

UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE

FACULTÉ DE THÉOLOGIE, D'ÉTHIQUE ET DE PHILOSOPHIE

MAITRISE EN THÉOLOGIE : CHEMINEMENT THÉOLOGIE ORTHODOXE

PTR 784 ORTHODOX PASTORAL THEOLOGY FALL 2007

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MAN AND MINISTRY



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*"THROUGH THE PRAYERS OF THE PROTOMARTYR DEACON STEPHEN, O LORD
JESUS CHRIST SAVE US AND HAVE MERCY ON US"*

MAN AND MINISTRY

Man was, still and will be the acme of the quest of the researchers, philosophers and theologians. He is the centre of the visible world. Actually, he is the one who is inquiring these quests about him and the world. He is searching for answers in order to satisfy his human complicated properties, characteristics and characters-his personhood. And yet after all these millions of years of developments and researches he didn't reach out to one single theory that defines and satisfies his thirst and hunger. He is in constant search for the truth- the true story about his origin and the world that he dwells, lives in and communicates through it. ponderMan's, inwardly and outwardly, dynamism and his knack to see, smell, touch, taste, hear, move, feel, fear, support, hate, love, grow, die and think etc....¹ made him different than any other form of visible organisms. We don't see the same dynamism in plants, animals and cosmological planets. Even though we are uncertain how all the visible living things function, grow and die but we are certain that they contain in themselves their self destruction cells as Marcel Sendrail says: *"From our birth, human cells contain the seeds of their own destruction"*² and this what our eyes see happening.

¹ *The Wikipedia encyclopedia* "Humans, compared to other living organisms on earth have a highly developed brain capable of abstract reasoning, language, and introspection.... [they] are social by nature; however, humans are particularly adept at utilizing systems of communication for self-expression, the exchange of ideas, and organization. Humans create complex social structures composed of cooperating and competing groups. Social interactions between humans have also established an extremely wide variety of traditions, rituals, ethics, values, social norms, and laws which form the basis of human society. Humans also have a marked appreciation for beauty and aesthetics which, combined with the human desire for self-expression, has led to cultural innovations such as art, literature and music. Humans are also noted for their desire to understand and influence the world around them, seeking to explain and manipulate natural phenomena through science, philosophy, mythology and religion. This natural curiosity has led to the development of advanced tools and skills; humans are the only known species to build fires, cook their food, clothe themselves, and use numerous other technologies."

² Marcel Sendrail, *Histoire culturelle de la maladie* (Toulouse, 1980), p.2. Quoted from *The Theology of Illness*, Jean-Claude Larchet, (SVS, 2002), p. 9

In man, a motivator-the mind- is behind this dynamism. Ignatius Mindits clarifies but criticizes at the same time this conclusion by saying: *"It has been said until now that the chief characteristic of man is reason-the mind- which makes him stand out, even if this understanding is not unshakeable [man] does not act solely at the dictation of his reason,"*³ for man is a microcosm that is full of wonders that can not be described or analyzed in an orderly and scientific way. There are many factors that unable the inquirers for absolute conclusions and definitions because the inquirer is assuming and building up theories based on shaken foundations and assumptions. A man is inquiring about man is like tasting a drop of vinaigrette in a river for each person thinks and acts differently. In fact, these numerous factors affect the decisions, the actions and the reactions of the same person each time he encounters a situation, or even, the same situation.

Man's dynamism and his capability to reason made him a minister-*person in charge giving aid and service*⁴-who reaches to himself and outreaches to the world. In general, he became a ministry. Therefore, man and ministry are not separated from each other from the primitive time. His ministry in this case is seeking solutions and answers to what confront and puzzle him.

One of his greatest puzzles that is related to our Pastoral Theology course and contributes mainly to his ministry is the origin of the world that is containing him. In fact, after an analogy of the relationship between man, himself and the world, it is mainly concluded that his perception or belief about his origin is what directs and controls this relationship. His sought for the right answer led him to countless theories and philosophies and my intention is to examine and compare the variations of man's ministry depending on his set of belief that is related to his origin of existence. Therefore, I will try to use my learning, findings and personal experiences and reflections to talk about man and his ministry in an Orthodox Christian perspective comparing it slightly with atheism and other monotheism thoughts.

