the *Alleluia*, and not during the Apostle reading, as had wrongly prevailed, which is inappropriate and distracting.

18. The same Encyclical restores preaching of the sermon to its right place, that is to say immediately after the Gospel; not before the Holy Communion as had wrongly prevailed with the excuse that that moment is the zenith of attendance of the faithful in the Church, so that more people would seemingly benefit from the sermon.

19. Likewise, it is unacceptable and intolerable to continue the bad practice of moving the partaking of Holy Communion to the end of the Liturgy, i.e. after the Apolysis, and to offer it from the side doors of the Holy Altar, which had prevailed in the recent past for reasons of time saving! "The distribution of Holy Communion must take place without hastiness and with the appropriate serenity, orderliness, care, and reverence", the Archbishop states, "as the goal and the most important act of the Liturgy is to receive Holy Communion"!

20. Also, it is reminded to the Priests that it is *their* own duty and privilege and not of the councillors to distribute the antidoron, as this act is of particular pastoral importance.

**Also in the outlook and to the purpose of *Liturgical Rebirth* particular importance is attributed to the behaviour of those who serve in the church at the time of worship, and to the attitude of the faithful towards each other.**

21. It is indicated to the Priests to not attack the people during the Liturgy with scolds, but rather, whenever they have to give advice for orderly behaviour during the services, to do it in a modest and kind way.

22. The self-evident behaviour is reminded to the chanters, that they should not laugh or joke while on their stands, nor loiter there. On the contrary, they should inspire devotion and reverence to the service with their attitude and their behaviour.

**Certain slightly more radical implementations are also proposed such as:**

23. The simplification of the holy vestments of the bishops!

24. The frequent Holy Communion of Lay people. This is very important if we take into consideration that so far the approach of the Hierarchy to this matter has been totally the opposite!<sup>4</sup>

25. It is allowed to Lay people with proper education and skills to give the sermon in the Liturgy. *The previous Archbishop had ruled against it many times!*

26. The kneeling during the Epiclesis on Sundays and the Pentecost period after Easter is reprovved.<sup>5</sup>

27. It is indicated to the Priests and the readers to avoid as much as possible the repetition of the same Evangelic and Apostolic texts on the feasts of Saints, as it is prescribed by the Typicon. It is suggested, to prefer to read the Gospel and the Apostle *of the day* according to *Lexionarium*, which is always different, instead of that *of the date*, which according to the category of the saint, it is very often the same!

28. It is decided that the reading of the Gospel and the Apostle of the Liturgy, after being read in the original language, should be repeated in modern Greek also, so that its content becomes comprehensible to all.

### Initiatives of various Metropolises

In addition to the initiatives of the Synod and the Archbishop, several Metropolises, parishes and monastic communities have made some similar steps towards reviving the Liturgical life of their flock.

Liturgical Seminars and Conferences are organized in most of the Metropolises and Parishes.

Furthermore it has become rather common in many Parishes to have the prayers of the Divine Liturgy read aloud and clearly, while Services are now celebrated in stateliness, exactness and reverence, rather than hastily and unceremoniously.

In some parishes and monasteries, the active participation of the people has gone as far as the Epiclesis. The priest will wait until the choir are over with the hymn "We hymn Thee ..." and then read audibly the Epiclesis, while the people participate by replying "Amen" at the designated points of the prayer.

Quite hesitantly there is a growing custom of celebrating Marriage with Holy Eucharist, or having Baptism followed by the Holy Eucharist.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, in the Metropolis of Nicopolis certain services are fully celebrated in spoken plain Greek. This development has been initiated by the Metropolitan himself, who is otherwise generally regarded as one of the most conservative-minded bishops.

<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it is considered completely wrong and anti-Eucharistic to receive Holy Communion without attendance in the Divine Liturgy.

<sup>5</sup> It is pointed out that kneeling at that time is contrary to the holy canons, and the insistence to kneel at this point is an expression of pietistic stubbornness.

<sup>6</sup> Some sort of agape takes place in several parishes right after the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. Most parish churches have an annex building in their ambience with rooms suitable for talks, seminars, banquets etc. In many of these parishes, people are offered coffee and cookies for free after the Divine Liturgy, while in even fewer cases parishioners will bring their meal from home and share it with all in the parish hall on great feasts.

