

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
63 (2), pp. 99-110, 2015

The Eucharistic Anaphora of the First Three Centuries of Christianity and its Importance for Contemporary Theology

Iuliu-Marius Morariu

Iuliu-Marius Morariu
Renașterea Radio, Cluj-Napoca
E-mail: maxim@radiorenasterea.ro

Abstract

The anaphora is a very important part in the structure of the Orthodox Liturgy. It has been part of the Liturgy from ancient times, from the very first century of Christianity and even today it is substantial in the consecration of the gifts of bread and wine. In this study, we shall call attention to the importance of the anaphora in the first three centuries of Christianity. Drawing on the writings of the most representative authors of that period, such as Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher, Saint Irenaeus of Lyon, and on texts from documents such as *The Didache of the twelve Apostles*, as well as on contemporary literature analysing those texts, we shall present and try to explain the structure and role of the anaphora in those times, but also in contemporary theology. This study represents a new approach in contemporary theological research and fills a missing link in the research of this problem.

Keywords

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *The Didache*, Saint Irenaeus of Lyon.

From the very beginning of Christianity, the Eucharist has been considered „the source and purpose of all Sacraments”¹, and has been at its core, together with the Divine Liturgy, the service during which it is received. During the Divine Liturgy, a special moment was represented by the sequence of prayers through which the bread and wine, lain on the diskos, were changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This moment is known in today’s theology as the „*anaphora*” and is very important².

It is why older and more recent writings, belonging to important figures of Christianity of all times, describe or analyse various anaphoras used in the rituals of local churches. These writings illustrate the theological richness and historical relevance of anaphoras or use them as arguments in proving different hypotheses. Among such prayers, those from the first three centuries of Christianity are of utmost importance. In what follows, we will try to analyse them and shed light on their multiple values. We

¹ Carl Christian Felmy, *The Dogmatic of Ecclesial experience*, translated by Fr. Ioan Ică, Deisis Press, Sibiu, 1991, p. 253; Idem, *From the Secret Supper to the Holy Liturgy of Oriental Church. A historical comment*, translated in by Fr. Ioan Ică jr., Deisis Press, Sibiu, 2004, p. 145. Cf. Fr. Serghei Bulgakov S., *Eucharistic dogma*, translated by Paraschiv Anghelescu, Tit Simedrea, Paideia Press, Bucharest, 2000, p. 7; Fr. Nicolae Necula, *Tradition and renew in liturgical service*, vol. 2, Orthodox Diocese of Lower Danube Press, Galați, 2001, pp. 253-258.

² ”The Anaphora - central part of the Holy Liturgy that corresponds to the ritual and the prayer of the Holy Sacrifice. Anaphora consists from an assembly of prayers of thanks, holiness and invocation, told by the priest, that are followed by gestic and symbolic actions, during that took place the transformation of Holy Gifts from bread and wine in The Holy Sacraments”. Ioan Bria, *Dictionary of Orthodox Theology A-Z*, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1994, p. 19; Ioan Mircea, *Biblical Dictionary of The New Testament*, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1991; E. A. Livingstone, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Second Edition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 327; Albin Michel, *Dictionnaire de la Theologie chretienne*, Enciclopedia Universalis Press, Paris, 1998. The *Dictionary of Spirituality* appeared at Paris in 1961 defines so the anaphora: „Name used in Oriental Church for the central pray from the Eucharistic Liturgy, known in Occident as The Eucharistic Pray. ***”, *Dictionnaire de spiritualite ascetique et mistique, doctrine et histoire, Tome IV- Deuxieme partie*, Beauchesne, Paris, 1961, pp. 1582-1583. Also, the term has some laic signification (that of written report, addressed to a Prince from an employed from the court, or a stylistic aspect, that consist in repeating the same word at the beginning of several phrases, parts of phrases or verses for accentuate an idea or for obtaining some symmetries). See: Romanian Academy, Institute ”Iorgu Iordan and Al. Rosseti for Linguistics”, *Explicative Dictionary of Romanian Language*, Second edition, Encyclopaedic Univers Gold Press, Bucharest, 2009, p. 39, and <http://dexonline.ro/definitie/anafora>, accessed in 14. 03. 2014.