³ *"Man Within History and Within the Church"* an article by Ignatius Mindits in the Synaxis Vol III, Alexander Press, Montreal 2006.

⁴ *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary*, Lexicon Publication, Inc. New York, 1988edition

TWO MAIN STREAMS:

Man's physical death and dissolution has created a fear and a desire of protection and security. This has influenced his thoughts and actions. His ministry became a ministry of well being and security that led him to find ways to prolong his earthly life and seek solutions comforting his life. His reason has allowed the essential characteristic of his persona –freedom- to take the necessary steps to prolonging the length of his existence and finding resources to avoid mortality. He therefore, created for himself rules and tools of defenses which, later on, they became his source of security.

Two main streams of belief were generally developed and have dominated his life. The Theocentric belief: the belief in an eternal source of security- God the Uncreated Creator who created all things visible and invisible- and the Anthropocentric belief: the belief that negates it totally and puts the responsibility of security on man's power. And under these two umbrellas of beliefs many cults, religions, philosophies and theories perceived and developed and had set systems guiding the members in their relationship with each other and the surrounding.

Accordingly, man as ministry- his role in this universe- is depending on his perception on whom is the provider of his comfort and security. In fact, the Theocentric and Anthropocentric beliefs can lead man to minister in the same way or in complete opposite directions. This we discern in the two other Theocentric beliefs- monotheist religions- Judaism and Islam- that man's ministry matches the Anthropocentric belief's ministry- the man's made belief- and its opposite ministry in the belief of the Trinitarian Theocentric belief. Even though that Judaism and Islam are called monotheistic religions and they attribute the origin of the creation to the Theos- God- Allah- but, in my opinion, they are man's made religions because they are still waiting for the salvation to occur for they are not meeting the Revealed God-the Incarnated and Inhominated God and therefore, they don't believe in His Suffering, Resurrection and Ascension which outline and divulge the meaning of ministry via the way He is ministering.

There is only one Theocentric belief-the Trinitarian- that is making complete divergence in the ministry of man where man becomes ministry and minister in the full sense, essence and meaning of the word. This paper is to reveal the latter view with God's help, support and illumination.

THE ATHEIST MAN AND MINISTRY:

The attention of the atheist man is oriented towards himself. He is person centric- Anthropocentric. Nothing is controlling him except for his reason that he also can manipulate with his desires and intentions. Nothing will restrict him from controlling or liberating his environment. It is all embedded in his own unstable and shakable persona that is in constant growth, formation and change. His ministry is depending on his freedom- his essential characteristic. He is the center of the universe that can order, move, manipulate, use, deteriorate, build, innovate, create, develop, cultivate, etc... and everything should be directed and used for his benefit. He became the ruler, the judge and the controller who has the right to use and even abuse the other living organisms.

Man's fear from death has allowed his freedom and gave it all sorts of reasoning and support to create a "help your self" ministry. His ministry is to minister to him alone. It is a ministry that uses whomever and whatever is available to serve the "I". "Me" is above all and has the right to use and even abuse the "you, he, she and it". Therefore, in order for man to safeguard himself, he created a disharmony between him and his surrounding. He became an island- a barn of storage to store his wealth⁵- that isolated him from his siblings who with the universe became his supplies of comfort and longevity of life; he looked at the universe including his siblings as reserves and tools for his existence.

Accordingly, the atheist man became the minister unto himself first and foremost. His intention or vision is becoming the first and the best at any cost. Nothing can restrict him from doing so unless he, and because of the same intentions of his peers, sets and adopts set of laws that will border his and the others' freedom to live in harmony, peace and security. And therefore, his freedom is enslaved and

⁵ Luke 12:18

limited for the sake of the society that is depending also on its unstable and shakable personas and these laws can change with time, place and many other factors.

Man became an “another”, a peer, a challenger, a competitor, a brother, an enemy for the other man. They are only bond together with a “*vision that becomes an ethic of sorts*” that “*are drawn from human experience alone.*”⁶ And consequently, man’s ministry to the other can become a part of this humanistic and ethical vision. A ministry controlled, profiled and tailored for the “Me” ministry.

