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# Theological Grounds Regarding the Communion as the Purpose of the Liturgy in the Vision of Theologian Alexandre Schmemmann

Lucian Farcașiu

**Lucian Farcașiu**

“Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad  
E-mail: lucian.farcasiu@yahoo.com

## Abstract

This study refers to the theological groundwork regarding the Communion as a goal of the Divine Liturgy as they appear in the vision of theologian Alexandre Schmemmann. Thus, in the introduction, I referred to the view of the early Church regarding the reception of Holy Communion, the sole purpose of celebrating the Saint Liturgy and to the historical context of its obliteration. Next I presented a theological evaluation of losing the understanding the ultimate goal of Liturgy in the act of Communion, as it analyzed in the work of Rev. Prof. Alexandre Schmemmann. At the end of the study I presented some practical conclusions that can be drawn from the content of my material.

## Keywords

grounds, theological, Communion, purpose, the Divine Liturgy, vision, Alexandre Schmemmann

## I. Introduction. The conception of the Early Church regarding the Communion and the historical context of the estrangement from its single purpose of the Liturgy

As Father Alexander Schmemmann showed over time, the development of the Liturgy has undergone several changes. However, “there was no deepest and most significant change as that which marks the last part of the Holy Eucharist, namely the Communion with the Holy Gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> This fact should be taken into consideration especially since “this part of the Divine Liturgy culminates and really fulfils the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist”.<sup>2</sup>

At first, the Communion of all the faithful at Liturgy was conceived by the Church as the obvious purpose of the Eucharist and fulfilment of our Saviour’s words: “ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom” (Luke 22, 30). We understand the biblical word “by its form”, that the Eucharist, which is the Lord’s Supper, finds its fulfilment precisely in civic communion.

Throughout history, a growing number of faithful of the Church fell from this understanding of the Sacrament of Eucharist, reducing it to an individual understanding, in which the Eucharistic does not regard the entire community of believers, the whole people of God. However, the Communion during the Divine Liturgy is increasingly seen more as a particular act affecting only a part of the believers who can approach the Chalice by performing a set of very severe moral rules. Thus, today Christians no longer feel the need to receive the Communion at every Liturgy, because they do not understand the essential, namely that the Communion actually is the purpose of the Liturgy. Therefore today more and more people believe that the laity cannot partake of the sacraments, or “may participate in the Liturgy (Eucharist) as mere spectators, without the necessary preparation for the Communion. The Christian life is consequently reduced to a disincarnate pietism and deadly individualism of the real and living communion of all the faithful with God-Trinity”<sup>3</sup>, which is possible only through “One

<sup>1</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, Editura Anastasia, București, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> Episcop Serafim Făgărășanul, *Deasă sau rară împărțășire?*, in Neofit Kavsokalivitul,

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of the Trinity” Christ-God, Who partakes Himself to the faithful in a real manner in the Sacrament of Communion.

On the other hand, in some ecclesiastical environments appeared the idea that between the clergy and the people there is a separation in terms of proximity to receive Holy Communion. Thus, while priests can take the Communion, and must do so at every Liturgy, laity can receive the Communion only time to time, fixed by the so-called “religious consciousness” (four times per year or once every forty days). We note that according to this view, the separation between priests and people in the act of Communion is a total one.

In his work *The Canon of Orthodoxy*, Father John I. Ică jr. explains the germs of such an attitude towards Holy Communion in a very lucid assessment. Thus, he shows that since the fourth century, with the opening of large churches built by Constantine the Great, it comes to “the generalisation of the approximate Christianity” of the poor catechized and unconverted crowd. In this newly created situation, in order to assure the consciousness of the Sacraments holiness and the worthily communion with them, for pastoral reasons it has been imposed “a set of moral and spiritual criteria which, however, instead of encouraging the adoption of an authentic Christian conduct and responsibility by many Christians, had a negative effect, causing discouragement among laity in approaching the sacraments.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, it was a situation when the Liturgy was considered complete even without the Communion of laymen, on the one hand, and on the other hand, it created a barrier between the “holy clergy” who celebrate the Liturgy and took the Communion, and “the morally impure and ignorant laity” who only attends the Liturgy. Fr. Ică shows that “the consequences of this changing regarding the understanding of the purpose of the Holy Liturgy were disastrous both in the liturgical and the ecclesiological plan” in the sense that “from a ecclesial-community cult par excellence, it became a rite/mystery celebrated by a professionalized clergy, for the laity and in their place, not together with them”<sup>5</sup>. Although the Liturgy is often celebrated, the Communion of the laity has become very rare. Thus, the