### The new Hieratikon: an interesting attempt.

It is fair to say that the decisive criterion to judge the work of a Liturgical Reform is the publication of Liturgical books.

The official Liturgical books in Greece are published by the Apostolic Diakonia Organization of the Church of Greece, i.e. the special authorized publishing house of the Holy Synod. Recent publications include the Hieratikon, the Concise Hieratikon, and the Abridged Euchologion.

Yet, a curious fact is worth mentioning at this point. In theory, since a Committee on Liturgical Issues has been established and produced work, the Apostolic Diakonia should cooperate with this Committee for the publication of new Liturgical books. However, this hardly happened in practice. The Apostolic Diakonia published three of the most important Liturgical books without joining forces with the Committee. *In deep honesty, one has to admit that this is a sign of inconsistency and deficient ecclesiastical ethos.*

Moving beyond this distressing fact, the general viewpoint of the Liturgical Reform, appears to have impacted on the publication of these books. Moreover, Fr. Konstantinos Papagiannis has been the editor of the new Hieratikon, and although he is not a university person, nevertheless he has proved a very good Liturgiologist.

Given the restricted time limits of this presentation, it is impossible to cover the whole range of these new publications here. Samples of the benefits of certain chapters of the new Hieratikon will be discussed briefly. Our comments will be confined in the edition of the Divine Liturgy, both by St. John the Chrysostom and by St. Basil the Great:

1. Rubrics have been reduced to a minimum. This makes an apparent difference! Older versions of the Hieratikon kept exhaustive, detailed, and quite tiresome *diataxeis*.

2. The text of the Divine Liturgy has been subdivided in units, headed by labels of theological value taken from Church Tradition. A typical example of this approach is the purposeful use of the terms 'The Entrance' and 'The Entrance of the Holy Gifts' instead of the misleading terms 'The Small Entrance' and "The Great Entrance".

3. The prompt for 'low-voiced reading' of the Priest's Prayers has been deleted. Also, all of the prayers have been inserted in their *correct place and time*. Older versions of the Hieratikon had caused total disintegration of Divine Liturgy, because they would have most prayers printed after their read-aloud endings (*ekfoneseis*) or in a completely irrelevant point of the Liturgy, meant to be whispered by the Celebrator himself.

**Touching now some specific points of the revised text, one can observe this:**

4. The troparion "Prepareth Bethlehem..." has been deleted from the opening of the Prothesis Service.

5. Unlike the instructions of the older Hieratikon, the priest is now directed to address the Cathedra rather than the Prothesis, after the Entrance, as he recites "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord...".

6. The priest exits to cense before the reading of the Gospel while the choir chants the whole of "Hallelujah", rather than during the reading of the Apostle.

7. The two prayers of the Faithful before the Cherubic Hymn are restored as part of the Divine Liturgy –these had been deleted in the older versions.

8. The dialogue between the Ministers "The Holy Spirit shall come..." has not been restored, but a footnote states it is wrong and refers the reader to the Notes section where the right form of the dialogue is provided.

9. The order instructing the priest to bless the people holding the so-called folded aer in his hand as he recites "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and..." before the Anaphora, has been removed.

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10. The priest so far was erroneously ordered to deliver the invitation "Let us give thanks to the Lord" turning to the icon of Christ –this is now corrected.

11. A footnote to the supplication "Thine Own, of Thine Own, we offer To Thee...." states the right text as "In offering to Thee Thine Own, of Thine Own, ....".

12. The troparia of the Third Hour and the repetition of "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!" interpolated so far in the Epiclesis have now been deleted.

13. Several phrases in the text of Divine Liturgy have been restored; for example, "The fullness of the Holy Spirit" and "The fervency of the Holy Spirit" have replaced "The fullness of the cup of the faith of the Holy Spirit" and "The fervency of the faith, full of the Holy Spirit".

14. A footnote to the interpolated personal prayers before the Holy Communion of the priests informs that these prayers are not a genuine part of the Divine Liturgy.

15. Another footnote to the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil notifies that, according to Tradition, the celebration of this Liturgy is possible on more than the ten customary occasions round the year.

16. The interpolated phrase in the Epiclesis in St. Basil's Liturgy "changing them by the power of your Holy Spirit" has been omitted.

