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# **P**articipation at the Divine Liturgy - personal necessity and ecclesial event - in the theological reflection of Father Professor Ene Braniște

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## **Abstract**

This study refers to the participation of the faithful in the Liturgy as personal necessity and ecclesial event, as this issue is reflected in the theological thought of Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște. Thus, in the introduction I referred to the personality and work of Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște. Secondly, I referred to the Liturgy as a special concern of Fr. Braniște. Next I examined the issue of participation in Holy Liturgy, as pastoral “diagnosis” as well as specific characteristics of the problem. Another section of this work addresses the issue of participation in the Liturgy - between the danger of secularization and the need of renewal. The study concludes with some final considerations.

## **Keywords**

Father Professor Ene Braniște, the Divine Liturgy, Liturgical Theology

## **A. Introduction**

Year 2013 is a year of major significance for the history of Christianity to the fact that it marks 1700 years since the Edict of Milan, given by Em-

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peror Constantine the Great, which made Christianity a permitted religion of the Roman Empire, alongside other lawful religions until that moment. This new status enjoyed by Christianity, had a positive impact on the entire life of the Church and evident consequences in all the fields of her activity. The Romanian Orthodox Church dedicated a reverential year to this special event for theological reflection and evaluation and to highlight how Christianity understood and managed to use its newfound freedom. Also, 2013 represents the anniversary of hundred and ten years since pious Father Dumitru Stăniloae's birth, the greatest orthodox dogmatist theologian of the twentieth century brought forth within the Romanian people.

The same year 2013 has a major importance for the Romanian practical theology as it marks one hundred years since the birth of the greatest theologian and liturgist, Fr. Ene Braniște, and almost three decades since his passing into eternity. We took into account the size and diversity of his theological work, the diversity of the themes, the theological depth of his work, its scientific accuracy, the impact that it had on Romanian liturgical and theological research and on the liturgical life and pastoral ministry in our Church. We add his academic attire and how it contributed to the formation of elite researchers in Liturgical Theology and Pastoral Theology, and the formation of many generations of priests who served the Church and nation, with dignity sacrifice in times of great test. Then, without hesitation and without fear of making mistakes at all, we could call 2013 Ene Braniște Anniversary Year too.

The outstanding personality of Father Professor Ene Braniște was revealed in a series of medallion studies published at anniversary dates. We should mention here the portrait in words done in some synthesis studies of Romanian theology by the first disciple, Rev. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Necula<sup>1</sup>, the successor to the teaching chair and along with many others, the continuer of Ene Braniște's research work<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Pr. asist. dr. Nicolae Necula, *Părintele Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște la aniversarea a 70 de ani de la naștere*, in "Studii Teologice", XXXV (1933), nr. 7-8, p. 563-565; Idem, *In memoriam: Pr.Prof. Ene Braniște*, in "Studii Teologice", XXXVI (1984), nr. 3-4, p. 280-281.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*\*, *Centenarul Facultății și Institutului de Teologie din București. Reflecții și considerații asupra activității Facultății și Institutului de Teologie din București la aniversarea centenarului său*, (colectiv), in "Studii Teologice", XXXIV (1982), nr. 1-2, p. 10-137; Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul Teologilor Români*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, București, 1996, p. 59-61; Ediția a doua revăzută și întregită, Ed.

In the study commemorating the 70th birthday of Professor Ene Braniște Father Rev. Prof. Nicholas D. Necula identifies the major themes that formed the subject of scientific research and were reflected in the published work of the honoured Professor<sup>3</sup>. Besides the major themes mentioned in the study, it should be pointed out that during the full affirmation of Father Professor Ene Braniște as researcher many of his studies were frequently published in the central and local magazines of the Church. They present topical themes of liturgical theology and pastoral theology, meant to be an immediate response to the specific challenges of parish lives and their priests. It is difficult to identify a theme that, even in passing, was not the subject of Father Professor Ene Braniște's research so that the present research liturgical on any topic has a starting point and reference in his work. However, we believe that the current liturgical research should pay more attention to the work of Father Professor Ene Braniște and researchers in the area of practical theology must make more effort as the largest Romanian liturgist of the twentieth century is better known in the European space. Personally I strongly believe that for liturgical theology, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște is as important and great theologian, how important is the great theologian Fr Dumitru Stăniloae for Dogmatic Theology. if he had the freedom to write and publish in foreign languages, his work would have been comparable as scientific value and size with that of many researchers within other Christian traditions of the twentieth century and would have enjoyed at least the same consideration from the liturgical domain experts.