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Sfântul Nicodim Aghioritul, “Despre Dumnezeuiasca Împărtășanie cu preacuratele lui Hristos Taine”, Editura Ortodoxis Kipsely, Tesalonic, 1996, p. 10

<sup>4</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei. Canonul Apostolic al primelor secole*, Editura Deisis/Stavropoleos, București, 2008, pp. 308-309

<sup>5</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei. Canonul Apostolic al primelor secole*, p. 309.

practice of mere assistance at Liturgy becomes generalized, without the Communion of the faithful. Even more than that, the Eucharist, “instead of being consumed, it becomes a protecting and healing amulet which is worn for side effects”.<sup>6</sup> The weakening of spiritual enthusiasm and zeal for the holy resulted in “a rare and casually Communion of the majority of laity, against whom the Church has responded by imposing strict ascetic demands for Communion, which came to be postponed to the end of the usually three to four large fast periods of the year”.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, from the late fourth century, the Eucharistic feast of the community is

“already reduced to symbolic proportions and instead the Liturgy becomes an increasingly complex drama ritual, a sumptuous liturgical performance, in which the secondary or auxiliary elements occupy the vacated the scene of the essential rites withdrawn beyond the curtains of the altar in the silence of the mystery.”<sup>8</sup>

This decline of the Eucharistic communion was already evident at the end of Antiquity, maintaining and emphasizing throughout the Middle Ages in both the East and the West. We recall in this regard that in 1215, the Eucharistic crisis was so profound that the Canon 21 of the 4th Council from Lateran threatens by excommunication and refusal of burial the Christians who do not confess and do not take the Communion at least once a year.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei. Canonul Apostolic al primelor secole*, p. 309. In this regard we note that today in Maramures area, and possibly in other areas of the country, is accustomed the celebration of private Liturgy for small needs of one or another of the “good Christians” of the community, creating the conscienceless that the celebrating of Holy Liturgy can solve problems of the family. At these Liturgies participates only the priest and the singer, and the believer only “pays” for the celebration of that “Liturgy”, without getting involved in any way. We are facing total distortion of the purpose of the Liturgy, which proves actually the increasingly estrangement from the authentic and healthy “Eucharistic” consciousness of the Church, which exists in the thought of the people since the dawn of life of the Christian Church.

<sup>7</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Împărtășirea continuă pro și contra – o dispută perenă și lecțiile ei*, in “Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine – dosarul unei controverse și mărturiile Tradiției”, translation diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2006, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei. Canonul Apostolic al primelor secole*, p. 309

<sup>9</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Împărtășirea continuă pro și contra – o dispută perenă și lecțiile ei*, in “Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine – dosarul unei controverse și mărturiile Tradiției”, p. 62

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The Eucharistic problem will be brought back to light in the East, especially in the Holy Mountain Athos, in 18th century, in a dispute between traditionalists “Kollyvades” and their opponents. Thus, the traditionalist group of “Kollyvades Movement” claimed a strict adherence to the typical rules on the day of commemoration of the dead, which must be on Saturday and not Sunday, while emphasizing the need of *continuous communion* of the sacraments on every Sunday Liturgy and on holidays and not only once or a few times a year.

On the contrary, more pragmatic the “anti-Kollyvades” “defended the legitimacy of accommodation and sacramental-liturgical «practices» created over time and which became «tradition»,<sup>10</sup> insisting that the commemoration of the dead can be done any day of the week, including Sundays and the Communion of the faithful it is better to be done rarely and only after a long individual and ascetic training. In the defence of their thesis the “Kollyvades” appealed to the Tradition of the Church. From this perspective they were confronted, with the “ignorance of authentic Orthodox tradition degenerated into ritualism and clerical formalism polarized in a monastic obscurantism and a theological rationalism of scholastic type amid moral laxity, religious illiteracy and increasing indifference of the masses and clerical, devoid of any catechesis and torn apart off living sources of the faith”.<sup>11</sup>

