

ETP 941 Séminaire de méthodologie

Professeurs : Pierre Noël, Raymond Lemieux, Jean Desclos et Louis-Charles Lavoie

La Pratique Religieuse

The Eucharist: Medicine of Immortality - Healing

The Lost Meaning of the Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church

Aux Plans Théologique et Psychologique



By Jean El-Murr

Doctorant,

May 12, 2011

CONTENTS

• Introduction	3
• Personal Observations	5
• Theory and Praxis	8
• Why the Theological and Psychological Methodologies?	9
• A Word about Immortality – Healing	11
• The Divine Liturgy – The Eucharist – A Theological Methodology Approach	16
• The Divine Liturgy – The Eucharist – A Psychological Methodology Approach	22
• Conclusion	26
• Bibliography	28

The Eucharist: Medicine of Immortality¹ - Healing

The Lost Meaning of the Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church

Introduction:

The present-day Orthodox Christian believers are unenthusiastic in their observation of, and participation in, most liturgical services. Although the attendance in all services is in decline, the Sunday Divine Liturgy where- the pinnacle of the Sacraments – the Eucharist, is communion as “the realization of the restoration of the proper relationship between God and humanity”² is the weekly thermometer of this measurement. Once, this realization was considered a top priority, and taken as seriously and mandatory to be participants of the Sunday Liturgy. Recently its significance has been lost and the faithful has begun taking it at ease and schedule it as the least of their priorities.

This decline is due to various and multifaceted daily life struggles. Although, modern science and technology brought tremendous positive changes to society and social life, we cannot deny their negative effects on the mind of the population which led some to atheism and distraction from the corporate – communal, social – life escorting them to individualism. However, beside these negative effects the modern person is also being faced and much occupied with incredible amount of visible and pressing priorities. These visible and pressing priorities left him with no other option, but to decline, slowly or at once, completely or partially, the invisible and non-pressing item on his agenda – God. God can wait and therefore, the modern person took a rain check in his religious participation, and consequently a continuous separation from what was, at one time, considered very basic.

At the same time, this discontinuity of religious practice has led to either: 1) hunger, 2) refusal, and 3) neutrality – a lukewarm status. All three cases have infected the regular religious practice. In the first case, hunger is to be filled and therefore the person commenced a search for a spirituality – religious practice - that is tailored according to his³ need and time. Hence, the

¹ Paul Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick*, SVS Press, Crestwood, New York, 2009

² Ibid., P.24.

³ Here and thereafter, the masculine is used for the sake of easing the reading of the text. With all due respect to the feminine personhood.

creation of an alien and different kind of discipline that is personified and freely chosen and selected à la carte by the individual. A new way of self-discipline (practice) that is not similar to the one that was offered by his original religion, which abides him as a member of a community.

The second case is the complete refusal of any worship at all, a complete spiritual detour towards the self - ME. The person can live with no contact at all with God. He is the master of his life. This may be proven through the successful career, wealth, health and daily life. There is no need for God although God exists.

The last case faces us up with a lukewarm person who ceased his religious participation but keeps his respect and awe to his traditional religion and fulfills some aspects, obligations and recommendations without getting into the depth of the meaning of these religious practices. He does not reject God's power and influence; neither he tailors or chooses a new discipline for himself, but he decides to stay at the same distance from both of them by holding the stick in the middle.

According to my analysis of these observations as a royal priest⁴ beforehand, and as an ordained priest on the second hand, I concluded that the decline and the cessation of participation in the liturgical services, and in the Divine Liturgy in particular, is due to the loss and misunderstanding of their meanings and their importance as tools of healing, of becoming whole (holy) – sainthood – and immortality.

Therefore, I have chosen this subject, in the first place, - *The Eucharist: Medicine of Immortality – Healing, the Lost Meaning of the Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church* as part of my sacramental duty – ecclesiastical guardian. And secondly because of my personal experience with illness where I encountered healing throughout liturgical practices. I will be, through God's guidance, discussing it in theological and psychological perspectives. Hoping that by recovering the lost meaning will reschedule this religious practice to the top priority of the Orthodox Christians in their weekly agendas and activities and may render the participants a

⁴ Through Chrismation- the 2nd sacrament that comes just after baptism where the baptized is anointed with Holy Chrism – the Orthodox Church teaches that all those who are baptized and Chrismated become participants in the Royal Priesthood of the holy royal nation. For more details read Alexander Shmemann, *In Water and Spirit*, SVS Press, Crestwood, New York.

transformation in their attitudes and actions of love. They may become transparent tools of sanctity to their societies.

Personal Observations:

Over 24 years of involvement in the Orthodox Church as both a *λαϊκός*, *laikos*, and as a clergyman, I observed that the Divine Liturgy and therefore, the Eucharist which is communed therein, is not held by the participants at the high level of admiration and honor that is adequate to its institution. I also noticed throughout these years a decline in the participations of most of the liturgical services in general and especially in the weekly Divine Liturgy.

My ministry as Christian and as a clergyman has compelled me to dig for the reasons that lay behind these two phenomena. Throughout my involvement with the parishioners at many levels of discussions either through Bible Studies, social gatherings or personal encounters I detected two main themes that are affecting our Orthodox Christians faithful: Secularism and the Loss of meaning of the Divine Liturgy – the Eucharist.

However, while searching deeper I came to a hypothesis that the latter theme is what is affecting and leading the faithful to secularism. It is this loss of meaning that directs the faithful to engender, hold on and be speculated by secularism, and, of course, to its consequences. The free choice of Orthodox Christian faithful to choose slavery to work and to other created gods over their freedom of being with their Creator is due to their lack of personal experience with this Creator and therefore to Theophanies – His Revelations, and to their improper catechism and progressive development.

Indeed, the modern person is facing a tremendous amount of daily challenges, mottos and media and billboards' advertisements directing his attention towards success, happiness, comfort, luxury, travel, relaxation, meditation and etc. but in order to fulfill these passions and desires, he forgot that he must put a tremendous amount of time and energy. He forgot that these needs are endless and they are putting him in an unending circle of needs and demands. The more he gets, the more he needs. He became a tool of consumption and he became a customer and a consumer. He became a slave to the society and to his material passions. He is looking for happiness, joy, relaxation etc. and yet he is wasting his daily happiness, joy and relaxation in order to get them.