The Eucharistic Anaphora of the First Three Centuries of Christianity...

can find anaphoras in writings such as *The Didache of the Twelve Apostles*³, the epistles of Saint Ignatius of Antioch⁴ and Saint Clement the Roman⁵, *The First Apology* by Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher⁶ or in works belonging to Saint Irenaeus of Lyon⁷, while Tertullian⁸, Clement of Alexandria⁹ and

³ ***, "Teaching of Twelve Apostles", in *Writings of Apostolic Fathers*, translated in Romanian Language by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 1, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, 1979, Bucharest, pp. 15-35. Cf. Draper Jonathan A., "Ritual Process and Ritual Symbol in "Didache" 7-10", in review *Vigiliae Christianae*, 54 (2), 2000, p. 121.

⁴ See: Saint Ignatius Teophoros, "The Epistle to the Ephesians", in *Writings of Apostolic Fathers*, translated in Romanian Language by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 1, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1979, pp. 147-156; Idem, "The Epistle to the Smirnens", translated in Romanian Language by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 1, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1979, pp. 182-186.

⁵ Saint Clement of Rome, "The Epistle to Corinthians", translated in Romanian Language by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 1, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1979, pp. 37-88.

⁶ Saint Justin the Marthyr, Philosopher and Martyr, "First Apology in the help of Christians", in *Apologetics of Greek Language*, translated in Romanian Language by Teodor Bodogae, Olimp Căciulă, Dumitru Fecioru, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 2, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1980, pp. 25-88.

⁷ Saint Irenaeus of Lyon, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, translated by Armitage Robinson, coll. "Christian Classics Ethereal Library", The Macmillan Co. Press, New York, 1920, p. 64. Cf. A. Robinson, *The "Doctrine of The Holy Spirit in Justin and Irenaeus"*, in Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, coll. "Christian Classics Ethereal Library", The Macmillan Co. Press, New York, 1920, pp. 22-24; Constantin Necula, *Let's deserve our Orthodoxy*, "Oastea Domnului" Press, Sibiu, 2004, p. 105; Ioan Goje, *Saint Irenaeus, defensor of Christian teach*, Renașterea Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 294; Saint Irenaeus of Lyon, *Demonstration of Apostolic teaching*, translated in Romanian Language by Remus Rus, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 102-103.

⁸ Tertulian, "About the prayer", in *Apologetics of Latin Language*, translated in Romanian Language by Nicolae Chițescu, Eliodor Constantinescu, Paul Papadopol, David Popescu, coll. "Parents and Writers of the Church", vol. 3, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1981, p. 239.

⁹ Clement of Alexandria, "The Pedagogue", in *Writings – first part*, translated in Romanian Language by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 4, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982, p. 82; Idem, "Stromats", in *Writings – first part*, translated in Romanian Language by Dumitru Fecioru, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 4, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982, p. 305.

Origen¹⁰ allude to anaphoras when talking about the Eucharist. One of the oldest writings to offer information about the anaphora of the first centuries is *The Didache of the Twelve Apostles*¹¹. In chapters 9 and 10, it presents splendid prayers¹² of Judaic origin; experts claim they derive from the Judaic rite called Birkat Ha Mazon¹³. Some of them are being used even today – e.g.: the prayers blessing the gifts¹⁴.

As far as the order of liturgical elements is concerned, the one presented by the author differs from that known from the scriptural fragments regarding the origin of the Eucharist (Luke 22, 19). Thus, first the wine is sanctified, then comes the thanking prayer, followed by the consecration of the bread¹⁵. The prayer blessing the Holy Gifts, rich in meaning, is at the core. Hereafter we render it entirely:

¹⁰ Origen, "Homilies to the book of Prophet Jeremias", in *Chosen writings – first part*, translated in Romanian Language by Teodor Bodogae, Nicolae Neaga, Zorica Lațcu, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 6, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1981, p. 401, p. 405; Origen, "Comment at the Evangile of Matthew", in *Chosen writings – second part*, translated in Romanian Language by Teodor Bodogae, Nicolae Neaga, Zorica Lațcu, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 7, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982, p. 40, pp. 58-59; Origen, "About the prayer", in *Chosen writings – second part*, translated in Romanian Language by Teodor Bodogae, Nicolae Neaga, Zorica Lațcu, coll. "Fathers and Writers of the Church", vol. 7, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982, p. 40, p. 209.