To these portrait sketches, highlighting the quality of researcher in Liturgical Theology, and beyond, we must add those portrayals, full of tenderness, which highlights the everyday man and the qualities with which God endowed him. Here is how one of the disciples describes him: "[...] the perfect minister, with warm and beautiful voice, dignified reverence and elegance without ostentation, with prestige and honesty, combining admirably the teacher of the chair and the liturgist of the altar"<sup>4</sup>. Within a solemn framework, organized by His Eminence Cassian Archbishop of

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Enciclopedică, București, 2002, p. 61-62; \*\*\*, *Enciclopedia Ortodoxiei Românești*, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2010, p. 99-100; Pr. Viorel Sava, *Ostenitori și rodiri în ogorul Teologiei Practice – ghid bibliografic*, Ed. Erola, Iași, 2003, 379 p.

<sup>3</sup> Pr. Asist. Dr. Nicolae Necula, *op. cit.*, p. 567-572.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 565.

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Lower Danube, on November 30, 2002, the day of remembrance of St. Andrew, the patron saint of Romania, the third edition of the *General Liturgics Manual*<sup>5</sup> was edited by Rev. Eugene Drăgoi and published in two volumes. Rev. Prof. Ștefan Alexe, attending the event, praised the author of the textbook, Professor Ene Braniște Father and testified that after the Holy Mass celebrated in St. Catherine chapel of the University Theological Institute in Bucharest, he surprised the professor putting his clothes in order and tapping them with a gesture of comfort, full of grace, tenderness and devotion.

Of the many aspects that define the work and personality of Father Professor Ene Braniște in this study we stopped on the topic of participation in the Liturgy seeking to show that the integrity of the human person in the prayerful community is both personal necessity and ecclesial event.

### **b) The Divine Liturgy, one of Father Ene Braniște concerns - an overview**

The Divine Liturgy was a favourite theme of Father Professor Ene Braniște since the beginning of his liturgical research. The most significant work on explaining the Divine Liturgy, at least in the Romanian theological, to this day is the PhD thesis of Father Professor Ene Braniște entitled: *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii după Nicolae Cabasila (translated - Explaining the Divine Liturgy by Nicholas Cabasilas)* published in 1943<sup>6</sup>, a work based on the liturgical comment of the Thessalonikian theologian translated into Romanian by the author of the thesis<sup>7</sup>. If Father Petre Vintilescu, Father

<sup>5</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală*, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1985, 548 p.; ediția a II-a, București, 1993; ediția a III-a, îngrijită de Pr. Eugen Drăgoi, Ed. Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2002, vol. 1, 366 p.; vol. 2, 246 p.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii după Nicolae Cabasila*, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1943, 328 p., re-published by Mrs. Prof. Ecaterina Braniște, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1997, 416 p., this first edition including the translation of Nicholas Cabasilas' commentary done by Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște. PhD thesis and translation comments were reviewed by Fr. Dr. T. Bodogae, in "Revista Teologică", XXXVII (1947), nr. 3-4, p. 185-187.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolae Cabasila, *Tâlcuirea dumnezeieștii Liturghii*, studiu introductiv și traducere din limba greacă de Diacon Ene Braniște, București, 1946, re-published with the title: *Nicolae Cabasila, Scrieri. Tâlcuirea Dumnezeieștii Liturghii și Despre viața în Hri-*

Ene Braniște's predecessor to the chair and mentor, managed to provide a brilliant overview of the history of the Divine Liturgy<sup>8</sup> for the Romanian theology, with special focus on the first three Christian centuries, the Romanian theology felt acute lack of a commentary of the Holy Liturgy. This gap was filled by the PhD thesis to which we refer. What you need to understand is that Father Professor Ene Braniște, from the beginning, did not just research but sought to give immediate answers to specific challenges and provide appropriate tools for theological education, scientific research and missionary pastoral activity of the Church. This thorough study focused on the interpretation of the Divine Liturgy, as it is reflected in the liturgical review of Nicolae Cabasilas was followed by several studies on various topics (historical, exegetical, pastoral etc.) on the Divine Liturgy<sup>9</sup>.