Even though that his goal from this ministry is to wipe out poverty, have better education, communication, life, etc. but it is still based and directed towards the “Me” service, for the “Me” benefit which has no standard judgment- an individualistic ministry. It is a man’s ministry satisfying man’s desire and primacy. This ministry to the other becomes as an act of desire, of pity, and to become good in the “Me” eyes and in the eyes of the others.

The ministry of the atheist became a social work and he is the social worker and this can end and change at anytime. His freedom is enslaved to his desires and needs and ambitions. His actions are been controlled by many factors that can lead him to oppress- minister wrongly and devilish- unto his surroundings.

The atheist’s connection to his mortal persona and to his fear from this ending limits his ministry and its services and deprives the others from their partnership and ownership of the universe. The stronger controls the strong and destroys the poor. Thus, the atheist’s ministry is a man made ministry even if he is, as a person, a ministry.

THEOCENTRIC MAN AND MINISTRY;

In contrast to the man centric ministry, the God centric ministry is a ministry centered on an Eternal Uncreated Creator. But in two of the three monotheist religions- Judaism and Islam- it is based on man’s perception of God while in the Trinitarian monotheist way of Life- Christianity- is based on God’s initiative

⁶ *The Ministry of the Church, the Image of Pastoral Care*, Fr. Joseph J. Allen, SVS Press, 1986, p. 203

revelation and ministry unto the created creation. The prior is a ministry derived from man and centered on God while the latter is a ministry originated by God who planted the seed of ministry in man's nature to become an essential part of his persona and the fruit of his belief as Metropolitan Hierotheos describes it well *"on one hand a fruit of therapy [ministry] and on the other hand it points the way to therapy [ministry]"*⁷

Judaism & Islamism:

Even though that Jews and Muslim believe in the Eternal God, the Originator of everything, but they haven't encountered Him personally and communicated with Him. For this reason, they created perceptions about an alienated God who lives in the Highest and has made a covenant with them commanding them to walk in His way. These perceptions have led them to a fearful God, a Judge, a Warrior, a condemner and at the same time a protector. A God that has to be pleased or He becomes angry and will not fulfill His promise-covenant- He has made to their Forefather Abram.⁸ This god is a false perception of God who promised Abram to walk only in His way and become blameless as we can observe from the two verses cited in the footnotes. The Old Testament- Old Covenant- is full of examples that prove the Jews and the Muslims' false understanding and discernment of God.⁹

The ministry of protection and security is the common point between Atheism, Judaism and Islamism. The unbeliever and the believer in God ended up in creating their own gods. Even they are in two complete different categories but they are meeting in their ministry, a ministry that is based on their needs and the fulfillment of their own individual desires. They both have created laws to control the relationships between their communities in order to control the unconditional ambitions of their liberty, their main persona's characteristics; the prior is naming

⁷ *"Orthodox Therapy, the science of the Fathers"*, Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos

⁸ *"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."* Genesis 17: 1-2

⁹ Ibrahim in Arabic is Abram. According to Muslims, he is their Forefather too, but they are the descendants of Ishmail the son of Hagar, Sarai's maid. Genesis 16

it as goodwill towards society and the latter is calling it as a commandment of God. The first is derived from man, centered on man and directed to man while the second is derived from man, centered on God and directed to Him. They both became religions: one is in the name of man while the other is in the name of God.

Christianity:

Meanwhile, Christianity, the third monotheistic belief, is not a religion but a way of life. Christianity's ministry is derived from God, centered on God through the creation and delivered willingly to God. Christians believe, like Jews and Muslims, they are created in the Image and unto the Likeness of God but their ministry is not based on an obscure perception of security but on God's revelation because they encountered God in the flesh. This is a fundamental point that differentiates Christianity from all other ministry beliefs. And thus its Theology is a "God's Logismoi" and not man's words about God.

Christianity goes into the depth of things, into their essence. Every word and action is based on the Word Who through His action, everything was created and man was made. Man's dynamic persona is originated from the Eternal Trinitarian God's dynamism, from his active love.