17. The rubrics relating to Chorostasia by a Bishop during the Divine Liturgy have properly been removed, because in theological terms it is self-evident that, if a Bishop is present, he either celebrates the Eucharist in the normal order or informally attends the Liturgy from inside the sanctuary.

18. The end of the new Hieratikon includes an Addendum with some prayers of the Liturgy of Saint Chrysostom from Barberini 336. These are:

Prayer of the Entrance: "Benefactor and Creator of everything ..."

Prayer of the Trisagion Hymn: "Most holy of the holy, our God ..."

Prayer of the cathedra at the altar: "O Master Lord, the God of powers, save Thy people..."

Prayer Opisthambonos: "What proper praise, hymn or glorification...?" etc.

19. The final section of the new Hieratikon includes key Notes authored by the editor of the new version, Fr. Konstantinos Papagiannis. Several of these observations substantiate the current amendments in the text of the Divine Liturgy by making reference to the ancient form of the Byzantine Liturgy, while additional revisions are discussed based on the Tradition of manuscripts, as a proposal for inclusion in future editions of the Hieratikon!

### Reactions

Only naturally, as it has always been the case in Church History, this initiative was also received with intense reaction.

In a chronological order, first came the motion against the 'Synaxis' Congress. A letter signed by 22 priests was sent to the editors, in which more or less all of the congress participants were being attacked as heretics, followers of New Age, influenced by secularism, attempting to undermine Church, damage Tradition, introduce modernist ideas etc.

The same reacting cells caused a wave of opposition against the *Liturgical Rebirth* movement, through articles and meetings.

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Articles: From the very beginnings of this initiative, articles of a scientific and non-scientific type appeared in newspapers and periodicals, expressing disagreement with the movement. Let it be noted that the Archbishop's initiative was not refuted on theological or scientific grounds but with the use of cutting language, misleading facts and mistrust. Favorite descriptions of the Archbishop included 'heretic' in all lexical forms and flections, as well as 'negator of Tradition', 'modernist', 'neoarianist', 'neonestorianist', 'neomonophysite', 'neobarlaamist', 'fallacious' etc.

Meetings: A second mode of reaction has been to call meetings as a form of anti-conference alternative. Such meetings have had the character of a 'Robber Council', since they have generally been called as a result of individual initiatives, usually by monks or hieromonks, without the participation of any Bishops. As anti-conferences, they have worked mainly on concurrent dates as the workings of the Church Conferences. Although some members of the academic community have indeed participated in such meetings, the stars have normally been clergymen with a fame of elevated spirituality, some 'spiritual elders' or 'gifted monks' etc. The views and the outlook of these meetings are largely based on the theologians of the Turkish Occupation era. As regards contemporary theologians, Romanides is their main source for reference.

Let us point out here the odd perception of Tradition that is dominant in the way of thinking in these circles. According to this strange perception, the far past of Tradition is judged against the present or the recent past, not the other way round. Put otherwise, the value and authority of Didache is assessed with the measure of the theology of Saint Nicodemos the Athonite. While one might say such a perception can have a certain progressive character, this is not true, because although its supporters attribute special value to recent expressions of Tradition, they nonetheless reject the fruits of *contemporary* Tradition, and, even worse, discard its upcoming products (!).

Giving an end to the presentation of facts and events, it is now time to proceed with a critical evaluation of all these particulars on the basis of data offered by Liturgics, our discipline here.

### **Critical appreciation of facts and events:**

#### **Positive Aspects**

The whole attempt for a Liturgical Reform has had a good number of positive aspects:

1. This movement has been founded on the theoretical promotion of the Eucharist-centered essence of Church and the effort to put this truth in the practice of Church life.

2. The materialization of this high ideal is carried out by utilizing first and foremost the Liturgical Tradition, as well as all those compatible supplies of the God-inspired Theology and every other human value. Liturgics is employed to a certain extent. Reference is frequently made to the sources of the History of Worship such as the Didache, the Apostolic Constitutions, the ancient manuscripts etc.