¹¹ For more informations about the origins, the author and the reception of the work, see also: Ioan G. Coman, *Patrology*, Press of Holy Monastiere of Dervent, Dervent, 1999, p. 32; Ioan Ică jr., *From the Dionysius the Areopagyte to the Simeon of Thessallonic – complete anthology of byantine liturgical comments*, Deisis Press, Sibiu, 2011, p. 11. Idem, *The Canon of the Orthodox Church. I. I. The Apostles Canon of the first centuries*, Deisis Press, Sibiu, 2001, p. 232; Ioan VasIU, *Holy Eucharist, the culminant point of meeting between man and God*, Agnos Press, Sibiu, 2008, pp. 25-37, Claudio Moreschini, Enroci Norielli, *History of the ancient christian Greek and Latin literature*, translation in Romanian Language by trad. Hanibal Stănciulescu, Gabriela Sauciuc, Ioan-Florin Florescu, 1st volume, Polirom Press, Bucharest, 2001, p. 147; Constantin Băjău, *Patrology*, Universitaria Press, Craiova, 2007, pp. 15-18.

¹² ***, "Theaching of Twelve Apostles", p. 31.

¹³ Hurb Van de Sandt, "Do not give what is Holy to the dogs" (DID 9:5D and MAT 7:6A): The eucharistic food of the Didache in its jewish purity setting", in *Vigiliae Christinae* 56, 2002, p. 224; Ioan VasIU, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Iosif Enășoae, Mădălina-Maria Martin, *Holy Eucharisty, the sacrament of the charity of Christ. Historical, liturgical, dogmatic and spiritual aspects*, Sapienția Press, Iași, 2010, p. 48.

¹⁵ Hurb Van de Sandt, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

The Eucharistic Anaphora of the First Three Centuries of Christianity...

“First, as regards the cup: We thank Thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which Thou hast made known to us through Jesus Thy Son; to Thee be glory for ever. And as regards the broken bread: We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and the knowledge which Thou hast made known to us through Jesus Thy Son; to Thee be glory for ever. Just as this broken bread was once scattered in grains of corn over the hills, and having been gathered together became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power, through Jesus Christ for ever”¹⁶.

As we can see, the prayer is made of two thanking prayers¹⁷, doxological in nature. The final part describes the Eucharist as being the Sacrament by which the Church becomes one. This idea can also be found in the works of contemporary authors such as Saint Ignatius of Antioch¹⁸ and is rendered in a symbolic way, by means of an analogy with the grains of wheat which get unified in bread¹⁹. This image is extremely evocative and suggestive for the ecclesiological scenery of all times.

Beyond the information regarding the liturgical archaeology or the history of early Christianity²⁰ and beyond the eschatological tension transpiring from its content and specific to that epoch²¹, the anaphora from *The*

¹⁶ ***, ”Theaching of Twelve Apostles”, p. 29.

¹⁷ Ioan VasIU, *The evolution of eucharistic anaphora*, Archidieceșan Center of catechumenal diagnose, Sibiu, 2010, p. 37.

¹⁸ Iosif EnășoaiE, Mădălina-Maria Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁹ ”The Didachy presents the role of the Eucharisty in the Church, using a simbiolical language: the multitude of the pieces of weathgathered in one bread”. See: Iosif Țiba, *The Eucharisty is making the Church. Historical and theologycal study*, Galaxia Gutenberg Press, Tărgu Lăpuș, 2007, p. 60.

²⁰ Petre Vintilescu, *History of the Liturgy in the first three centuries*, Nemira Press, Bucharest, 2001, p. 59; Teodor M. Popescu, *The Church and the Culture*, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1995, pp. 24-39; Cf. Juan Mateos, *The Celebration of the Word in Biyantine Liturgy*, translated in Romanian Language by Cezar Login, coll. Liturgica, Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 5; Robert Taft, *A history of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, translated in Romanian Language by Cezar Login, 4th volume – The Diptics, Renașterea Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 21; Georgel Rednic, *Charisms in the early Church. A Pauline perspective*, coll. ”Biblical”, 12th volume, Alma Mater Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 59.