Christianity's ministry is based on an absolute ministry: *"The relationship of the 'I' to the Absolute Thou"*¹⁰ It is a must ministry. It is unchangeable with place, race, and time, etc. and is not dependable on a personal desire and ambition-individualism- but on the true nature of the persona that is made in the Image of God the Minister. Therefore, ministry for a Christian is his mode of existence ministered naturally to oneself and unto the creation and offered to the Creator sake in behalf of all and for all as we say in our Liturgy: *"Thine own of thine own is offered unto thee in behalf of all and for all."*

So man without being a ministry and a minister is not a man in Christianity, he loses his property as a being. Christianity is a ministry and therefore man is

¹⁰ *Orthodox Psychotherapy, The science of the Fathers*, Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, Translated by Esther Williams,

automatically a minister to everyone and everything regardless of their intentions and their status. The Christian has no enemy because he believes that man is the image of God and his ministry of love is for all. The Christian will be calling God his enemy if he considers any created creature as an enemy.

Even though this is the Christian's view but many Christian denominations who bear the name of Christ conceived and adopted the man centric point of view and here is not the place to discuss it at all. I will concentrate on the Orthodox Christian man and ministry for I believe it is the ortho living example and it has the ortho dogma of man and ministry.

ORTHODOXY: MINISTRY AND MINISTER:

“The Orthodox insistence that all care be placed within the context of the Church and its ongoing sacramental and liturgical life will be a welcome addition to those of us who work in this area.”¹¹

In this perspective the Orthodox Church sees the art of serving and caring. To minister, to serve, is to love and to love is to sanctify and to deify. So loving is the extension of the self to beyond itself. It is to outreach completely, freely and unconditionally unto God through the brethren in the same manner that God outreached, sought us and revealed Himself to us. It is to open the whole being to the other being and to accept him as he/she is. It is to bridge and mend the brokenness of our beings and of our brothers and sisters. It is to transcend our fallen nature unto its original nature as God has created it.

Loving, therefore, is the distribution of love that is implanted in us by the Creator to ourselves and to the others. It is to care through multitude tools of communication. God created the world out of His love to love it and He revealed His love while ministering unto it, shepherding it and in such way is our role as managers of this universe.

Therefore, ministering is embedded in our nature. We were created in God's image and after His likeness and henceforth we became His ministers to the

¹¹ Liston O. Mills, from the back cover of this book

creation. Our role and duty is to become after His Likeness in the ministry of love that He had established when He created the world. This agapetic ministry is received from the Breath that God poured in us while He was making us by His own hands.

This agapetic movement differentiates the Orthodox Christian ministry from the other ministries of man. Its source is from the absolute and Unchangeable God and hence is its unchangeable intention and goal. So, it is a natural flowing of love that is embodying our created nature which has become its essential property and characteristic nature and its outpouring to the world in imitation of the Incarnated and Inhominated God, the head of the Church, who revealed Himself to us in agapetic transcendence.

The Orthodox ministry is not depended on the mortal and changeable man who acts to fulfill his needs and therefore his ministry is depending on his feeling, attitude and mood that are changeable with time and place and is controlled, affected, and powered by political and powerful circumstances. Man discovered this agapetic love, the Christian Orthodox ministry, while he is living and experiencing it personally. Therefore, servicing in the substance of the Church is the fruit of our being and existence that is sprouted for the glory of the Creator and for His sake who is the origin, founder and giver of all things. The Orthodox ministry is only a mutual answer to God's grace that is implanted in us and His mercy that He has blessed, blessing and will bless us with unto the ages of ages. Yes indeed, the ministry is deficient when it is not embodied in the Church and founded on its pastoral theology. The Church as the assembly in the Incarnated, Inhominated, Crucified, Resurrected and Ascended God is where everything is fulfilled because it is only in the Church where Christ's ministry is revealing and unfolding the true meaning of serving. It is only in the Church where the natural sacrificial context, the offering of the self for the sake of the self and the others as His words are stating: "*the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and He gave His life a ransom for many*¹²" is exposed.