Society also has encouraged him to put these extra hours and energy. The shopping centers are now open in the evenings during the week, on the weekends and during Holy Day seasons. By giving man the comfort and the choice to shop at anytime he wishes, influences and changes the life style that he chooses to follow. It has added tremendous pressure as well as obligation, on his and his family's shoulders to work *on the first day of the week*, unable to honor the Day of praise, the day that the community had chosen to assemble in prayer.

Once, this gathering of *breaking bread on the first day of the week* was held by the early Christians, the primitive Church, and in memory of the fraternal practice that was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the sharing of His love in form of Bread (His Body) and wine (His Blood) with His intimate followers as a sign of becoming and mingling together according to His words: "that those who *keep eating (trôgôn)* His flesh and *keep drinking (pinôn)* His Blood 'stay with Him, and He with them'⁵ and will have 'eternal life'.^{6,7} This initiation was carried on, developed and perpetuated by the Early Church as a fulfillment of Jesus' commandment: "Do this in remembrance of Me"⁸ by "breaking bread" "on the first day of the week."⁹

Since then, this continuous and commanded practice has lost its meaning by the worshippers throughout the years. This loss of meaning was due to many historical factors in which the Church was incapable and ceased catechizing the proper and the true message of its faith because of oppression and other political reasons.¹⁰

Consequently, worshippers of true faith became church goers fulfilling a requirement and a religious obligation rather than "fulfilling a necessity of a soul that thirsts for God and wants to

⁵ Cf. John 6: 56.

⁶ Cf. John 6: 54

⁷ Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis, *The Heavenly Banquet, Understanding the Divine Liturgy*, Orthodox Witness, 2008, P.37.

⁸ Luke 22:19 and 1 Cor. 11:24.

⁹ Acts 20: 7.

¹⁰ It is not the intention of this paper to give an account of these historical reasons like the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, the Turkish invasion and the Russian Revolution, etc....

consume Him, or rather to be consumed by Him”¹¹ and obtain Eternal life – Immortality – Healing.

This loss of meaning, in my opinion, has dramatically infected the role of Orthodox Christians in the society in general and in their neighborhood in particular. The Orthodox faithful parishioners failed to become the tools of illumination and sanctification following and imitating the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the Disciples and the Saints. They rather succeeded in following rituals, prayers and personal devotions without exposing themselves to the real meanings behind these religious practices.

The Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy, the Sacraments and prayers of the Orthodox Church have been, and yet continue to be practiced while their power of grace to transform and change the participants are restricted and yet obstructed. The participants are approaching these Mysteries to fulfill a mere obligation without conscience of their significations of being vehicles of communion and communication between the Invisible and the visible, between the Creator and the created, between Immortality and mortals, between the Divine and humanity.

This phenomenon of loss of significance and of unawareness of the mystical reality has contributed to an ineffective piety and to ceremonies and services that are routinely observed for the sake of mere attendance, not for the sake of participation in the revelation of God’s love through this assembly, the Church, and for the sake of transformation and *Metanoia* – the change of mind – the detour towards God. Therefore, the faithful are missing to communicate with the focal aim of the Liturgy which “is the sanctification of the faithful, who through these Mysteries receive the remission of their sins and the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven.”¹²

Hence, the Orthodox Christian in modern time, and throughout the years, became like all other citizens in his community. He became one of the many rather than the one who sanctifies the many. The daily life worries and wearies him and his religious inheritance loads him with daily, weekly and seasonal obligations, rules and religious practices. He is peer pressured by materialism and commercialism. He became an unsatisfied consumer because of the extensive

¹¹ Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis, *The Heavenly Banquet, Understanding the Divine Liturgy*, Orthodox Witness, 2008, P.37.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 39 quoting St. Nicholas Cavasilas *On the Divine Liturgy*, 1.1.

and continuous exposure to new supply every day, and the subliminal messages of advertisement behind them. This allowed him indirectly, and sometimes against his will, to work harder to pay the bills. These visible and pressing priorities left him with no other option, but to decline, slowly or at once, completely or partially, the invisible and non-pressing item on his agenda – God. God can wait and therefore, the modern person took a rain check in his religious participation, and consequently a continuous separation from what was, at one time, considered very basic.

Alas, this rain check and neglect of religious practices had its consequences on the individual and on the community as well. Faithful got into a vicious cycle of misconceptions about everything in life. Their misunderstanding and neglect of their religious practices have obstructed the work of the Holy Spirit, the work of salvation, the work of sanctification, which will heal the infirmities, the sickness and the death of this world.

Theory and Praxis:

My personal observations led me to a theory that the faithful should be exposed, experience and learn as much as possible the meaning and the *Theology* of the liturgical services. During Bible Studies, group discussions, social encounters, tête à tête consultations, teens and young adults gatherings, Church camps, and Sunday school catechism I found deep hunger and great interest in acquiring knowledge and significations of what the faithful are experiencing during the liturgical services. This has convinced me to put my theory into praxis.

Although these groups represent a small percentage of the church's members, they highlighted an important fact. The fact of a change of attitudes towards the services and towards the others is been noticed between those who practice without knowing the signification of what they are doing and those who were exposed to the proper meaning and *Theology*. Those who fill up their hunger with the appropriate knowledge become more passionate, more vigilant and more conscience about their role at home, church, community, society and country. I may say that they were transformed and converted, and though incompletely, they began a progressive process towards becoming Christians and good models of the Orthodox faith.