²¹ Iosif EnășoaiE, Mădălina-Maria Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 47. Ciprian Streza, ”The cultic

Didache is also representative for its theological content, for its thanking prayers and for the way in which it points to the role of the Eucharist in establishing the unity of the Church²².

The Epistle to the Corinthians belonging to Saint Clement the Roman is yet another paper providing information on the Eucharistic Anaphora of the post-apostolic age²³. The context in which it was written is special in illustrating the rebellion of the community against the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Therefore, Saint Clement establishes a link between the role of the clergy and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist²⁴. He also puts forward an example of prayer, which is considered by some specialists as the grand Eucharistic prayer of the Roman community²⁵:

“[Grant unto us, Lord,] that we may set our hope on Thy Name which is the primal source of all creation, and open the eyes of our hearts, that we may know Thee, who alone abides Highest in the lofty, Holy in the holy; who layest low in the insolence of the proud, who settest the lowly on high, and bringest the lofty low; who makest rich and makest poor; who killest and makest alive; wh oalone art the Benefactor of spirits and the God of all flesh; who lookest into the abyesses, who scanest the works of man; the Succorof them that are in peril, the Savior of them that are in de-spair; The Creator and Overseer of every spirit; who multiplies

mystery as modality of presence of Christ in the Church”, *Theological Review*, year XC, No. 4, Sibiu, 2008, p. 247.

²² Iosif Țiba, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

²³ For more informations about his life and activity, see: Ioan G. Coman, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Ludwig Hertling S. J., *The History of the Church*, translated in Romanian Language by Emil Dumea, Ars Longa Press, Iași, 2001, p. 15; Alexander Roberts D. D., „Introductory Note to the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians”, în vol. *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, col. „Ante Niceene Fathers, vol. 1, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1920, pp. 7-9; Constantin Băjău, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-22; Dan Batovic, „Ist Clement. An introduction”, in „Apostolic Fathers – Writings- 1st part”, coll. „Christian tradition”, vol. 10, Polirom Press, Iași, 2010, pp. 17-43; Saint Clement of Rome, *Memories*, translated in Romanian Language by Cornel Savu, Eikon Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, pp. 5-36.

²⁴ Idem, *The Epistle to Corinthians*, pp. 68-69. Cf. Gheorghe Ispas, *The Eucharisty – The sacrament of the unity of the Church. Practical and Theological aspects*, Basilica Press, Bucharest, 2008, p. 29; Ștefan Alexe, „The Ecclesiology of the Apostolic Fathers”, in *Theological Studies*, Second series, Year VII, No. 5-6, Bucharest, 1955, p. 373.

²⁵ Iosif Enășoae, Mădălina-Maria Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

The Eucharistic Anaphora of the First Three Centuries of Christianity...

the nations upon earth, and hast chosen out from all men those that love Thee through Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, through whom Thou didst instruct us, didst sanctify us, didst honor us”²⁶.

Fragments from this prayer exist in other Christian prayers as well²⁷. This is proof that the author’s words are enduring but also that a significant number of Christians face today the same major problems with which the Early Church was confronted²⁸. Just like Saint Irenaeus of Lyon later on, Saint Clement gives a cosmic dimension to the anaphora, which also represents a thanking prayer for the entire creation and a praising of God for the gift of life itself and for all the gifts springing from it.

Its doxological dimension and the many thanking prayers make the anaphora presented by Saint Clement similar to the one from *The Didache*, yet the former has a more elaborate structure²⁹.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, the Bishop of Antioch, in his epistles to well-known Christian communities and on his way to martyrdom, offers us another important prayer from the same period³⁰. The context in which he writes is different from that of Saint Clement’s works. Nonetheless, Saint Ignatius links the Holy Eucharist and bishopry and provides information on the existence of an ecclesiastical hierarchy and on its role³¹. Likewise, he shows how the Eucharist “feeds the unity of the Church”

²⁶ Saint Clement of Rome, *The Epistle to Corinthians*, pp. 76-77. Cf. Idem, *The first letter of Clement*, in „Apostolic Fathers – Writings- 1st part”, translated in Romanian Language by Cristina Ciubotaru, Nicolae Mogage, Dan Batovici, coll. ”Christian tradition”, vol. 10, Polirom Press, Iași, 2010, pp. 129-131.