¹² Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45

This sacrificial care, love and service is well rooted and exposed only in the very Liturgical and sacramental life of the Church where through the sacraments, which “are man-directed, man-oriented”¹³, the Holy Spirit sanctifies and bless the people’s actions, thoughts and requests. This way of life that is founded on the Triune God as the Originator, the Orthodox Church ministry is sanctifying the creation and returning it back to its original blessedness, unto the likeness of God through the invocation and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Liturgical and Sacramental life. And in thus is its unlimited and ceaseless movement. While the secular ministry, the social worker, is stemming out from the needs of the limited and conditional desire, love and principles and hence is its distortion and limited resources.

If *Praxis* is the witness of man’s uniqueness so it is Orthopraxis for the Orthodox Christian man and this is observed uniquely in an Orthodox Pastoral Theology concept- the Church. In Orthodox Theology, man is a ministry and a minister and it is true for the Church as well or man is not a man otherwise. His horizon is the whole universe while His origin is the God of the universe and his ministry as a minister is the reconciliation of the latter (including him) through him to the Originator. While the Church is the hospital of this reconciliation therefore, his horizon is sanctifying the universe and making it a Church.

So, Orthodox Pastoral Theology is God’s field where He acted, still acting and will never cease to act. It is in fact His Word and therefore, the Orthodox members that abide to His Word become the field and the workers of the field- the Church.

Therefore, the created man as members of the Church- the image of God- is the reconciler worker, the witness and the proof of this sanctification. The human being is the sole creature who can speak the language of God due to the Breath of God in him which is not in the rest of the created cosmos. The responsibility of this sanctification is bestowed upon the chosen man race, from the beginning, as the deacon of God, His people and His holy nation.

¹³ IGNATIUS IV, Patriarch of Great Antioch and all the East, in his introduction to the book “*Ministry of the Church, Image of Pastoral Care*, Joseph J. Allen

So man is the agent of God as a reconciler- a healer. He is the visible action of the invisible movement of God. He is the seen work of the hidden mysteries. His person is therefore a revelation and a witness (martyr) of God's presence and work.

Church - the Place of Reconciliation- of Healing:

Man, from the beginning, was called out of nothing and was ordained to stand on behalf of God to the creation by speaking His word. He was appointed to name¹⁴ the creation and therefore he became its king and its priest and hence is his role as a leader of the creation before God; "*he offers life to God*"¹⁵. In different words, man was appointed a representative with a double task: he stands on behalf of God to the creation and at the same time, he stands on behalf of the creation in front of God as a ministry and a minister. Man's disobedience to his natural calling has created a dichotomy in his orientation. He became confused between ministering to God and His creation and ministering to himself alone as the centre of the creation.

After the fall- the disobedience to the calling- the distortion of the Image and the lost of Likeness- God interfered in His creation and once again He called out on people. Those people became His chosen people- *Laos*- because they answered positively (obedience) His calling to different tasks. Those chosen people, in the Old Covenant were Chrismated foreshadowing the Christ to come. Some became His prophets (like Isaiah and Jeremiah) conveying His words, some His kings¹⁶ (like David and Solomon) ruling in His name and some His priests¹⁷ (like Moses and Aaron) offering to Him burnt sacrifices. But these three characteristics were individually gifted and they were never combined and assumed by one person as the original man was made manager of this creation: a prophet, a king and a priest until the Second and the Last Adam has revealed among us.

¹⁴ Genesis, 2: 20

¹⁵ "*The Ministry of the Church, the Image of Pastoral Care*", Fr. Joseph J. Allen

¹⁶ 1 Kings:10 & 16:13 and 3 Kings 1:34

¹⁷ Exodus 29:7, Leviticus 21:10 and Psalm 132 (133): 2

But the chosen people have missed the call too- their ministry to ministering. They created their own god and obeyed man's laws rather than God their Origin. They made concepts and alienated God and boxed Him in a temple of stones, laws and burnt sacrifices. They didn't understand that they have to become Messiahs. And therefore, the agapetic ministry of God that never stops from loving and ministering has to reveal to these people and show them in persona the true meaning of their calling out of nothing. The Messiah has to come.