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*stos*, traducere, studiu introductiv și note de Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște și Pr. Prof. Dr. Teodor Bodogae, Ed. Arhiepiscopiei Bucureștilor, București, 1989, 299 p.

<sup>8</sup> Pr. Petre Vintilescu, *Încercări de istoria Liturghiei. I. Liturgia creștină în primele trei veacuri*, București, 1930 – extract from magazine “Studii Teologice”, I (1929), nr. 1, p. 170 ș.u.; II (1930), nr. 2, p. 100 ș.u.; nr. 3, p. 80 ș.u. – re-published.

<sup>9</sup> We present here the most important studies on the subject: Pr.Prof. Ene Braniște, *Biserică și Liturghie în opera “Mistagogia” a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, în “Ortodoxia”, XXXIII (1981), nr. 1, p. 13-22; Idem, *Câteva cuvinte despre Miridelle (Părțile) speciale, scoase la proscomidie pentru felurite scopuri*, în “Glasul Bisericii”, XXVI (1967), nr. 5-6, p. 495-497; Idem, *Controversă asupra necesității Epiclezei euharistice, după Nicolae Cabasila*, în “Studii Teologice”, VII (1938-1939), nr. 1-2, p. 107 ș.u.; Idem, *Cu privire la slujbele obor*, în “Mitropolia Olteniei”, VII (1955), nr. 1-2, p. 19-20; Idem, *Despre pregătirea preotului pentru săvârșirea Sfintei Liturghii*, în “Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei”, XX (1954), nr. 1-2, p. 13-21; Idem, *E necesară binecuvântarea anafurei care se împarte credincioșilor la sfârșitul Sfintei Liturghii?*, în “Mitropolia Banatului”, XVI (1966), nr. 10-12, p. 663-671; Idem, *Însemnătatea Sfintei Liturghii pentru viața creștină*, în “Glasul Bisericii”, X (1951), nr. 1-3, p. 33-36; Idem, *Liturgia Darurilor mai înainte sfințite*, în “Studii Teologice”, X (1968), nr. 3-4, p. 176-192; Idem, *Liturghiile catolice în comparație cu cele ortodoxe*, în “Ortodoxia”, IX (1957), nr. 1, p. 119-138; Idem, *O nouă liturghie întrebuințată de unii “ortodocși” apuseni: Liturgia după Sfântul Gherman al Parisului sau Liturgia de rit galican*, în “Mitropolia Olteniei”, X (1958), nr. 9-10, p. 711-717; XI (1959), nr. 1, p. 36-47; Idem, *Rânduiala slujbei în sobor de preoți fără diaconi*, în “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LXXVIII (1960), nr. 3-4, p. 218-257; Idem, *Săvârșitorul Sfintei Liturghii și pregătirea lui pentru slujbă*, în “Glasul Bisericii”, XLII (1983), nr. 6-8, p. 390-394; Idem, *Scurtă lămurire asupra Sfintei Liturghii*, în “Mitropolia Banatului”, XIV (1964), nr. 4-6, p. 260-269; Idem, *Valoarea și importanța Sfintei Liturghii în viața noastră religioasă*, în “Îndrumător Bisericesc”, Cluj, 1979, p. 83-88; Idem, *Pregătirea preotului pentru săvârșirea dumnezeieștii Liturghii*, în “Îndrumător Bisericesc”, Alba Iulia, 1980, p. 70-73; Idem, *Cultul Bisericilor creștine vechi din*

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By their scientific accuracy, depth of content and subject matter they are always current and a reference. Some of these studies have become chapters of the two *manuals* of Liturgics<sup>10</sup> made and published for the theology students. Another group of studies with liturgical-pastoral content, deals with participation in the Divine Liturgy. On them we will particularly insist in the following pages.