Meanwhile, I am not sure of the results of how filling up the loss of meaning will affect those who do not attend. However, my role and my ministry as a priest compel me to try using the same logic with them regardless of the results because “of what is impossible with man is possible with God.”¹³

Catechism is the core message behind Christ’s taking on the human flesh and it is part of His commission to His disciples: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”¹⁴ He is called Teacher. He is the Teacher par excellence and He taught by words and deeds. Therefore, the core of my ministry is the preaching of the Gospel, which is the teaching of the Incarnate God through His words, parables, healings and actions. But catechism cannot convey the proper message without the proof of actions as that of Christ. The words should spring forth fruits and preaching will be tested throughout the deeds. The deeds are the fire that may illumine the words or burn them. Therefore, my actions should preach and catechize more than my words and they should fulfill my role as a teacher. Both, preaching and deeds go hand by hand.

This is true also for all the faithful. Those who are chrismated are endowed with a similar role than that of the ordained priest, because they are part of the royal priesthood which is obtained after Baptism by the means of the seal of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Chrism. They are endowed with the role of teaching through their actions and deeds that they may inspire their milieu.

Therefore, the theory of teaching the meaning should be carried over by the laity and the clergy alike to all the faithful. Once a parishioner discovers the lost meaning, it will illumine the others throughout his theology and deeds because the light of the services will shine forth and will not be “hidden under a basket.”¹⁵ Hence, the theory becomes the praxis and participation in the Divine Liturgy brings its fruits of transformation.

Another way of conveying the lost meaning, especially to children, teens and young adults, is to get them involved actively in the services. Experience proved that those who served the altar, read and chanted throughout the services and were bestowed with responsibilities were more

¹³ Luke 18:27; cf. Matthew 19:26 & Mark 10:27.

¹⁴ Mark 16: 15-16

¹⁵ Cf. Matthew 5: 15

enthusiastic to come to the services than their peers, even though a camaraderie was built among them.

Why the Theological and Psychological Methodologies?

The Divine Liturgy as a religious celebration can be discussed in three methodologies; sociological, theological and psychological. The three methodologies intersect and intertwine, but I have chosen the last two for various reasons.

1. *The Theological Methodology:*

It is because the subject itself – the Divine Liturgy – is:

The means that is offered by the faithful to the *Theos* to communicate through the *Logos* His *logia* for Theology means the sayings of God; “*theos* (θεός), meaning God, and *logia* (λογία), meaning utterances, sayings, or oracles (a word related to *logos* [λόγος], meaning word, discourse or reasoning.”¹⁶

The synergic work between God, *Theos*, and the people in which a personal relationship is established throughout the community; a relationship a) with one another, b) with the Church and c) with God.

The practice that is founded on the *Theology* of the Church according to the *Theologia*, the words of God, through the Word.¹⁷

A Mystical religious celebration in the Orthodox Church,¹⁸ in which, during this service only, the Eucharist – Holy Communion – is prepared (the gifts of bread and wine and water are sanctified) and communed.¹⁹

¹⁶ Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.

¹⁷ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1

¹⁸ The Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church in most of the parishes is celebrated on Sunday only, but it can be celebrated on any day during the week except throughout Great Lent when it is permitted on Sundays and Saturdays only.

¹⁹ The Holy Communion may be communed to the baptized catechumen or child after his/her Baptism and Chrismation and to the sick and elderly who cannot attend and participate in the Church’s service from the reserves that are prepared on Holy Thursday and kept in the Tabernacle on the Holy Altar for these reasons. And it

Theology is my interest, inspiration and goal. I experienced healing; physical healing through the crucial healing and peace of my soul, as though it is physical, but the healing, the peace, of my soul was the crucial one.²⁰ Orthodox *Theology* has converted me to Christian Orthodoxy although I am born, baptized and brought up as an Orthodox Christian.

The loss of theology is behind the decline in attendance and participation at services.

2. *The Psychological Methodology:*

The genetic and analogical analyses of Sigmund Freud that were presented in his ‘‘*Actes Obsédants et Exercices Religieux*’’ dans *l’avenir d’une illusion*, Paris, PUF.’ highlights the no-superficial resemblance between the obsessive acts of the neurotics and the religious practices of the faithful in which he expresses his righteousness, the anguish that is resulted from the absence of signification in the repetitive acts, the genetic approach to understand the obsessive acts, the efforts of psychoanalytic treatment, and etiology, the causation of compulsive disorder, have encouraged me to delve into the psychological methodology in order to understand the reasons behind the deficiencies that led to the decline in the religious practices in general and in the Divine Liturgy in particular.

These analogies have aided me to the conclusion that proper education, catechism, of this lost meaning at the genesis of the formation of the infant will lead to an increase in the participation of the practices in the future, and for the adults will lead to their restoration on their daily, weekly and seasonal agendas.

A Word about Immortality – Healing:

The story of the Divine Liturgy and its lost treasure is like:

The story about a jewel and a jewel box. Once a noble family came into possession of a priceless jewel and in order to safeguard it, put it in a beautiful jewel box. The next generation valued not only the jewel but also the jewel box, and so they placed both in another beautiful jewel box of larger size. After many

may be communed during Great Lent through the pre-sanctified liturgy because the Holy Gifts are called pre-sanctified for the bread, wine and water were prepared and sanctified during the preceding Sunday Divine Liturgy.

²⁰ This will be the topic of my doctorate essay.

generations and many jewel boxes, the outside jewel box itself made of delicate carvings and decorated with costly gems, was universally acknowledged as a masterpiece. One day an admiring visitor asked: What is in the Jewel box. The question took people by surprise. A few knew the answer, but many were quite uncertain. Still others did not even know at all what the magnificent Jewel box contained!²¹

Immortality – healing - is the priceless jewel that is treasured in the jewel box. The jewel boxes safeguarded the treasure and gave it a glamorous and a ritual form. Unfortunately, some of the faithful got attached to the carvings and the costly gems ignoring the essence, the inside, the meaning behind this inheritance that Jesus Christ has handed down to us. Others rejected the whole (the box and the jewel) because of the multiplicity of the boxes while they preferred simplicity instead without even looking at the jewel. The unpacking will restore the admiration to the jewel, the object, rather than to its container.

But what this priceless jewel reveals? How the Orthodox Church understands and teaches immortality and healing? What are the means, the vehicles, of this transmission?