The Messiah, *Al Masih* in Arabic means "the Anointed One who through his divine-human hypostases has freely wiped out, is still and will continue wiping out (*MASAHA*)," the sins of the world and from His action- Ministry- we learn the true ministry to become the ministers of reconciliation and healing.

The Orthodox ministry is the ministry of reconciliation and this was already accessed by the Reconciler- the *Massih*- Who presides in His Church. The Church, the visible man's assembly of the visible and the Invisible, of the created and the Creator, of the yet and the yet to come, of the members and their Head, of the Unwedded Bride and Her Bridegroom is where the sanctification of the creation will be experienced, developed and attained for "*the grace of God is not transmitted magically or mechanically, but Sacramental.*"¹⁸ It is originated by the Incarnated God, the Reconciler, and explored by His image through the dwelling and the work of the Holy Spirit in the latter.

The Church is the Altar and the Wedding Banquet table too- the feast table- where the Offerer is the Offered. It is where the remembrance of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ is remembered and celebrated. To re member is to become a member "*à nouveau*". It is a living remembrance where the members become members once again by partaking of the Blood and the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. This bonds them with Him whom never left them. And in such a way, the Church becomes the place of reconciliation. This reconciliation-the *Theosis* of man- was already established, once and for all, by the sacrificial suffering actions of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the body if the Church- the members and it is accessed through the Church where the Son of God is present

¹⁸ "*Orthodox Therapy, the science of the Fathers*", Hierotheos Metropolitan of Nafpaktos

*“in the gathering of sinful believers. Having become incarnate in the Virgin’s womb, He continues to take flesh in the womb that is His Church, in the great mystery of the Eucharist. In the communion of the Holy Eucharist, we therefore become one with Christ. And in Christ, horizontally speaking, we also become one with our brothers and sisters.”*¹⁹

And through the mystery of God in the Church *“where we recognize that we are called not to be invincible but to be vulnerable, not to be perfectionists but to be perfect merciful”*²⁰ the called one is introduced to the initiative movement towards healing, destroying the sin to attain Holiness (wholeness) via the performance of the sacrament of Holy baptism. Via this sacrament the called one is accepting to unite himself to Christ through His three days death and resurrection. His outer body is immersed in the sanctified and purified water and through his mouth his inner being, and therefore his one whole body, is united to the Holy One by partaking of His Body and His Blood, and then his whole being is sealed with the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Sacrament of Baptism is the narrow gate that the called one will pass through unto Life Eternal *“the place of brightness, a place of verdure, a place of repose, whence all sickness, sorrow and sighing have fled away.”*²¹

However the baptized didn’t receive a privilege to a safe and holy environment but an access to it; his natural responsibility that was part of his nature was enlivened and revived. He, therefore, didn’t get immunization from falling again into the pit of sin and infirmities. But rather, he is still and will be always under constant temptation where by his free will has to discern between healing his disorders and those of the universe or contributing to it through his evil works. And therefore, the baptized is still in need for guidance, counseling, forgiveness, to be united to Christ, purification, learning etc.

The baptized has just “put on Christ” but he is commanded to be attached to Christ, to be with Him²². He has to walk in the Way, witnessing to the Truth and

¹⁹ *“Fear Not: A Spiritual Journey of Faith and Freedom”* Fr. Cyrill Argenti,

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40

²¹ From the funeral service of the Christian Orthodox Church

²² Mark 3: 14-15

preaching and attaining Life and consequently the Church in its sacramental Liturgical celebrations is the way to the Truth and everlasting Life- the way to reconciliation- to theosis.

Through the Church is where the baptized becomes one with Al Masih *“the communion of the Holy Eucharist, we therefore become one with Christ. So the Orthodox Christian draws intimately near his Creator when he partakes of the Divine and holy mysteries”*²³ and John Chryssavgis completes: *“we become holy precisely through holy communion with God and humble connection with creation.”*²⁴

And through the rite of confession the person is re baptized with the baptism of tears and the absolution of sins. Through the rite of the Holy Unction the sick will be saved and he will be raised up and his sins will be forgiven.²⁵ Through the sacrament of the Holy Matrimony the two persons become one as at the beginning.²⁶ Through the laying-on of hands the sacramental priesthood continues its sacramental and mysterious ministry. And through all the liturgical acts the whole nation and its resources are blessed: water, oil, fruit, earth, homes, foundations and etc.