To recover these shortcomings the “Kollyvades” proposed “a program of «awaking» and Orthodox «enlightening» through existential recovery and liturgical-ascetic-mystical experience in the heart of the apostolic and patristic Tradition of the Orthodox Church”.<sup>12</sup>

Another problem is that of the divorce between Sacrifice and Sacrament during the Liturgy, between Eucharistic sacrifice and the Communion of believers and monks, divorce that becomes complete, in a context

<sup>10</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Împărtășirea continuă pro și contra – o dispută perenă și lecțiile ei*, in “Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine – dosarul unei controverse și mărturiile Tradiției”, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Împărtășirea continuă pro și contra – o dispută perenă și lecțiile ei*, in “Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine – dosarul unei controverse și mărturiile Tradiției”, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Împărtășirea continuă pro și contra – o dispută perenă și lecțiile ei*, in “Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine – dosarul unei controverse și mărturiile Tradiției”, p. 23.

where there the Liturgies are as frequent as rare are the Communion.<sup>13</sup> Father Ioan I. Ică explains this decadence and the reasons behind such a mutation, in the following statements:

“the understanding and apostolic practice of Liturgy, possible in smaller communities, structured around spiritual elite specific of the Church... in the first centuries was no longer possible in mixed communities of the great cosmopolitan cities of the later Roman Empire. The quantitative success of the big Churches was obtained at the cost of spiritual demands relaxation and the dramatic fall of the quality of urban Christian life. And measures to stop this interior decline of an apparently flourishing and triumphant Church worsened the crisis rather than solve it. The tacit acceptance of occasional Communion, on the great feasts or even annual on Easter, against which St. John Chrysostom (†407) was already protesting and the generalization for laity of a mere assistance at Liturgy without taking the Communion were an unspoken acknowledgment of the failure of individual consciences conversion and the solutions of the crisis actually deepened it”.<sup>14</sup>

This distortion of the understanding of the Divine Liturgy, whose only purpose is the Communion of the present believers, and the participation of all in the Church of the first century to the celebrating of Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice by common prayer and songs in a structured dialogue form between priests and the faithful people, generated the transition from loud recitation of anaphora so all the people present at the Liturgy could hear it, to recitation by clerics in private, only in the Holy Altar. So,

“... the Eucharistic Liturgy is practically duplicated in two parallel rites: prayers starting with anaphora, Eucharistic rites and the Communion of the clergy” which “becomes a privilege, a right and an obligation of the pure and holy clergy” sinking “as Atlantis into an ocean of silence, consuming itself behind the protective curtain, beyond the sight and hearing of the profane and impure laity who was kept away; along with a few “prayers”

<sup>13</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Împărtășirea continuă pro și contra – o dispută perenă și lecțiile ei*, in “Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine – dosarul unei controverse și mărturiile Tradiției”, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei. Canonul Apostolic al primelor secole*, p. 312.

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the latter had only a developed ritual drama and an extension of a choral music element: perceptible songs and rites become a comment about the liturgical mystery, an aesthetic-didactic substitute Liturgy for the use of lay people, a visual-musical-dramatic spectacle which is practically flooding all the service".<sup>15</sup>

## **II. Theological evaluation of the loss of understanding the Liturgy ultimate purpose in the act of Communion, in the conception of Father Alexandre Schmemmann**

The most common and widespread explanation regarding the non-participation of laity at Communion is based, according to Fr. Schmemmann, on "the pretext that the overwhelming crowd of laymen are unworthy to approach the Chalice and therefore... the need of certain additional requirements and safeguards. Lay people live permanently in the world and are in constant contact with its dung, injustice, sinfulness, and lie and therefore would require a special preparation, a special effort and repentance".<sup>16</sup>

Such an explanation is framed by Father Schmemmann, as "pietistic". In fact, as Saint John Chrysostom shows, we are all worthy of the sacraments, because to all of us "is offered a Body and a Chalice."<sup>17</sup>

Eventually, as shown in historical excursus at the beginning of this study, sacralisation and clericalism won. In agreement with this new concept, "entering the altar, approaching the holiness was prohibited to laymen and their presence in the Eucharist became passive. The Eucharist is celebrated on their behalf and for them, but they do not take part at its celebration".<sup>18</sup> Due to such a trend, nowadays, Communion is understood as a particular act, addressing only the morally "pure" people.