3. Vocabulary originating from liturgical theology is used successfully in documents such as Encyclical No. 2792/30-06-2004 on the Sacramental Life of Church and the Electronic Mass Media. Its closing states: "We must try to help the faithful realize that our Worship is neither a spectacle nor a listening, but a Divine task, a 'reasonable' worship, 'in spirit and truth', 'a congregation of holy people', in which every member of the community participates in a personal manner, all gathered in the name of Christ. They must realize that in the mystery of this gathering the faithful become 'members of the body of Christ, and members in particular' and meet their brothers. Because no-one can participate in this meeting by mail, no-one watches from

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the stadium stands, nobody remains a fun but becomes an athlete and a fellow athlete. Everybody is a blessed dinner guest to the meal of God's Kingdom."<sup>7</sup>

4. The venture as a whole is characterized by valor and determination, at least as far as the above-stated proposals are concerned. For example, this is true of the proposal to rearrange the Biblical readings in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feasts, and to reintroduce readings from the Old Testament and the Apocalypse, so that other excerpts can be heard, which are never heard under the current arrangement of the Readings. In the conservative and supposedly traditional world of the Orthodox Church such a proposal entails a lot of boldness.

5. Coming now to the Symposiums as such, one can only highlight their excellent organization. **What has come out of these Symposiums?** Deliberation, discussion of ideas, familiarization. The presentations have been well-prepared, profoundly rich in theological content, and full of ample historical evidence. The majority of these presentations are capable of at least triggering meaningful, deep-reaching, and constructive conversation. The Symposium proceedings are issued quite shortly afterwards and are then distributed free of charge to all the parishes of Greece. This practice has already stirred interest among several people, and discussion is going on based at last on given well-grounded data rather than on a romantic illusional fabrication of worship.

6. **Finally, almost everything the Encyclicals propose, recommend, or command are worth our attention. Their implementation will change and revive the decadent structure of contemporary Orthodox worship to a remarkable extent. Already, the reading aloud of the prayers has brought about a substantial change both in the celebration of the Divine Services and in the participation of the faithful in them.**

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<sup>7</sup> Other characteristic examples could be the following: The Encyclical on the frequent or at any rate regular participation in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist reads: "The Holy Eucharist is regarded to be and really is the spring and the centre of the spiritual life in Christ, the revelation of Church as the Body of Christ and as a community of the Holy Ghost." Finally, the Encyclical on the genuflection on Sundays concludes: "It is unnecessary to prove that the Divine Liturgy has a resurrectional and eschatological character. Besides, the Church has prohibited the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on fasting days, and although this has shrunk to the period of the Great Lent only, the bottom line of this prohibition remains that the Eucharist is an eschatological event to be celebrated in a festive, joyful, and glowing manner".

### Criticism

For our criticism to be fruitful, we should certainly refer to steps which need to be avoided in the future and also contribute with some suggestions.

1. As a first comment one can notice the 'wooden', formal, rather detached and quite impersonal style of language used in the Encyclicals. It is a case of purely administrative speech, lacking in the refreshing simplicity typical of texts conveying a personal communication.

2. As regards vocabulary, certain terms are frequently replicated in such documents, conveying an impression of exhaustive repetition and leaving the words meaningless. Take for example the word 'eschatology' and its derivatives, which have become something of a fashion, to be regularly found in Encyclicals, sometimes even used completely out of context.

3. One can read postulates of questionable theological validity or doubtful pastoral impact.

4. Use is made of inadmissible and obsolete terms such as 'heretics' or 'Protestants', which express discrimination and belittlement. With the Encyclical on Denial of the Holy Communion to Non-Orthodox, and particularly with the language used in it, the situation seems to be retreating a long way back to the past.<sup>8</sup>

5. Historical arguments are brought into play in the Encyclicals in an attempt to justify the recommendations of the Synod or the Archbishop. The negative aspect of this attempt is that such historical elements are quite often lengthy, redundant, sometimes inaccurate, and unfortunately very often contradictory, or inconsistent. In Encyclical (No. 2786/31-03-2004) on 'The proper time to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and the possibility of evening celebration', for example, following an extensive reference to the historical evidence, it is proved with irrefutable arguments that the Eucharist was at some time celebrated at noon, in the evening or at night without hesitation. And although the text goes on to recognize that the Divine Liturgy is not bound by any particular time of the day, the final conclusion of the Encyclical urges that the Divine Liturgy is only permitted to celebrate in the mornings, disallowing any other pattern!<sup>9</sup> Regarding now the incorrectness of arguments, the Encyclical on the '*Service of Proskomide*' claims that the proper time of the Service of Prothesis (the preparation the Gifts) is during the Cherubic Hymn, before the Great Entrance, but in order to save time

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<sup>8</sup> In much the same way, the Encyclical on the Burial of Non-Baptized Infants stresses that to have a non-baptized infant buried in a Church service, at least one of the parents needs to be an Orthodox Christian. So, this looks like we are drawn back to the Middle Ages of separation and mutual excommunications.