Therefore, through the Church, the baptized will be guided by one source but witnessed by multitude of witnesses- Martyrs, Saints and Fathers. The Holy Spirit is working through the Church to purify, illumine and deify the baptized who is walking in ascetical way and desiring this life.

The Church is the furnace where the Holy Fire burn but not consume man and the creation. It is the place where the pure gold remains and the impure disappears. It is the place to confront tribulation and make it a way to salvation rather than a way to condemnation: *“Tribulation is a fire; has it found for you*

²³ *Fear Not, A spiritual journey of Faith and Freedom*, Fr. Cyrille Argenti

²⁴ *“Soul mending, The Art of spiritual direction”*, John Chryssavgis, p. 118

²⁵ James 5:14 -15 *“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven”*

²⁶ Genesis 1:27 *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

gold? If so, remove the dross²⁷. Has it found for you straw? If so, it will turn you to ashes.²⁸

Orthodox Christian Man Ministry- Reconciling- Healing:

As the Church is the place of reconciliation- the ministry of reconciliation- the Orthodox Christian is the minister of reconciliation-healing- a reconciler- a healer. But at the same time, he remains a ministry too. This was revealed by Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who sought us from the beginning out of nothing and is continually illumining us and seeking out of darkness. He has taught us in His earthly life by example, by parables and by clear words what is the true ministry. His life as it is written in the New Testament is The Example- The True Ministry for He is The True Minister. But also, His words were clear and sound when He commanded the multitude, the called ones- Man- to *“deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow him”*²⁹. He therefore, ordained the chosen ones, those who obeyed His commandment and followed Him- the twelve as in Matthew 10: 1, Mark 3:14 and Luke 9:1 and the seventy as in Luke 10:1- from those who were called and sent them with a special mandate. He ordained them with additional tasks that He didn’t request from the others. *“He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease”*³⁰, to *“be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons,”*³¹ and *“He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick”*.³²

He then initiated, in front of the twelve only, the nucleus part of the liturgical celebration that is clearly noted in the four Last Supper’s statements where He became the Offerer and the Offered: *“Take, eat this is my Body and take, drink this is my Blood”*³³ and the commandment of the “doing in my memory” as in Luke and 1 Corinthians versions. And thereafter to the remaining eleven, He

²⁷ The scum that surface out of metals

²⁸ Blessed Augustine Sermon 81: 7

²⁹ Mark 8:34, Luke 9: 23 and Matthew 10: 38 & 16:34

³⁰ Matthew 10:1

³¹ Mark 3: 14-15

³² Luke 9: 2

³³ Matthew 26: 26-28, Mark 14: 22-25, Luke 22: 19-20 and 1 Corinthians 11: 23-25

established the sacramental service of Holiness and sanctification by the work and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the creation as it is described clearly in John 20:21-23³⁴, Matthew 28:8-20³⁵, Luke 24:48³⁶ and Mark 16:15-16³⁷ after His Resurrection.

The historical story of Jesus Christ among His people makes us to distinguish between three groups of people: the made man (the entire people of God who is called to follow Jesus Christ, the seventy (those who are called, obeyed His calling and followed Him, who got baptized) and the eleven/twelve, the clergy (those who were ordained for additional sacramental tasks).

The ministry of the fallen man, the sinner, is to heal himself by participating in the Liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. It is to minister as the Messiah by denying the self. It is a sacrificial act of crucifying the worldly desires and the sins. In fact, it is also, to heal the brokenness of the others and lifting up the creation to the Creator whom already has sought His creation.