Despite this harsh reality, we have to stress the fact that - from the beginning of the liturgical Anaphora, we find no indication of the partici-

<sup>15</sup> Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei. Canonul Apostolic al primelor secole*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>16</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 233.

<sup>17</sup> Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, citat la Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 233.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 234.

pation at the Divine Liturgy of two categories of believers: those who take the Communion and those who do not, because once the bloodless sacrifice is brought, the faithful who participate for the communion with the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord are prepared too.

In this regard we recall just a few liturgical texts from the Divine Liturgy, texts that lead us to this conclusion. Thus, in the **Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom**, before breaking the Holy Body for Communion, the priest says the following prayer: "... And we entreat thee, and beseech thee, and implore thee: Vouchsafe that we may partake of thy heavenly and terrible Mysteries, of this sacred and spiritual food, with a pure conscience".<sup>19</sup>

And in the **Liturgy of St. Basil the Great**, soon after Epiclesis, the priest asks God: "And unite all us who partake of the one Bread and the one Cup, one to another in the communion of the Holy Spirit..."<sup>20</sup> And before the moment of the communion, the priest prays to God: "... but enable us, even unto our last breath, worthily to receive a portion of thy Holy Things, which is a support upon the road to life eternal..."<sup>21</sup> When the people bow their heads, the priest says, "... those who have bowed their heads unto thee... ... and graciously grant that, without condemnation, they may partake of these, thy pure and life-giving Mysteries..."<sup>22</sup> Finally, at the end of the Liturgy, the priest exclaims, "Thou who art the fulfilling of the Law and the Prophets, O Christ our God, and hast accomplished all the dispensation of the Father: Fill thou our hearts with joy and gladness always, now, and ever and unto ages of ages".<sup>23</sup>

Finally, in the office of the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts before the priest move the Holy Body and Blood on the Holy Altar, in the second prayer for the faithful, the priest, says the following: "... For behold, his most pure Body and his life-giving Blood, entering at this present hour, are about to be spread forth upon this mystical Altar... Enable us to partake of them without condemnation..."<sup>24</sup> After the Holy Gifts have been placed on the Altar, the priest prays to God that

<sup>19</sup> *Liturghier*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2012, p. 182.

<sup>20</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 255.

<sup>21</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 265.

<sup>22</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 265.

<sup>23</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 280.

<sup>24</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 313.



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“...That partaking with a pure conscience, with faces unashamed, with hearts illuminated, of these divine, consecrated Gifts, and being quickened through them, we may be united unto thy Christ himself, our true God, who hath said: Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him; that thy Word, O Lord, making its abode in us and accompanying our path, we may become the temple of thine all-holy and adorable Spirit...”<sup>25</sup>

The prayer *Our Father* is pronounced very little time before the priest and the faithful take communion with the Holy Gifts, highlighting the same Eucharistic dimension. The words of this prayer regard the preparation of the present community to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, finishing with the prayer given to us by Christ the Saviour Himself “the public and private unity”<sup>26</sup>, “give us this day our daily bread”. In the prayer before the receiving of the Holy Communion, when people bow their heads, the priest says: “... Look with the eye of thy tender loving-kindness upon all thy people, and preserve them. And graciously enable us all to partake without condemnation of these thy life-giving Mysteries...”<sup>27</sup> In this text we note the expression “enable us all to partake”, which emphasizes again that the Holy Communion is for all believers who attend the Divine Liturgy. This idea is underlined in the following prayer uttered by the priest before the breaking of the holy Bread:

“Hear us, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, from thy holy dwelling-place, and from the throne of glory of thy kingdom; and come and cleanse us, O thou who sittest on high with the Father, and art here invisibly present with us: and graciously vouchsafe, by thy mighty hand, to impart unto us thy most holy Body, and thy most precious Blood, and by us to all thy people.”<sup>28</sup>

This latter liturgical text explicitly highlights that the Liturgy is celebrated not only for the communion of the priests, but the entire community present in committing the Divine Liturgy, that is, both priests and faithful.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the whole community exclaims: “We have beheld the true light; we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith. Let us bow down in worship to the Trinity Undivided,

<sup>25</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 316.

<sup>26</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 244.