The priceless jewel reveals the Creator's love from before the beginning of time, the beginning of the world. It is the existing mode of the Immortal Christian God – the Trinity – who created the world, “as a kind of paradise, at once incorruptible yet material and perceptible,”²² in order to reveal His love, His existence and His Goodness for the enjoyment of Man (Adam and Eve)²³ and his descendants . The creation is His action and His witness.

Man was appointed, by and on behalf of God and as the image of God, a manager, “a lord and king,”²⁴ of this creation and as the communicator of God's love, existence and Goodness. Alas, man transgressed this trust and excommunicated himself from God's communication. The relationship between the incorruptible creation and Immortality was broken and man had fallen

²¹ Theodore Stylianopoulos, *The Eternal Liturgy, a Study Guide to the Video film: the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, produced by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Department of Religious Education, 1987, p. 3.

²² St. Symeon the New Theologian, *On the Mystical Life, The Ethical Discourses, Vol. I. The Church and the Last Things*. SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1995. P. 21.

²³ “So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1: 27. Man with capital M signifies Adam and Eve before the creation of Eve.

²⁴ Cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian, *On the Mystical Life, The Ethical Discourses, Vol. I. The Church and the Last Things*. SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1995. P. 21.

from God's world and "was stripped of his incorruptible vesture and glory, and clothed with the nakedness of mortality,"²⁵ the flesh. Once the world was subjected willingly to Man's command and management "no longer wished to be subject to the transgressor [Adam]...and turned savagely against him."²⁶ Therefore, harmony that was between the Creator, Man and creation became a chaos, order became disorder, and the incorruptible creation became corruptible. Death and sickness clothed the creation because of the sin of transgression, pride, disobedience. Man has missed the mark, the point, of God's creativity and goal.

Rather than incorruptibility, corruption, mortality and sickness made their way to the world. Therefore, healing is needed and death has to be conquered. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."²⁷ This was the beginning of restoration, the beginning of healing, the beginning of the return to the mark, the purpose and the point of God's creation though "through our faith in Him He imparts to us from His own divinity."²⁸

Therefore, Immortality – healing - is the primary goal of the messianic ministry of Jesus Christ and thereafter, His followers – the Church. His Incarnation, Inhomination, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension were to conquer death and restore the fallen humanity to its glorious splendor of being in communion with God praising and glorifying Him.

Jesus' answer to John the Baptist when the forerunner sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He is the Messiah was: "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them."²⁹ This was a testimony and a foretaste of man's immortality through grace and God's work.

However, those who were healed and raised up from death have gotten sick and died again. So what are we talking about? What kind of immortality and healing will we receive?

²⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁷ John 3: 16.

²⁸ St. Symeon the New Theologian, *On the Mystical Life, The Ethical Discourses, Vol. I. The Church and the Last Things*. SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1995. P. 32.

²⁹ Matthew 11: 5-6.

The healings of Jesus Christ were not to restore health for “health cannot be counted among those things that are good by nature.”³⁰ Physical healing is not an end in itself and health is worthless to the human person if it is not used to be in communion with God. Health and illness are not activities. They are a status of beings because without human persons, creation, they do not exist and they have no power. Both are the consequences of the fall and they can be used as tools of restoration.

Therefore, “the healings of Jesus must be seen within the context of His entire ministry.”³¹ He “linked to the power to heal is the power to forgive sins.”³² The Messiah who came to wipe out the misery of the world is concerned with the healing of the entire person. His intention is to reconcile the world with God that was infected by sin. He came to set the fallen world, the creation, “free from its bondage of decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God”³³ and as such, inaugurating the Kingdom which is “not of this world.”³⁴

Then and only then, when the earthly will be united with the heavenly, man will be made by God “new again and [will] render him immortal, incorruptible and spiritual, at that time, I say, he will change all of creation itself together with man, and will bring it to completion as immaterial and everlasting.”³⁵

But how the earthly can be united to the heavenly? How the mortals can mingle with the immortal? And how the sick can be healed?

Christianity in general and Orthodoxy in particular is a therapeutic science. “Every means it employs, and indeed its very aim, is to heal man and guide him to God.”³⁶ From the moment a man is born he can be greeted with prayer on the first day, on the eighth day, on the 40th day, when baptized, chrismated, after which he may participate in the Eucharistic and liturgical life of

³⁰ St. Basil, *Letters* CCXXXVI.7. Copied from Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2002, p. 55.

³¹ Paul Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2009, p.14.

³² *Ibid.*, p.15.

³³ Romans 8: 21.

³⁴ John 18: 36

³⁵ St. Symeon the New Theologian, *On the Mystical Life, The Ethical Discourses, Vol. I. The Church and the Last Things*. SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1995. P. 38.

³⁶ Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy, the Science of the Fathers*, Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, prologue.

the Church; his marriage may be blessed, through confession, Holy unction when he is sick, as well as in the daily, weekly, seasonal and yearly prayers (personal or communal) of the Church and even when he is departed from this life.³⁷ All these prayers invoke God's grace and mercy to restore the person into the newness of life, that this life may be blessed and in communion with God. They ask God's Holy Spirit to come and dwell in the persons for the healing of soul and body.

Among these Sacraments and prayers are the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. In the sacrament of Baptism, which is called the sacrament of healing by excellence,³⁸ man rejects his old self and asks for a newness of life by putting on Christ as St. Paul describes: "Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"³⁹ and the Sacrament of Eucharist in which man is able to take into himself the Body and Blood of Christ because during the Divine Liturgy Jesus Christ "is present in the bread and wine, which become his Body and Blood."⁴⁰ The Sacrament of Baptism is the entry, the passage, to the community of faith, the Church, and the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the mystical union between God and man without confusion and without change.

"Every aspect of the ongoing life of the Church and her members involves an element of healing."⁴¹ However, partaking of the Eucharist – Holy Communion - is a direct touch with the reality of immortality – healing - and a foretaste of Eternal life that is present in the Body and Blood of the Lord and Physician Jesus Christ. It is a communion with the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Thus is the priceless jewel that will be revealed by the unpacking of the boxes that enveloped it throughout the years.