*“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”*³⁸ Mainly the sending out (an order to minister) was for a purpose, for a specific task. It is a sending out to heal the sick, cast out demons and unclean spirits, to preach the Kingdom of God, to be with Christ and to pray³⁹. This was obvious from Christ’s commandment of calling out the twelve and the seventy from their comfortable zones and sending them out to the whole nation. It is also well apparent from Christ’s answer to the forerunner’s disciples who were sent to ask Jesus if He is the Messiah *“Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame*

³⁴ So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.” John 20: 21-23

³⁵ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore^[5] and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen

³⁶ And you are witnesses of these things

³⁷ “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.

³⁸ John 20:21

³⁹ Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:14-15, Luke 9: 1-2 & 10:2

*walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of me.*⁴⁰ These were the words of God by the prophet Isaiah that declared and revealed Christ.⁴¹

Every Orthodox Christian man is a pastor who is called to heal the sick and to preach the Gospel which means destroying sin. *“Each one is responsible before all, for everyone and for everything.”*⁴² Because of sin sickness and death have corrupted the creation and through healing and repentance, holiness (becoming whole) in Jesus Christ, sin will be destroyed. But in order to get baptized, repented, being in Jesus Christ some special people has to have authority and the power to conduct and perform the signs (*sytheon*) of the Kingdom. These are the eleven/twelve that Jesus has commanded and authorize and gave them the power, the Holy Spirit, to go baptize, forgive sins, make disciples, witness, teach and preach the Kingdom who became the clergy, the ever present Christ's representatives.

Thus the role of sacramental pastors those who are endowed with additional role, the role of sanctifying through the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished through their sacramental role as *“ministers of the sanctuary [while] making Him present; they are presenting Him who is there”*⁴³ who is the sole performer and *“the only true minister of the Church.”*⁴⁴ Pastors as representatives of Jesus Christ, who is always present and He is the sole performer of the actions of grace, are hallowing the called ones by baptizing them, forgiving their sins, teaching them, uniting them to the Holy One, preaching them the Kingdom and making disciples by performing the sacramental services, and the “doing in remembrance” of the Holy Mysteries. Their *“primarily goal of*

⁴⁰ Matthew 11:3-6

⁴¹ Isaiah 29:18;35:4-6 & 61:1

⁴² *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoievsky

⁴³ *“The Ministry of the Church, the Image of Pastoral Care”*, Fr. Joseph J. Allen, p. 32

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, quoting George Florevsky

[the pastoral relationship] *is the undoing of sin and the restoration of life*⁴⁵ by giving their own selves in imitation of Jesus Christ.

Pastors as ministers of the Altar are transforming the personhood of man. They are handing an opportunity to the person and to the universe also to be hallowed by getting attached and mingled with the Holy one through the performance of the sacraments.

While the baptized persons have a great responsibility towards the healing of themselves and of the universe the sacramental pastors have a greater responsibility towards the baptized and their Pastor and Shepherd. Through their availability to maintain the sacramental actions of grace the world will be healed.

CONCLUSION:

Man is called out of nothingness as Holy- whole. His ministry is to minister in holiness for his origin is the Holy One. He is called out to pastor the creation and keep it good- holy- as the Good has created it. After he distorted his image and defiled the creation and was restored through the earthly actions of the Holy One, he is called out once again to pastor it and hallowed it under his leadership via the work of the Holy Spirit. This is his ministry that was from the beginning gifted to him as a minister of holiness.

So man became a ministry and a minister to holiness- reconciling- healing. The Incarnated, Inhominated, Crucified, Resurrected and Ascended Son of God is his Pastor, his Model, of ministry and ministering. This is revealed in the Orthodox Church where the remembrance of Christ's earthly life is celebrated and where the "*Strange things*", the mysterious actions are continually and ceaselessly ministering.

The ministry of the Orthodox man- general priesthood and sacramental priesthood- Laos and Cleros- is a universal and unconditional ministry as the ministry of God. It is not based on fear of death because death is only a gate to eternal life- the True Life but it is based on the grace and the mercy of the Eternal God.

⁴⁵ "*Soul mending, The Art of spiritual direction*", John Chryssavgis, p.123

So Lord, enlighten us to minister in holiness through holiness to holiness.

Ya Rub Irham- Lord, have mercy.

Submitted by Deacon Jean El-Murr.