<sup>9</sup> Another token of this attitude are the arguments called forth in favor of the reading aloud of the prayers. In two different Encyclicals, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece clearly advocated the reading aloud of the prayers in the Divine Liturgy, excluding those directly related to the Priest or the Clergy only. However, both in the arguments and conclusions, as well as in the recommendations issued about the prayers, the phrases 'low-voiced' and 'read aloud' appear interchangeably to such a confusing degree that make one wonder whether after all the Synod is in favor or against the reading aloud of the prayers by the Priest to the people. The statement that "The prayers that can be heard by the faithful are those relevant to them", struggling as it is in the flood of vague and contradictory lines of reasoning, far from clarifies things.

transferred this rite to the Matins (!).<sup>10</sup> Yet another Encyclical goes as far as to purport the historical fact that "once upon a time" the Church "moved the iconostasis from the *narthex* to the *Altar*" (!).

6. Regarding the ecclesiological stances expressed in some Encyclicals, I believe they are dominated by an element of astounding clericalism. In one of the synodical encyclicals we read: "The faithful ought to be facilitated so as to realize that they are not 'celebrating' the Sacrament of the Divine Liturgy together with the Priest, but instead participate in it; because this former view, both as a belief and an admission, is a purely Protestant conception and way of action, which eliminates the 'hierarchical order' within Church" (!).

7. Similarly, a scholastic pyramidal notion of the Church is to be strongly supported by the Encyclicals. The Encyclical on the Pontifical Divine Liturgy retains, preserves and consolidates the false distinction between the celebration of the Pontifical and the Presbyteral Liturgy. The non-traditional artificial complexity of the pontifical Liturgy is fostered, the ostentatious pomp and the use of symbols and gestures that express power and supremacy are maintained and emphasized, instead of being simplified and reduced.

As far as the Hieratikon is concerned:

8. It is unclear why the Addendum includes Prayers from the Divine Liturgy of St. John the Chrysostome found in Codex Barberinus 336. Are they given for alternative use or just for informative reasons?

9. On the whole, certain corrections or suggested amendments to the full range of texts of the Liturgy are documented on the authority of Barberini 336. However, although in technical terms this Codex is the oldest one, by no means represent by itself the original and *authentic* Byzantine Euchologion. There are later codices saving more ancient and more valid texts of the Euchologion. Therefore, as long as we have not as yet seen a critical edition of the Euchologion such an amendment of a non-critical edition of the Hieratikon ought not to call the witness of just one of some 300 codices saving the Byzantine Divine Liturgy.

10. More restorative amendments could and should have been implemented based on the Tradition of the manuscripts. For example, both the amended proper form of the Celebrators' dialogue "The Holy Spirit ...." and of the supplication "In offering to Thee Thine Own, of Thine Own ..." could have been printed in the proper text instead of in the footnotes or the Notes section.

11. Certain amendments to the orders could as well have been implemented. For example, there could have been noted that the act of censuring before the Great Entry can be performed by the Deacon as well, and in fact this is a preferable and quite older order. Regarding the occasion of the Divine Liturgy being celebrated by a Bishop or concelebrated by more Priests, it could have been recorded that in the presence of two or more Deacons, the latter alone may perform the process of the Entrance of the Holy Gifts without the participation of the Presbyters, and that this is the more ancient and theologically more reliable order.

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<sup>10</sup> The same Encyclical also argues that according to Tradition, the Deacons should not celebrate the Service of Prothesis but rather only assist in the commemoration of names. It is well-established however that the preparation of the Holy Gifts had initially been the Deacons' task, and one would only wish this Tradition to be recalled to practice.