**c) Participation in the Liturgy - a pastoral “diagnosis”.**

Speaking about the participation of the faithful at the Divine Liturgy Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște makes an X-ray of the parish situation showing in a very systematic presentation, the different attitudes of the believers towards their Christian duty. It should be stressed that the analysis he presents in his studies reveals him to be a very good connoisseur of his contemporary parish life and a pastor with a strong and refined pastoral sense. He mentions three types of attitude towards the Divine Liturgy: *an attitude of total physical and spiritual absence, an attitude of simple bodily presence, and an attitude of genuine, active and effective participation* at the Divine Liturgy<sup>11</sup>. The first attitude is defined as “indifference and ignorance of the meaning and importance of the Liturgy”<sup>12</sup> for the spiritual life and it is specific to those believers who are “on the periphery of the Church, those who only bear the Christian name”<sup>13</sup>, Christians of census or statistics, as we would say today. The second attitude is characterized by formalism, “routine or habit.” The representatives of this category “do not participate”

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*Orient. Liturghiile riturilor orientale*, in “Ortodoxia”, XVII (1965), nr. 1, p. 83-131; Idem, *Observațiuni și propuneri pentru o nouă ediție a Liturghierului românesc*, in “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LXII (1945), nr. 11-12, p. 599-613; LXIV (1946), nr. 4-6, p. 194-217; nr. 7-9, p. 333-351; Idem, *Noua ediție a Liturghierului românesc (1950) în comparație cu cele anterioare*, in “Studii Teologice”, III (1951), nr. 9-10, p. 563-580, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală*, vezi nota 5; Idem, *Liturgica specială*, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1980, 510p., published so far in several editions.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, *Participarea la Liturghie și metode pentru realizarea ei*, in “Studii Teologice”, II (1949), nr. 7-8, p. 567.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

but only "participate just like at a show"<sup>14</sup>. The latter attitude is identified by Rev. Prof. To be of the parish "elites", those believers

"who come to the church in genuine religious zeal, that is are driven by a sincere and deep spiritual need and not only watch closely and inner concentration, with respect and devotion, the sacred drama that unfolds in front of them, but they strive to get through the eye of the soul in the heart of the Liturgy, in the mysterious and sacred action that lies beneath its tool of external forms and rituals"<sup>15</sup>.

Our author finds that the numerical difference between those who make up the first category and those in the latter category is very large, the former holding rule and he concludes by saying that it appears "the notion of "active participation" has remained still in the abstract theology and definition so far"<sup>16</sup>.

By the concept of "active participation" Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște understands first „the physical presence” of the believer in the Divine Liturgy that is bodily. We could say that this is a minimal sign of belonging to the parish community. The one who says is a believer and does not show, at least, the sign of his faith is dry branch of a tree. But the physical presence is only the first step. It must be confirmed by "the personal, conscious and active integration and participation in the sacred drama"<sup>17</sup>. The logical consequence of this integration is to fully share "the gifts and spiritual treasures of the Divine Liturgy"<sup>18</sup>.

#### **d) Participation in the Liturgy - characteristics.**

To understand the current situation regarding the participation of the faithful at the Holy Liturgy, Father Ene Braniște makes a brief, but clear and enlightening, peek into the past of the Church and identifies three common characteristics of the presented theme. The first specific note was given by the regular attendance of all the members of the community at the Sunday

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 567-568.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 568.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 569.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

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Liturgy, which means that “all the believers participate in all Liturgies”.<sup>19</sup> This full participation “gives the more vivid and plastic image of the unity of adoration, thought and feeling which prevailed in the ancient Church”.<sup>20</sup> Not participating in Holy Liturgy entailed the removal from religious community or congregation, as Tertullian writes<sup>21</sup>, or defrocking the cleric, and sopping from taking the Holy Communion, as will later establish the canonical provisions.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the thinking of Fr. Prof Ene Braniște the obvious expression of integration in Christ and in Church is the permanent participation in Sunday Liturgy. This would be the first of the defining characteristics of the early Church liturgical community.