<sup>27</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 319

<sup>28</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 319.

for He hath saved us”.<sup>29</sup> Such a confession cannot be complete in the absence of the communion with the Mysteries of all who give this testimony, that is, those who participate at the Divine Liturgy.

It is also interesting to note that in the prayers of individual preparation for Communion, it is clearly shown the absolute necessity of frequent Communion with the Mysteries:

“having received a portion of thy Holy Things with the testimony of my pure conscience, I may be united unto thy holy Body and Blood, and may possess thee, dwelling with me and abiding with the Father and thy Holy Spirit. Yea, Lord Jesus Christ my God, let the communion of thine All-pure and Life-giving Mysteries be not unto me for condemnation, and let me not be infirm in body and soul because I have partaken thereof unworthily. But grant that, even unto communceptable defence at thy dread Judgement Seat. And let me, together with all thine elect, be a partaker of the incorruptible good things which thou hast prepared O Lord, for those who love thee”.<sup>30</sup>

As Father Alexander Schmemmann stresses in this prayer “here the accent passes from the community and the triumphant preparation of the whole Church, to the personal preparation of each member of the Church”<sup>31</sup>, regarding the act of the Divine Communion. Moreover Fr. Schmemmann shows that “there can be no doubt that in the spirituality of early Christian, universal factor strengthens the personal one and the personal is not possible without the universal”.<sup>32</sup> In this sense Saint Apostle Paul rebukes the believers who take the Communion unworthily and threatens them with punishment. He asks them to examine themselves. But never and nowhere has he proposed the election: “you, the worthy, take the Communion, and you, the unworthy, do not”. Such a division between the pure and the impure gradually led to abstention of most members of the Church and the “loss of feeling and understanding of the Eucharist as public work or as Liturgy.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Octoiul Mic*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2002, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> *Liturghier*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>31</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 242.

<sup>32</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 243.

<sup>33</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 243.

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On the other hand, Father Schmemmann highlights “even the sense of abstention is lost...” so that, “it has become a sort of disciplinary prescription (four times a year!), with the obligation of confession, as a ticket for the Communion.”<sup>34</sup>

In this case we must remember that “the early Church knows that no one is worthy through his spiritual virtues, of the “dignity” to approach the Holy Blood and Body of Christ and, therefore, preparation does not consist in calculating and analyzing the “preparation” and the “unpreparedness”, but in the response of love to love - “and let me, together with all thine elect, be a partaker of the incorruptible good things which thou hast prepared, O Lord, for those who love thee...”. At the exclamation of the priest “Holy is the Lord!” – the choir responds: “One only is holy, one only is the Lord, Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.”<sup>35</sup>

In fact, the preparation for the Communion ends in the unity of the people of God with the prayer, given to us by Christ Himself: “give us today our daily bread...”<sup>36</sup>

Father Schmemmann notes that in the Orthodox Church a manifest revival of Eucharistic has lately been noticed, mainly because of the desire of many lay people to receive the Communion more often, happily noting that “the true revival of the Church will begin with Eucharistic revival.”<sup>37</sup>

Regarding the imposition of this direction in theology and Orthodox liturgical practice, Father Alexandre indicates three major deficiencies:

1. The first is the abundance of symbolism, not that symbolism as a state of mystery of all God’s creatures, but an allegorical symbolism that assigns a special meaning to each moment of the Holy Liturgy, making it to foreshadow something that is not real. The significance of the Liturgy is full of allegory, to the detriment of sacramental realism.

2. The second is the secret prayers said by the priests and which are unknown for the overwhelming majority of laymen, because they cannot hear the actual wording of the Eucharist, thus being deprived of the most precious gift.

3. The third is the artificial division between clergy and laity during Communion, tragic division because of the consequences in the religious consciousness.

<sup>34</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 243.

<sup>35</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 243.

<sup>36</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 244.

<sup>37</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, pp. 245-246.

According to the Eucharistic theology of Father Schmemmann, “all that regards the Eucharist regards the Church, and what regards the Church regards the Eucharist and any shortcoming in the Liturgy reflects on faith and the entire life of the Church.”<sup>38</sup> That is why these failures must be solved and overcome, through the affirmation of an authentic ecclesiology, in which the liturgical factor or the ecclesial experience must be in full compliance with the dogmatic confession of faith.