12. Some rather unnecessary repetitions could just as well have been omitted. There is no reason for example, to have the Priests recite the Trisagion or the Cherubic Hymn inside the Bema while the Choir sings these; instead, the Clergy and the People should join voices to sing a single Trisagion and Cherubic Hymn. Moreover, the Divine Liturgy needs to abandon the repeated Deacon's Petitions, which have caused the Liturgy to be an Extensive Prayer for the everyday needs, thus concealing those elements of the Liturgy (mainly the prayers) that demonstrate the real nature of the Sacrament as a Communion and a foretaste of the Kingdom.

13. Obviously interpolated elements of the Divine Liturgy as well as occasional inserts used in certain circumstances according to Church Tradition could also have been left out. We are talking here about parts of the Divine Liturgy which are in no case integral to it, such as the Litany after the Gospel, the commemoration of names before entering the altar at the Great Entrance or the prayers "I believe, O Lord, and I confess that..." before the Holy Communion etc.

14. As a last comment to the Hieratikon, it should be mentioned here that the partial omission of certain pieces of the Divine Liturgy text, simply because these are well known or customarily sung or read by the Choir, is beyond any explanation. The *Sanctus* or the Lord's Prayer for example are only partially printed in their indicative first words or so, in the new Hieratiokon. The point here is that the *Sanctus* is an integral part of the Anaphora, so it is completely unacceptable to print the Anaphora without the complete text of the *Sanctus*. Also, the Lord's Prayer is a vital section of the Divine Liturgy. Regardless of who may recite it -be it the reader or a plain member of the congregation-, the Lord's Prayer is an essential, crucial, and inseparable part of the Eucharist. The ancient order of Worship stipulated the joint reciting or chanting of both by Clergy and People together(!). Therefore these two elements should always be printed in their completeness whenever the text of the Divine Liturgy goes to print.

**As to the method of implementing the Liturgical Reform, one can make the following criticism:**

15. A listing of the topics covered by the Reform shows that there is neither a coherent sequence nor a well-defined axis of liturgical arrangements, restitution of the worship Tradition, or settlement of liturgical pending issues. The course so far has been a little bit of everything.

16. There is too much haste. The Synod or the Archbishop pass their verdict on issues that require further investigation, although they are aware more research is needed, whose outcomes will call for changes to such verdicts (!).

17. It is still uncertain how the Holy Synod and the Holy Metropolises assess and make good use of the conclusions reached at the Symposiums. Until today the Holy Synod has released no communication or made any reform on the basis of Symposium results. To the best of my knowledge, no instrument for transferring current developments to the Clergy of the Metropolises is in operation today. Sometimes, representatives fail to inform even their Bishop on the proceedings of Conferences. It may seem enough for a Metropolis to have complied with its duty of simply sending representatives...

18. Many of the suggestions and recommendations by the Holy Synod and the Archbishop have turned dead letters and remain unapplied today. There is also this regrettable impression that a certain number of these recommendations were doomed to remain in documents, such as the advice to the bishops to get less elaborate, more modest, and relatively austere sacred garments.

## Conclusions

*Glory be to God now and ever!*

Based on the facts presented so far, let us question ourselves: Is this all at all possible? What is the purpose of a Liturgical Reform? Is such a reform necessary?

I dare answer "Yes!" to all three questions. A Liturgical Reform is more than absolutely necessary -it's inevitable! Even if the Church of Greece through its institutions failed to proceed with such a Liturgical Reform, the latter will nevertheless occur, just as it already occurs every day. We have to face it: every time a service of the Byzantine form is celebrated, at that very same time by instinct and in an imperceptive way some kind of reform is taking place, in the sense of the complex typikon being adapted to the specific needs of that moment, at that particular parish, with that priest and choir etc. For example, from the very moment the chanters, having already started to chant the Stichira at Vespers, decide themselves to sing 4 only out of the 6 Stichira for whatever reason, these people are expressing the necessity, the capacity and the potential of the Church to bring about a Liturgical Reform.

Moving beyond a general acceptance of the real situation, which has a certain air of compliance in the fashion it was presented, one may however rationalize the inevitability of a Reform, and further on express a number of reasons which make such a Reform imperative.