³⁷ Cf. Paul Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2009, p. 91.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁹ Romans 6: 2-4.

⁴⁰ Paul Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2009, p. 25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

The Divine Liturgy – The Eucharist – A Theological Methodology Approach:

H. Cox remarked that “secularization is related to the deployment of technology, when the man changes his tools, he changes his gods.”⁴² This is actually true to our subject. The treasure of the person is not anymore with the Invisible and Uncreated God, but with the visible and created necessities of life. The Bible tells us: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”⁴³

Some of the faithful have indeed changed their God. Once He was in the fulfillment of the 3rd commandment and the implementation of their life, He became the least of their worries. This is due to the change of their treasures and therefore their hearts, which was the result of their misunderstanding and the loss of meaning in the religious practices.

These treasures were once in the gathering, in the assembly of the Church, in the festival celebration of the Divine Liturgy in resemblance of the gathering of the Apostles around Jesus’ banquet and festival supper. These treasures were once in the Eucharist, in the fulfillment of Jesus Christ’s commandment that to be celebrated in His memory as “the realization of the restoration of the proper relationship between God and humanity.”⁴⁴ These treasures were in the celebration of the weekly Pascha, in the celebration of the New Day, the Eighth Day, the Day of the Kingdom by the community. These treasures were once in the Kingdom of God, the Church, the earthly place, where the Priest proclaims the entry into the Kingdom of God when he says: “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵

Work and other necessities and obligations have displaced these treasures of these participants and therefore their hearts have been shifted from being connected to the Divine, to Immortality, to the Kingdom where “we put all earthly cares [and becoming] mystically like the Cherubim”⁴⁶ to being attached to mortality and hooked to many created gods and earthly cares. These hearts, which are where the treasures are, have departed from the place where the actualization of the

⁴² Harvey Cox. *La cité séculière. Essai théologique sur la sécularisation et l’urbanisation*, Paris, Casterman, 1968, p. 31-38.

⁴³ Matthew: 6: 21 and Luke 12: 34.

⁴⁴ Paul Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick*, SVS Press, Crestwood, New York, 2009, P.24.

⁴⁵ The proclamation of the commencement of the Orthodox Divine Liturgy of both Sts John Chrysostom and Basil the Great.

⁴⁶ The Cherubim Hymn chanted in both Divine Liturgies of Sts John Chrysostom and Basil the Great.

Trinity's work. They departed from the place where the restoration of the defected and distorted images may take place and be lifted up, and the place where "moths and vermin do not destroy" the heavenly and Divine treasures.⁴⁷

This dramatic change in treasures and hearts has allocated the interests of the people somewhere else. It has caused the decline in the participation of this focal religious practice and therefore, has a negative imprint in the upbringing of children. It is likewise from generation to generation, unless crises arise and question marks puzzle the minds and suffering touches the hearts, where they will face and realize that all the treasures cannot help and will be destroyed by moths and vermin.

Alas, the Lost Meaning will continuously affect the generations to come unless a thespian catechetical plan is implanted and personal experiences have been evolved for children and adults alike. This will be firstly viewed through a theological methodological approach.

The German materialistic philosopher Feuerbach expressed unintentionally a religious idea of man when he said: "Man is what he eats." Truly, this is what is happening during the Divine Liturgy. Man must eat in order to live. The Bible has presented us man as a hungry being from his genesis until he is received at the Kingdom. Alexander Shmemann puts it very interestingly and beautifully when he says:

The image of the banquet remains, throughout the whole Bible, the central image of life. It is the image of life at its creation and also the image of life at its end and fulfillment: that you eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom.⁴⁸

However, what man eats at the Divine Liturgy? He eats the "Bread of Life"⁴⁹ and who "eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."⁵⁰ The eternal life should be the treasures of a Christian person for he should be hungry for God first and everything else will be added to him; "but seek first the

⁴⁷ Cf. Matthew 6: 19-20.

⁴⁸ Alexander Shmemann, *For the Life of the World*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2000, p.11.

⁴⁹ John 6: 35, 48.

⁵⁰ Cf. John 6: 52.

kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”⁵¹ Everything else will become the blessings and the means to feed humanity for God’s glory. Therefore, man’s desire should be a desire to God.

And this is what the Divine Liturgy offers. It bestows an opportunity to partake of the heavenly banquet. It submits a *Leitourgia*, “a ministry, a calling to act in this world after the fashion of Christ, to bear testimony to Him and His kingdom.”⁵² It allows an entry into the presence of Christ in order to see “the ultimate reality of life.”⁵³ It permits a leaving from the ambiance of the house and the work to “come and see”⁵⁴ a different reality. In such leaving and coming there is a transforming power and reality.

A different reality in the presence of Christ begins from the minute the priest steps into the Church. He recites different kinds of prayers while he is taking his kairon and he is vesting.⁵⁵ And prior to the commencement of the Divine Liturgy he recites these prayers:

O Heavenly king, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, who art in all places and fillest all things and Giver of life: come and dwell in us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord.⁵⁶

Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace and good among men. (twice)

O Lord open thou my lips and I should declare thy praises.

In such prayers, the priest asks the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life, to act on him and on the people who have entered physically into the Kingdom of God, which is the community of faith, the Church, the members of Jesus Christ. He asks the comforter to comfort the Church by dwelling, cleansing and saving the souls of its members. It is a prayer addressing the priest’s and the people’s unworthiness and incapability of being around the heavenly banquet without being

⁵¹ Matthew 6: 33 & Luke 12: 31.

⁵² Alexander Shmemann, *For the Life of the World*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2000, p. 25.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵⁴ John 1: 46.

⁵⁵ These are special prayers for the priest that indicates the changes in his role. These prayers are supplications to God in granting mercy upon the priest who is about to perform the mystical celebration.