²⁷ See, for example: ***, *Breviary*, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, *Breviary*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 38; ***, *Missal*, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 236-237 (it is a pray readed during the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great).

²⁸ Cf. ***, ”The Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna”, in *The Acts of the Apostles*, translated in Romanian Language by Ioan Rămureanu, coll. ”Fathers and Writers of the Church”, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1982, p. 32.

²⁹ Iosif Țiba, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

³⁰ Saint Clement or Rome, *The Letter of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth, Commonly Called Clement’s First Letter*, în vol. „The Library of Christian Classics”, S. C. M. Press, London, 1953, p. 48.

³¹ This affirmation confirms the affirmation of Father Gheorghe Ispas, which says: ”It can be easly observed that, by the middle of the 3rd century, the Eucharistic Liturgy is richer in its content, but without losing his specific esence”. Gheorghe Ispas, *op cit.*, p. 29.

(our translation)³² and suggests that sin is what prevents Christians from partaking of Christ³³ and urges them to stay away from schism mongers³⁴. The Saint tells the Ephesians that by fully experiencing the community offered by the Eucharist, they would feel immense joy. When defining the core Sacrament of the Christian cult, he makes an analogy with the bread, which is seen as the medicine of immortality³⁵:

“Especially [will I do this] if the Lord make known to me that you come together man by man in common through grace, individually, in one faith, and in Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, being both the Son of man and the Son of God, so that you obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, but [which causes] that we should live for ever in Jesus Christ”³⁶.

A few decades after the martyrdom of Saint Ignatius, another great man of the Church, Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher³⁷, in his first *Apology*, presents in detail the Divine Liturgy held in his times. He aimed

³² See: Ioan G. Coman, *op. cit.*, p. 35; Constantin Băjău, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-25; Paul Foster, *The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part I)*, in rev. „The expository times”, volume 117, No. 12, London, 2006, pp. 487- 495, or his biography, written by Allen Brent: Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy*, T & T Clark, London, 2007.

³³ After some scholars, he prefers to say more thinks using the silence, than writing. This is the reason for what, we think that a lot of thinks about his opinion on this subject were lost at his martyrdom, or they were kept by the disciples from generation to generation. Cf. Harry O. Maier, *The politics of the silent bishop: silence and persuasion in Ignatius of Antioch*, in rev. „Journal of Theological Studies”, Vol. 55, Issue 2, Oxford, 2004, pp. 503-519; Cf. Joesph H. Crehan, S. J., *Eucharistic epiklesis: New evidence and a new theory*, in rev. „Theological Studies”, vol. 41, Issue 4, Oxford, 1980, p. 699.

³⁴ Cf. John E. Lawyer, *Eucharist and martyrdom in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, in „Anglican Theological Review”, vol. 73, Issue 3, London, 1991, p. 73.

³⁵ See: Alexander Roberts D. D., *op. cit.*, p. 214; Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to Smirniens*, p. 184. Cf. Gheorghios D. Metallionos, *The Parish - Christ between us*, translated in Romanian Language by Ioan Ncă, Deisis Press, Sibiu, 2004, p. 19; W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, Fortress Press, Hermenia - Philadelphia, 1990, p. 243.

³⁶ Iosif Enășoae, Mădălina-Maria Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³⁷ ”They are getting further from Eucharist and prayer for not to be compelled to testify that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the body which suffered for our sins and which were resurrected by the Father, throw his goodness. So, those who are opposing to God’s gift, die because of their unbelief”. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

The Eucharistic Anaphora of the First Three Centuries of Christianity...