A formal participation in Liturgy is far less what meant for Christians the Sunday Liturgy. The connection with the Liturgy is the expression of “the consciousness of belonging to the *ecclesia*”<sup>23</sup>, the mystical body of Christ. Each believer had a clear conscience that is part of this body. In other words, attending Liturgy, on the one hand, satisfies personal spiritual needs, and on the other hand, was a manifestation of ecclesial conscience: “Belonging to the same shrine or altar was the first sign of unity with the bishop and Christian community ruled by him, as well as the distancing

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 570

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> “We gather in community and religious congregation (Liturgy), that we besieged God, begging Him through prayer ... Here (in the congregation) are made even promptings, divine punishment and judgment. For we are judged very wisely, as those who are sure that we are in front of God and is the biggest loss for the judgment to come if someone was guilty so as to be removed from the community prayer, sacred assembly and any communion” – Tertullian, *Apologétique*, XXXIX, 2-4, texte établi et traduit par Jean-Pierre Waltzing avec la collaboration de A. Severyns, Paris, 1929, p. 82, la Asistent Diacon Ene Braniște, *Participarea la...*, p. 570.

<sup>22</sup> Canon 80 of the Council in Trullo says: “If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or those numbered clergy or a layperson, for he would have no too heavy need or difficult job, to miss more time from his church, but being in the city would not go (to church), three Sundays in three weeks, the cleric to be deposed, and the layman would be removed from the communion”, Arhidiacon prof. dr. Ioan N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe. Note și comentarii*, București, 1991, p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> Asistent Diacon Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 570; Idem, *Liturgica generală*, 1, ediția a III-a, p. 67; Idem, *Idei, principii și preocupări sociale în cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe*, în “Studii Teologice”, IV (1952), nr. 7-8, p. 435; Idem, *Cultul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române față de cultul celorlalte confesiuni creștine și al sectelor din țara noastră*, în “Studii Teologice”, III (1954), nr. 1-2, p. 7-8.

from the altar was the most concrete evidence of rupture of the Church”<sup>24</sup>, says Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște relying on one of the writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch. In a similar approach, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște relies on an exceptional study of his master and predecessor, Rev. Prof. Petre Vintilescu. The latter says:

“Since its origin, the existence and social life of the Church were ruled by Liturgy. The consciousness of a new and distinct religious community curdled in the mentality of the early Christians only within the Liturgy. The self-consciousness of the Christian Church was born and came to expression in the Liturgy. In fact, according to the confessions of Christians during the first periods of pagan persecutions, their main fault constituted the liturgical meetings, where they often had been caught and arrested ... Thus, cause of Liturgy was the cause of the Church”<sup>25</sup>.

In another study, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște shows that singing together at Liturgy, expresses the membership of the Church of Christ and enhances the unity, harmony and love among Christians. In support of his allegations he cites the work of St. Basil Hrisostomos, who said:

“Who can be considered an enemy of another, when he joins voice together with him to give together praise to God? Psalmody brings along everything that can be better: love, making from the companionship of the voices a sort of bonding between people, gathering believers together in one choir”<sup>26</sup>.

In the same spirit expressed St. Ambrose, who is also cited by Fr. Braniște: “The Psalm is the guarantee of peace and harmony, a kind of guitar that brings one special song from different and various voices. It gathers those apart, united the factions, reconciles the fight. Indeed, the great bond

<sup>24</sup> Idem, *Participarea la Sfânta Liturghie...*, p. 570-571. See also Sfântul Ignatie al Antiochiei, *Epistola către Tralieni*, VII, in “Scrierile Părinților Apostolici dimpreună cu Canoanele și Așezămintele Apostolice”, trad. de Pr. I. Mihălcescu, Econ. M. Pâslaru și Ec. G.N. Nițu, vol. I, Chișinău, 1927, p. 165.

<sup>25</sup> Pr. Petre Vintilescu, *Funcțiunea eclesiologică sau comunitară a Sf. Liturghii*, în “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LXIV (1946), nr. 1-3, p. 4-5 la Asist. Diacon Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 571.

<sup>26</sup> Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Comentar la Psalmi*, ps. 1, translated by Pr. Dr. O. Căciulă, p. 25 cited by Pr. prof. Ene Braniște, *Temeiuri biblice și tradiționale pentru cântarea în comun a credincioșilor*, in “Studii Teologice”, VI (1954), nr. 1-2, p. 23.