1. Pastoral requirements. The sterile liturgical life in the Eastern Churches, the very fact that nobody understands what is happening, why it is happening, so everything is done just to be done, the pure fact that the church is full of people only during the last ten minutes of the Liturgy on Sundays ... all this is nothing but clear evidence that we lost the train, that something has to be done about it!
2. Add to this the living experience of disagreement between theory and practice, between theology and the rite, between the subject of celebration and the celebrational service itself, and you have a second indication that the practice of Worship has been blown up in the air, that what takes place in a Service is an instinctive, unconscious and unknowing act leading sometimes to nowhere.
3. The study of history tells those who at least have the courage to do so, that the rich worshipping life of our Church has been impoverished to a dangerous degree. The veins of life juices have been cut! The spring is there, the water is running pure, but nobody would go to drink because nobody knows the way to the spring!

Certainly, as necessary as it is the Liturgical Reform, so complicated, tough, and thorny is: An apparent question is about the form, the method and the direction a Liturgical Reform may take. Will it only be a restoration of Tradition or more than that a forward development to discover new forms and rites? On the basis of what "rightness" are any "corrective actions" to be undertaken? Which specific historical point in the evolutionary trend of Tradition needs to be considered as proper? Who is going to undertake such a venture and in what ways? How can it best be planned and what authority may guarantee its validity? Is the standing of our Church at all threatened?

Although I personally would not regard a forward development towards discovering new liturgical forms as illegitimate, I do believe that any similar advancement ought to be founded on Tradition. So, what has to be done before anything else is to clarify the question of Tradition. Certainly, Tradition is constantly evolving. Which specific historical point in the evolutionary trend of Church Tradition needs to be considered as proper? On the basis of what "rightness" are any "corrective actions" to be undertaken for the Liturgy?

At this point I would reflect on two issues: First, every liturgical form had a beginning. It was established and introduced in Church Tradition and the practice of Worship at a

*Glory be to God now and ever!*

certain moment. Therefore, we need to search for the precise original form of every liturgical element and its reason, "sa raison d' être": why this rather than that liturgical act, gesture, phrasing, symbol etc. was adopted? This brings us to the theology of Liturgical forms, which is the most important and essential element of this discussion. Is the same theological content expressed by using the contemporary variety of this or that liturgical form? Consequently, on the issue of the perspective discovery of new liturgical elements, this can only be affected by *mastering that same theology which can then be expressed in new invented forms in the future.*

However, who is going to undertake the Liturgical Reform venture and in what ways? How can it best be planned and what authority may guarantee its validity?

My personal opinion is that we are not yet ready for profound changes. There is work to be done before that. However, certain changes are feasible, especially those changes that are both manifestly necessary for pastoral reasons and also relate to forms proved by current historical research to have lost their original quality. For example, the reading of the prayers aloud, a simpler version of clergy vestments as well as an amendment of certain texts, clearly ought to be put into practice here and now. The Church of Greece has to deal with the issue in all seriousness. Worship is the very life and existence of Church rather than some field of activities between third parties.

The conclusion we reach then is that specific objectives regarding the Liturgical Reform and Rebirth should be set. Such an objective might be to agree to a 10-year study plan on the Byzantine Divine Liturgy, on what has been discovered by the scholars, what is left to do, in order to reach a safe point of final resolutions. If the Church of Greece were to take this in earnest, they should set up trustworthy scientific committees, allocating adequate funds, and providing proper equipment and staff, so that these committees can make research work before concluding their proposals for a Liturgical Reform. Above all, the Church should set the goals: is this all undertaken in order to merely restore some traditional forms (such as the suitable use of the miter) or rather to reestablish the Divine Liturgy as a an act of communion between God and His Creation, or equally an event of communion among the created beings and their Creator?

The next step would be to inform the clergy and the people in a well-organized way, before moving to actual reforms.

A spiritual and non-assertive approach is a prerequisite for all this. Definitely, prayer and prayer and supplication to our Father in heaven, to His Son and to His Spirit, is the foundation and the keystone of every endeavor in His Church. Everything has to happen as an Anaphora and an Epiclesis, a present and an invocation!

Certainly, the last anxiety of Church people would be: when we change things in the Church, things that people consider as *unchangeable*, is **the standing of our Church at all threatened?** This remains largely an unsolved issue. However, I would dare to say that perhaps the issue of the Church standing is far less serious than we think: **Maybe love and humbleness are better safeguarding the standing of our Church than inflexibility and intolerance.**

Thank you!