at dismissing the unjust accusations brought to Christians. Experts believe his work to be “the most thorough explanation of the Christian Liturgy of the first three centuries” (our translation)³⁸. He presents the Liturgy in chapters LXV – LXVII³⁹, insisting on the Eucharist in chapter LXVI. He writes in a context which is different from that of *The Didache* or of the other aforementioned papers. Thus, he does not aim at providing a pedagogical material or at offering liturgical advice, but at protecting Christians from allegations. It is why he does not put an emphasis on the words of the Anaphora and prefers instead to outline in a logical-chronological order the most important moments of the prayer, to tackle certain rituals such as the communion of the sick⁴⁰, or to counter sectarian methods and misguided theories - according to which Mithraic Mysteries would be at the origin of the Eucharist⁴¹. When describing its central moment, Saint Justin refers to founding texts, most probably laden with meaning for the cult - which is why some Catholic authors believe this is in fact the text of the Epiklesis⁴². This is to prove that those writings are a heritage from the Apostles, transmitted to us by means of the Holy Tradition:

“For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, This do in remembrance of Me (Luke 22:19), this is My body; and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, This is My blood; and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done”⁴³.

³⁸ Ștefan C. Alexe, *op. cit.*, pp. 373-374; Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to Smirniens*, p. 182. Saint Ignatius insists in this Epistle on the problems of the Eucharist of the heretics. Cf. Paul Foster, *The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part 2)*, în rev. „The expository times”, volume 118, No1, London, 2006, p. 3.

³⁹ Cf. Pr. dr. Gheorghe Ispas, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to Ephesians*, p. 164.

⁴¹ Ioan G. Coman, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Cf. Teodor Bodogae, *Introduction*, in ”Greeks Apologetics”, coll. ”Parents and Writers of the Church”, vol. 2, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1980, p. 8; Constantin Băjău, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-48.

⁴² Carl Christian Felmy, *From the Secret Supper to the Holy Liturgy of Oriental Church. A historical comment*, p. 24; Ene Braniște, *Special liturgical for the faculties of Theology*, 3rd edition, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, p. 135.

⁴³ Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosoph, *The first Apology*, pp. 70-72; cf. Pr. prof. Petre Vintilescu, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Cf. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>, accessed in 03. 04. 2105.

Another father who writes about the early liturgical ritual is Saint Irenaeus of Lyon⁴⁴. Similar to other contemporary authors such as Athenagoras of Athens and Theophile⁴⁵, Saint Irenaeus does not focus on description⁴⁶, but on the preaching of the Apostles and on fighting heresy⁴⁷. Saint Irenaeus, like Saint Justin, mentions the invoking formula and the prominence of the Epiklesis⁴⁸, which transforms bread and wine and grants it a new value:

“For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity”⁴⁹.

Likewise, much as Saint Clement the Roman, Saint Irenaeus offers a cosmic dimension to the Sacrament by which, he believed, it is possible to *re-enact the Creation in Jesus Christ* and describes it as the spiritual food of the Christian⁵⁰, emphasising the fact that it marks the communion, the

⁴⁴ Irineu Bistrițeanul, *Saint Irinaeus, polemist and theologian*, coll. „Sacra Via”, Cartimpex Press, Cluj, 1998; Adrian Dinu, *The Virgin Mary – prototype of Spiritual life – exegesis of the work of Saint Irinaeus of Lyon*, Trinitas Publishing House, Iași, 2008, pp. 75-101; Ioan G. Coman, *op. cit.*, p. 43, and Constantin Băjău, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-75, for more information about his life and activity.

⁴⁵ Petre Vintilescu, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁴⁶ Ioan G. Coman, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁴⁷ For more information about the heresies from his period, see: Teodor M. Popescu, *Historical overview on the schisms, heresies and sects – social patterns of its apparition*, in rev. ”Theological Studies”, second series, year 2, no. 7-8, Bucharest, 1950, pp. 351-355; Pompiliu Nacu, *The heresies of the first eight christian centuries and its survive at the begining of the 3rd millenium*, Partener Press, Galați, 2010; Eusebiu of Cezareea, *Church History*, translated in Romanian Language by Teodor Bodogae, in ”Writings – first part”, coll. ”Fathers and Writers of the Church”, vol. 14, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1987, pp. 131-142, and Saint Epiphany of Salamyna, *Ancoratus*, translated in Romanian Language by Oana Coman, Dragoș Gabriel Mârșanu, Adrian Muraru, coll. ”Christian Tradition”, Polirom Press, Iași, 2007.

⁴⁸ Gheorghe Ispas, *op. cit.*, p. 29; Zareh Baronian, *The Liturgy of the Armenian Church between the other Liturgies from the Eastern tist. A comparative study*, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1975, pp. 33-34.