⁵⁶ This is an opening prayer to the Holy Spirit to almost all liturgical services in the Orthodox Church. It is recited by the celebrant priest.

cleansed through the Holy Spirit, the divinely gracious gift of God that is proceeding from the Father.

Afterward, when the time arrives, the deacon converses with the priest a dialogue in which he announces to the priest: “It is time for the Lord to act, bless master.” This announcement indicates that Christ is the main celebrant, not the priest. It declares authentically that the liturgy is a Divine one. It is headed by Christ who is offering himself. He is the offerer and the offered. All these are prior to the solemn doxology, the proclamation of the Kingdom: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.” This is the solemn declaration and the true acclamation of the assembly that the Kingdom of the God of the Christians – the Divine trinity, not any God, is the goal and the fulfillment of all desires and interests. This totality is affirmed by the Amen, the agreement, of the people.

Thus is the acceptance to be at the banquet of the Divine Trinity, the ultimate destination. The grace is covering the place and joyfully those who are assembled around the table, the *Ecclesia*, *ἐκκλησία*, the Church that represents heaven on earth, begin common prayers and supplications asking the Lord of the Banquet to grant the whole world, themselves, their hierarchs, clergy, rulers and civil authorities mercy, peace, salvation, health and remissions of sins through the intercessions of the *Theotokos*, Mother of God, and the saints. They petition Him not to reject them because they do not have on “the wedding garment.”⁵⁷

Therefore, the assembly begins to ascend slowly in their communication with God by the chanting of the Antiphons.⁵⁸ As such, the participant depicting the angels “summons his whole being to praise and glorify God for His mercy and righteousness for the many benefactions bestowed upon him.”⁵⁹ He addresses Jesus as the Savior and asks Him for His help while asserting that He is the Incarnated Son of God who is risen from the dead for the salvation of the world.

⁵⁷ Matthew 22: 11.

⁵⁸ An antiphon (Greek ἀντίφωνον, ἀντί "opposite" + φωνή "voice") in Christian music and ritual, is a "responsory" by a choir or congregation, usually in Gregorian chant, to a psalm or other text in a religious service or musical work. From free Wikipedia.

⁵⁹ Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis, *The Heavenly Banquet, Understanding the Divine Liturgy*, Orthodox witness, p. 110.

The next act of the Liturgy is the small entrance of the Gospel compared to the great entrance of the gifts. This entrance signifies the procession “from the old into the new, from this world into the world to come”⁶⁰ as is proclaimed in the *Evangelion*, the Hypostatic *Sophia* of God. This is the entrance of the entry of Christ’s wisdom and life into the life of the celebrants around the banquet. To understand its full signification, it is worthy to note that until the 7th century the small entrance marked the commencement of the Divine Liturgy.

The assembly, after their supplications for peace and rendering praises to God, are ready to hear the word of the One Who invited them. They are ready to hear His teachings and to comply with them for they are saying: “Speak, Lord, for your servants hear”⁶¹ because “here we are.”⁶² They are ready to move on from beings petitioning for earthly things to beings waiting for the heavenly Manna, God’s heavenly word, God’s heavenly Bread. They are ready to be blessed by God’s *Parousia*, *presence*, among them while declaring His holiness (wholeness), *Heil*, *healthy*,⁶³ by chanting as the angels “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.”⁶⁴ They are ready to enter into God’s grace through listening, obeying⁶⁵ His teachings, commandments and understanding the purpose of the Son’s earthly life. They are ready to accept Him in their life and be transformed from beings hearers of “the Word into beings receptacle of the Word and a temple of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁶

With the litanies of fervent supplication, departed, and the catechumens and their dismissal the first part of the Divine Liturgy, the Liturgy of the Word, is concluded. In such supplications, the Church hearkens to the Almighty, the God of the Fathers, in the sober of her mind and soul for some of the particular needs of the Church such as for the clergy, the founders of the church, those who chant and do charitable work in the Holy Temple, and those who bring offerings and those who are sick and who are departed from this life in the hope of the Resurrection according to God’s great mercy.

⁶⁰ Alexander Shmemann, *For the Life of the World*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2000, p. 31.

⁶¹ 1 King 3: 10.

⁶² Cf. Isaiah 6: 8.

⁶³ Akin to Old High German *heil* = healthy. Such is the meaning of healing, becoming whole, holy, complete in soul and body.

⁶⁴ Isaiah 6: 1- 8.

⁶⁵ The verb to obey in Greek and Latin means to hear.

⁶⁶ Alexander Shmemann, *For the Life of the World*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2000, p. 33.

The second part of the Divine Liturgy, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Thanksgiving, begins now with prayers for the faithful. The catechumens are dismissed and the priest, on behalf of the faithful, offers thanksgiving for not being condemned for their sins and transgressions. He asks the faithful to put aside all earthly care and become like the Cherubim hymning, the Thrice Holy Hymn, in order to receive the King of all. Here the Church is assembled around the Eschatological banquet contemplating and acting mystically, as the Cherubim witnessing God on his throne who is offering Himself, for “He is the Offerer and the Offered, the One who receives and is distributed.”⁶⁷

The awesome moment arrives with the procession of the great entrance in which the assembly imitating the Lord, offers themselves and the world as sacrifices in the form of bread and wine in remembrance of Him. This is the movement of the food that they will be eating and offering them to the Altar to be sanctified by the operation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

As these gifts are laid on the table, the Church continues with its prayers by adding (completing) supplications to obtain the higher things. She asks that her day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless. She asks for a guardian angel to guide her steps, for the remission of sins because of her unworthiness, to obtain what is good from the origin of all Goodness, and to stay sinless in peace and repentance modes and that she may receive a Christian ending of her earthly life. Then the Church, as the body of Christ, offers her whole life to Christ who takes the Church into Himself, to God, in His thanksgiving and loving ascension and offers her in return His peace, that she may confess the Creed, the symbol of Faith that is declared by the Church as it is revealed by God.