### III. Conclusions

From the above mentioned assessments on the vision of Father Alexander Schmemmann regarding the Communion of believers as the purpose of the Holy Liturgy, we clearly understand that “without the Eucharistic Christ, Christianity turns into a sentimentality without light, always capable to change someone’s faith as they please. All sectarian aberrations which claim that they have the truth of Scripture, appeared when the link with the Eucharist weakened, when the Word of God was not understood and authentically lived, but it was taken out of its natural context which is the Church and the Liturgy.”<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand

“it cannot be imagined a spiritual rebirth of the believer and the congregation unless we start with the Liturgy, which transform us in the Body of Christ, becoming his members and one for another by communion from the same bread. Only united in Christ, Who is our permanent food and drink, and united with each other through Him we can move forward on the road of a better communion with God and all the people, which is the essence of Christian life.”<sup>40</sup>

Thus, in today’s context of our Church, regarding the communion of the faithful with the Holy Mysteries during the Divine Liturgy, we think

<sup>38</sup> Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia-Taina Împărăției*, p. 246.

<sup>39</sup> Episcop Serafim Făgărășanul, *Deasă sau rară împărtășire?*, in Neofit Kavsokalivitul, Sfântul Nicodim Aghioritul, “Despre Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie cu preacuratele lui Hristos Taine”, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Episcop Serafim Făgărășanul, *Deasă sau rară împărtășire?*, in Neofit Kavsokalivitul, Sfântul Nicodim Aghioritul, “Despre Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie cu preacuratele lui Hristos Taine”, p. 10.

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that we should strongly reaffirm the need to understand that the main purpose of the Liturgy is the communion of the faithful.

For the awareness both at theological and practical level we propose three concrete actions:

1. Enhancing of mystagogic catechesis in which it must be specified and explained the meaning of Holy Liturgy: the communion of the faithful.

2. On a practical level, the reaffirming of the need for constant confession of the believer, which can make him aware of the main purpose of the Divine Liturgy which is the Communion, on the one hand, and on the other hand to be directed to this state of personal consciousness through a spiritual guidance.

3. In the context of the above presented and discussed problems, we consider that today the return to the practice of the primary Church will be salutary, i.e. the utterance to the whole Anaphora of the Liturgy, especially given that our faithful do not have any minimal elements of liturgical culture, and consequently do not understand almost anything from the purpose of service of the Divine Liturgy. This is due to their gradual removal from Eucharistic communion, which had as a consequence a major transformation of the prayers of the Anaphora uttered by the priest in secret, since the Eucharistic communion concerns only him. Returning to practice of reading aloud the prayers of the Anaphora could mediate an understanding of the spirit of the Divine Liturgy in its original meaning, making it be perceived not as a mere purely aesthetic ceremonial. By listening and understanding the theological and spiritual deeper meaning of the text of the Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy, the people might realize that the main purpose of its celebration is the communion of all those who attend it. The Liturgy will not be reduced, nor perceived by believers only as a ritual drama or a performance of sacred music. On the other hand, listening and understanding the text of the Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy would further strengthen the spirit of intercommunion of the faithful who often participate at the service so dispersed, losing focus or often unaware that through the Liturgy we become one with Christ and with our fellows by receiving the Communion in the sense that it reveals the contents of the prayer of St. Basil the Great: "And unite all us who partake of the one Bread and the one Cup, one to another in the communion of the Holy Spirit."<sup>41</sup> Reading aloud the prayer of the Eucharistic Anaphora would also be added as an

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<sup>41</sup> *Liturghier*, p. 255.

element of sacramental mystagogic catechesis, resulting the awareness of the people and the continuous Communion with the Holy Mysteries.

As a final conclusion,

“we should want the Communion; we should not be able to live without it. And if we haven’t take the Communion at one Liturgy, we should be conscious of our sin that we refused Christ because we haven’t prepared ourselves to receive Him, preferring food, recreation, pleasures of the world, working ... The Communion is not a habit and, thus a devaluation of it. On the contrary, the more you pray, the better you pray, the more you take the Communion, the higher your desire and zeal for Christ is. Bad habitude can happen only to the one who has no faith and fear of God.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Episcop Serafim Făgărășanul, *Deasă sau rară împărtășire?*, in Neofit Kavsokalivitul, Sfântul Nicodim Aghioritul, “Despre Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie cu preacuratele lui Hristos Taine”, p. 22.