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of unity is the gathering of all believers in one chorus! Guitar sounds are different but the symphony is one ...”.<sup>27</sup>

To the statements of St. Basil the Great and St. Ambrose, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște adds the internal argument of the Liturgy itself. Since the beginning the Holy Liturgy appears as a work of the whole community and for the community. This is reflected in particular in its dialogue structure and the fact that, gathered together in the presence of Christ and His saints, we all pray for spiritual and material needs of everyone. These realities make the presence of the faithful in the holy place as “participation”, not only “spectator...”, in the true sense of the word, the “cooperation” in Holy Sacrifice, “which is brought *for them* and *in their name* or *on their behalf*. Or, the first manifestation of this collaboration of the faithful in the Liturgy is their participation in religious singing in the church, with the priest and the singer”.<sup>28</sup>

Communion in prayer, as a manifestation of ecclesial consciousness was doubled by communion in faith, which is the third defining note of the community gathered in Sunday Liturgy. The divine worship was defined by Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște as “a true school in which ordinary believers were taught Scripture, the truths of faith and moral rules of Christian living”.<sup>29</sup> So, the divine worship in general, and the Divine Liturgy, especially sanctify the faithful and by invoking the Divine Grace, and by obedience to the holy teachings, because of deep and inseparable relationship between *lex credendi (modus credendi)* and *lex orandi (modus orandi)*.<sup>30</sup> In Orthodoxy, the form of faith (see the Creed) integrated into the Liturgy or the Sacraments becomes form of prayer, and the orthodox prayer in all its forms of expression, is only the one that expresses faith.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Sf. Ambrozie, *Enarratio in psalmum*, I, 9, Migne, P.L. XIV, col. 968-969, cited by Pr. Prof. Ene Braniște, *Temeiuri biblice...*, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup> Pr. prof. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, *Liturgica generală*, I, ediția a III-a, p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> Idem, *Liturgica specială*, p. 275-280. See also Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Sava, *Mărturisirea credinței și importanța ei în Liturghia ortodoxă, cu privire specială asupra Liturghiei Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*, în vol.: “Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur (†407) – Mare dascăl al lumii și ierarh”, Ed. Trinitas, Iași, 2007, p. 9-21; Idem, *Relația dintre învățătura de credință și rugăciune reflectată în rânduiala Sfințelor Taine*, în vol.: “Autocefalia Bisericii și Mărturisirea credinței”, coord. by Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Sava și Pr. Lect. Dr. Ilie Melniciuc-Puică, Doxologia Publishing House, Iași, 2011, p. 30-53.

The transmission of doctrine of faith was made through liturgical hymns, the text of prayer, the homily, which from the beginning has been a major step in conducting the Divine Liturgy<sup>32</sup> and through mystagogic catechesis, it was developed to the highest level in the period of catechumenate. During the catechumenate (fourth to fifth centuries),

“the explaining of the Holy Liturgy was the main activity of those mystagogic, systematic and comprehensive instruction courses, addressed usually to the catechumens, candidates for baptism (competentes) or neophytes (νεοφωτίστοι), to those recently baptized, to who were especially expounded the three major mysteries or sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and anointing with chrism”<sup>33</sup>.

This work became a constant concern of the Church and was held up until today in the divine worship, and in particular, in the relation to the Divine Liturgy.

Another aspect that adds to those presented here refers to the communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ, in Divine Liturgy, act that Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște considers both one of personal fulfillment and full ecclesial manifestation. Treating of the purpose of the Divine Liturgy, as it is reflected in the interpretation of the Byzantine liturgical theologian Nicholas Cabasilas Father Braniște distinguishes a “*direct effect, close or immanent* (ἔσργον) and other *indirect, farthest or transcendent* (τέλος).<sup>34</sup> The first goal aims the *anaphora*, the other relates to *sanctification of believers*<sup>35</sup> by communion with the Divine Mysteries. This vision on the purpose of the Divine Liturgy is based also on the theology of Fr. Braniste predecessor, Rev. Prof. Peter Vintilescu. The latter states that “the communion stands ... in the direct relationship with the Sacrifice. It is necessary, that is, sacrifice to be brought so that there will be something to be given for communion and the sacrifice, once made, to fulfill its meaning must be consumed through communion”<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, *Liturgica specială*, p. 177-178; Idem, *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii...*, p. 133.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, *Participarea la Sfânta Liturghie...*, p. 571-572.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii...*, p. 196.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Pr. P. Vintilescu, *Trupul și Sângele Domnului din Sfânta Împărtășire*, în “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LV (1937), p. 302. Vezi și Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii...*, p. 196.