Therefore, the Church stands with fear and awe to the reality that she is witnessing at the banquet. She lifts up her heart from the earthly to the above, to the other dimension, and she offers thanksgiving because she becomes heaven by surrendering completely herself to the heavenly Father. By becoming heaven, the church joins herself with the angelic ranks singing, shouting, proclaiming and saying the triumphal hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy...confessing the Holy Trinity as the Lord of Sabaoth, a single Deity, ready and waiting for Christ’s offering the bread

⁶⁷ From the anaphora of the Divine Liturgies attributed to Sts. John Chrysostom and Basil the Great.

and the cup containing wine and water as His Body and Blood in order to eat the Paschal meal in *Anamnesis*, in His remembrance in behalf of all and for all.

The banquet table is set and the food is laid and the priest is destining them to His disciples in commemoration of the Last Supper. He invokes the Holy Spirit to manifest the bread as the Body and the wine as the Blood of Christ. However, before partaking of the heavenly food, the Church intensifies her rhythm of prayer by commemorating all the saints and it prays for the heavenly food which God has accepted them at His spiritual altar as fragrance, as a symbol of the unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit in order to become worthy of becoming, through grace, His children and inheritance proclaiming Him as Christ, the only begotten Son, a Father. Then the priest invites the church to be attentive to this solemn, awesome, fearful and wondrous proclamation: “the Holy things are for the holy.” This is the invitation that the faithful is waiting to hear in order to partake of the heavenly banquet. The sanctified gifts are for the sanctified people who approach the food, with fear, faith and love. The Bread of life draws them to Himself.

The Divine Liturgy is the only place where such mystical and mysterious proclamation is announced inviting the participation of the feast, the wedding. The Church becomes holy. She is set aside to return to the world and sanctifies, illumines it when she departs in peace, leaving Mount Tabor where it is good to stay after she has received the true light. She must go forth and proclaim the good tidings that she witnessed and participated in.

So, where the treasures of the faithful should be? Should they be in the earthly and mortal or in the heavenly and immortal where they will be called holy (whole) and become healthy?

The Divine Liturgy – The Eucharist – A Psychological Methodology Approach:

Sigmund Freud analysis of relating the obsessive acts to the genesis of “*cérémonial névrotique*” pursued my belief that that catechism about the Lost Meaning of the Eucharist in the Divine Liturgy at the childhood level may render more respect and observance of this weekly religious practice.

“Psychology cannot ignore the intention inherent in the articulation of the rite.”⁶⁸ This statement by Vergote assured also my belief that the correct and proper theological meaning of the rite of the Divine Liturgy is not paradoxical with psychology, but rather it will enhance the participation in the rite.

This also is confirmed by the analogy of Freud in his *Actes Obsédants et Exercices Religieux, dans l'avenir d'une illusion, Paris, PUF.*, when he connected the repetitive activities that are “dénudées de sens” of the obsessed person to “insupportable angoisse.” Therefore, when the person does his repetitive ritual acts, like the weekly Sunday Divine Liturgy and daily prayers, knowing and understanding the proper meaning behind them will not have a psychological disorder. He will achieve the intention of this ritual without anguish, but with love and joy and the acts will not be called obsessive acts because they are full of meaning.

By analyzing today’s observance, I find that catechism in infancy was not to the appropriate level of its signification. It was taught and practiced as either a fear from judgment, or as compulsory observance, and or as a requirement of collecting merits and favor in the sight of God, parents and community. These have engraved false and bad memories on the psyche of the infant and have developed the servitude to religious practice rather than freedom, which is the result of personal experiences with the Divine and the proper participation in these practices. The joy and the love that these practices should provide are obscured by the absence of proper signification and the forceful imposition on the children.

However, proper catechism to children has to be implemented by example for the theological significations are heavy to be understood by their minds. The joy and the love expressed towards these rituals by their parents, instructors and community are very relevant to their participation. Therefore, parents, instructors and community of faith should encounter children, teenagers and young adults with their compassionate love and teach them by parables and examples.

The regularity of attendance in piety and righteousness as well as the impressive good deeds by the participants reflecting the holiness of the rituals are also important to the upbringing of the children and their spiritual and physical growth in the love of the Church and its liturgical

⁶⁸ Antoine Vergote, *Dette et Désir, Deux Axes Chrétiens et la Dérive Pathologique*, Éditions du Seuil, p. 129.

services. The cheerful involvement in the rituals as well in the charitable activities bestows an atmosphere of sharing and caring that will grow up with them; negativity and ignorance will hurt their involvement. The encouragement of the children to serve in the Church services is very vital too as they will be acting, doing, reading, chanting, and etc. This will be engraved in their memories and their hearts will be exposed to the beauty of the Church; its hymnography, iconography, lights, the fragrance of the incense and the tasting of its food.

Adults should understand that children learn by examples and by involvement. Their growth in the Church and in appreciation of the rituals stem out from the adults' impression on them. This is not different from their secular upbringing. The disassociation by the parents, instructors and the community between social and religious life will confuse the child and set a schism in his mind that there should be a time for God and a time for other things. This schism stays with him until he faces a conversion in his life.

Therefore, catechism is more appropriate and should, though difficult, be conveyed to adults. They should learn what is really happening in the liturgical services especially the Divine Liturgy. As the previous section had implemented a theological methodological approach, it is therefore, very appropriate to discuss the second methodological approach; the psychological one.

“Psychological problems are mainly problems of thoughts, a darkened mind, and an impure heart⁶⁹ and “Orthodoxy is mainly a therapeutic science and treatment.”⁷⁰ These two acclamations lead to conclude that Orthodoxy in general and the Divine Liturgy in particular are means of healing.

Therefore, as the Divine Liturgy is a vehicle to illumine the mind and purify the heart, man should approach it as a patient seeking recovery of his whole being. Hence, the Divine Liturgy is a necessity, not an option. It is the treasure that pays back the debts of man to the society. The participation in this divine service is the participation in the Divine grace that is free and does not

⁶⁹ Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy, the Science of the Fathers*, Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, p.20.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.15.

ask for repayment. Man is the only benefactor in this participation. God does not need the people He created out of His love. Man needs God who alleviates all burdens.