⁴⁹ Petre Vintilescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91; Saint Irinaeus of Lyon, *The demonstration of apostolic preaching*, pp. 150-151. Cf. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103418.htm>, accessed in 04. 05. 2015.

⁵⁰ Saint Irinaeus, Bishop of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, translated by Alexander Roberts D. D., vol. „The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus”, col. ”Ante Niceene Fathers”, vol. 1, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1920, p. 1213; Cf. Iosif Țiba, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

The Eucharistic Anaphora of the First Three Centuries of Christianity...

coalescence of body, of flesh and the Holy Spirit⁵¹ and the importance of the relation between faith and the Holy Eucharist⁵².

Following Saint Irenaeus, other more or less prominent authors⁵³ provide information about the Holy Eucharist. However, none of them gives the formula of the Anaphora used in the Church of their time, nor do they insist on the content of the prayer. One explanation could be the exegetic or speculative character of theology and writing back then. Thereof, the works presented in this paper, which give details about the Anaphora, are still referential for studies on that epoch and on its Eucharistic ritual⁵⁴.

This explains why they are mentioned in the older or more recent writings of Eastern and Western authors⁵⁵, Protestants and even Neo-Protestants. They are therefore a useful reference for research and an undeniable testimony of certain events.

Today's Orthodox Theology and especially the Romanian one also acknowledges their role due to the arguments they put forward for different theological hypotheses and due to their splendid and extremely profound prayers. This justifies why they bear fruit in the works of distinguished theologians such as Father Dumitru Stăniloae⁵⁶, Father Ioan Ică jr.⁵⁷, Father

⁵¹ Irineu Bistrițeanul, *op. cit.*, p. 50. Alexander Roberts, *Introductory Note to Irenaeus Against Heresies*, în vol. „The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus”, col. „Ante Niceene Fathers, vol. 1, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1920, p. 1123. Cf. Saint Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, în vol. „The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus”, col. „Ante Niceene Fathers, vol. 1, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1920, p. 1288.

⁵² Iosif Țiba, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁵³ Irene de Lyon, *Contre les heresies. Denonciation et refutation de la gnose au nom menteur*; trad. Adelin Rousseau, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 2001, p. 464.

⁵⁴ Such an example may be considered Hypolit. See: Iosif Țiba, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁵⁵ Robert J. Daly, *Eucharistic origins: from the The New Testament to the Liturgies of the Golden Age*, în rev. „Theological Studies”, nr. 66, Oxford, 2005, pp. 3-22.

⁵⁶ See, for example: Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1-3, 4th edition, Ediția a IV-a, Press of Biblical and Mission Institute of Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2010; Hristu Andrutsos, *The Dogmatic of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Church*, translated in Romanian Language by Dumitru Stăniloae, Press of the Orthodox Archdiocese from Sibiu, Sibiu, 1930, 372; Chițescu, Isidor Todoran, Petreună, *Dogmatic and symbolic Theology, handbook for the faculties of theology*, 2nd volume, Renașterea Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2005, p. 229.

⁵⁷ Ioan Ică jr., *From Dionisius the Areopagyte to Simeon of Thesalonica – Byzantine liturgical full comments - studies and texts*, Deisis Press, Sibiu, 2011, p. 11; Idem, *The Canon of the Orthodoxy. I. I. Apostolic canon of the first centuries*, Deisis Press, Sibiu, 2008, p. 232.

Ene Braniște⁵⁸, Father Petre Vintilescu⁵⁹, the bishop Nicolae Popovici⁶⁰, of pious memory, and many others, some already illustrious and others on their way to becoming a familiar presence in the Romanian field of theology. Citing the views of the Church Fathers, they all confirm in their writings the strong link between the faith of the Church and the Holy Liturgy⁶¹.

⁵⁸ E. Braniște, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-152.

⁵⁹ P. Vintilescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 60- 91.

⁶⁰ Nicolae I. Popoviciu, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-78.

⁶¹ Cf. Mihai Himicinschi, "The Confession of Faith in the Divine Liturgy", in *Faith, confession, history and actuality*, eds. Valer Bel, Cristian Sonea, Grigore-Dinu Moș, Cluj University Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 230.