Man's impurity and debts are overlooked in the Divine Liturgy and in the other liturgical services and prayers; even the recited prayers ask for God's forgiveness and confess His mercifulness. The Divine Liturgy does not require from man any quota of actions in order to commune and participate. It is rather man's yearning for grace, mercy, love, healing, cleanliness, cleansing, wholeness, purification, illumination and *theosis* that bestow on him freely a way of life. This will not lead him to the sense of guilt, rather to his liberty and healing because it is his free will to do it with the conscience of its potential and intentional meaning. It cannot be seen as repetitive acts for every Sunday some elements are changed and it is done corporately. The healing is achieved in the Divine Liturgy privately and corporate.

What is implanted in the psyche of man will bring forth its fruits. Therefore, implanting that the Divine Liturgy is an expressive cry of God's love, engagement and conduct will bring forth the fruits of love, engagement and conduct towards this rite. Man should implant the seed that "God is not the Absolute Thou, but a living Person Who is in organic communion with man"⁷¹ and the Divine Liturgy is that place where this communion is vivified because in Orthodoxy eschatology is lived in the present.

Man has to understand that God does not judge in the Divine Liturgy. God is extending His grace for man to lift up his hands in prayers and grasp it. Envision the dome shape of the top of the Orthodox Byzantine Churches how it meets the walls and the supports of the Church as the grace of God is enveloping man's hands which are lifted up in prayers and acceptance. The passions do not have essence or hypostasis. They are not in the way between God and man. Man creates them when he does not direct his desires and passions towards God. He creates his crosses and therefore, he builds up a gap, a schism, between God and himself. This is the schism that the Divine Liturgy tries to solve and to bridge by remembering and partaking of the salvific acts of Christ and His redemption that was offered to us by His destruction of death through His death on the Cross and Resurrection. In the Divine Liturgy man directs his desire toward God, the Treasure par excellence and throughout the Divine Liturgy man's passions are cured.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Man's celebration in the religious practices should not be out of fear of God, death, culpability of any sort. Man should remember that God's mercy is overwhelming and the Church has provided many means for those who look at themselves and find themselves unworthy of such participation. They should remember that God who sought them first will look upon them with love and providence. Throughout the Divine Liturgy, man remembers Christ's action of love for him. How then, man could miss all these opportunities to restore the place of his treasures?

Man needs humility in order to grasp, to accept and to commune with this reality that is evolving at the Divine Liturgy. Man needs humility in order to render thanksgiving and understand the lost meaning of this focal service. He has to see himself as a patient looking for therapy although he is in good health. Pride will lead him to continue his disassociation with God, himself and the other.

Man's proper understanding of the role of the Divine Liturgy on his life and his role towards his family and the society gives him an awakening and an unceasing vigilant responsibility to convey properly God's revelations and his experiences. He will become a transparent vehicle of God's love, mercy and grace. Man has a free access to God's things to manage them and return them as thanksgiving acts of love.

Conclusion:

"We must begin to love in order that may not fall ill."⁷² Love ultimate form is forgiveness. This is what is embraced in the Divine Liturgy. God's love is meeting man's love and the community of faith's love. God's love is entitling forgiveness for man, though prior to any transgression, and the community. Man's love is entitling forgiveness of the inner self and the other and the community's love is entitling forgiveness of one another. Thus, in the Divine Liturgy and through the Eucharist, the thanksgiving, forgiveness resides par excellence and the ability to communicate and commune with Immortality, the Bread of life, is possible.

However, this communication and communion did not yet bring forth their fruits although they attained maturity and were plucked. The participant hid these fruits because of their ignorance of their beauty and taste. The fruits are dormant and ineffective.

⁷² Freud, *On Narcissism: an Introduction*.

The discovering of the lost meaning, the treasure of Immortality, of the Divine Liturgy is the powerful element that, I believe, will influence the faithful for regular and normal participation. It will shift their hearts from the love of gods that they created to the Love of the Uncreated and Immortal God. A synergy of love will be built between the Uncreated and the created, and there will be no conflict between social, religious and spiritual. All, including all aspect of life: science, technology and etc. will be in coherent and forwarded for God's glory Who is the Giver of life and everything therein.

The religious practice of the Divine Liturgy will be the culminate thanksgiving and loving action between God and man. There will be no need to prioritize, for everything will fit and be scheduled naturally.

Therefore, the lost meaning should be properly and urgently addressed at anytime and to any believer. It cannot wait. It is the responsibility of all clergy and laity alike who already have discovered it and were exposed to its experience. It should be the daily food of nourishment to all regardless of their reaction and the results. It is the action of love in imitation of God's love Who sought His people, or rather, it is God's love through our actions that should be transparent.

Fr. Jean El-Murr;

Doctorant,

May 12, 2011.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Paul Meyendorff, *The Anointing of the Sick*, SVS Press, Crestwood, New York, 2009.
- Alexander Shmemann, *In Water and Spirit*, SVS Press, Crestwood, New York.
- Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis, *The Heavenly Banquet, Understanding the Divine Liturgy*, Orthodox Witness, 2008.
- Theodore Stylianopoulos, *The Eternal Liturgy, a Study Guide to the Video film: the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, produced by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Department of Religious Education, 1987.
- St. Symeon the New Theologian, *On the Mystical Life, The Ethical Discourses, Vol. I. The Church and the Last Things*. SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1995.
- Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2002.
- Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy, the Science of the Fathers*, Birth of the Theotokos Monastery.
- Alexander Shmemann, *For the Life of the World*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 2000.
- Antoine Vergote, *Dette et Désir, Deux Axes Chrétiens et la Dérive Pathologique*, Éditions du Seuil.
- Sigmund Freud, *Actes Obsédants et Exercices Religieux, dans l'avenir d'une illusion*, Paris, PUF.
- Fr. Vasileios Thermos, *Encounters of Orthodox Theology and Psychological Science*, Alexander Press, Montréal, 2010.
- Alexander Shmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1986.
- Hugh Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy, the Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1990.
- Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, SVS Press, Crestwood, NY, 1998.