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The statements of the two ministers of Romanian liturgical theology are based on liturgical exegesis of Nicolas Cabasilas, which says that “*the object of the Divine Liturgy is, certainly, the anaphora; the purpose (τέλος), however, is the sanctification of the faithful, who acquire the forgiveness of their sins, inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, and other gifts...*”<sup>37</sup> and adds, saying that “*when the service is entirely performed and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist ends. For now the bread and wine are consecrated and sanctified and they sanctify the priest and all the other members of the Church*”.<sup>38</sup> To these statements, however, Father Ene Braniște adds a very important aspect: “*the sanctification of the faithful, that is their communion with the holy sacraments is the primary and final aim of the Liturgy, comparing to which the anaphora is only a goal-means*”.<sup>39</sup> He reverses, as we can see, the order of goals and shows that what at first seems to be essential, it is only the way by which it comes to what, at first glance, seems to be secondary but in the understanding of our author is the true purpose of the Divine Liturgy. In support of this new vision, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște brings the argument of the name *Liturgy* that is given in tradition to the solemn service of communion of all believers in the days of Lent. Although this service does not contain a pray for the consecration of the gifts, however, it is called Liturgy precisely because within it the believers receive the communion with the Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>40</sup> In other words, it is not called Liturgy because it was reached the *goal-means*, that is the consecration of the gifts, but because goal was reached, the communion of the faithful.

The personal fulfillment of the believer who, within the Divine Liturgy, partakes of the Body and Blood of Christ is seen in special effects it has on his spiritual life. Basing his approach on the works of Nicholas Cabasilas, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște identifies three special effects or consequences of communion with the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, effects that reflect a personal fulfillment of participating in the Divine Liturgy. These are: *the union with Christ; the forgiveness of sins which is “the most important effect of these gifts”*, and *the acquisition of eternal life*.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Nicolae Cabasila, *Tâlcuirea Dumnezeieștii Liturghii*, cap. 1, în vol. “Tâlcuirea Dumnezeieștii Liturghii și Despre viața în Hristos”, p. 27. See also Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. XLI, în *vol. cit.*, p. 90. See also *Ibid.*, p. 198-199.

<sup>39</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197-198.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278-283.

As ecclesial event, we find attending the Liturgy and communion in two aspects. The first aspect refers to the fact that the effects of the Eucharistic sacrifice include both the living and the dead. According to the theology of Nicholas Cabasilas,

“the divine and Holy Liturgy sanctifies the faithful twice: once *by intercession* – for the gifts brought to God, by bringing sanctify both themselves and those who bring them and those for whom are brought, and the second *by communion*, as they are our true food and drink, according to the word of God. Of these two ways of sanctification, the first is common both for the living and the dead ... and the second, however, is effective only on the living ones, because the dead can not eat and drink”.<sup>42</sup>

Commenting on the text, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște says that

“living benefit from both ways of sanctification, that Holy Liturgy offers us, that is through the *intercession* resulting from the remembrance of their names during the service and sanctification through *sharing*, which is an exclusive privilege of the members of the militant Church, but the dead can not receive only the sanctification through the intercession”.<sup>43</sup>

He adds saying that this situation does not put the dead in a state of inferiority, but rather, “they participate to an extent at least equal, if not superior, to those living in the sanctifying effects of the Liturgy and especially in union with Christ”.<sup>44</sup>

The second aspect that regards the participation in the Liturgy and communion of the faithful as ecclesial manifestation refers to the transformation of the Church in Eucharistic body, through the communion of the faithful of the Holy Chalice, from the mystical body of Christ, with many members. Quoting Nicholas Cabasilas, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște shows that partaking of the Holy Mysteries,

“the Church does not transform them in human body, like any other food, but it (the Church) turned into them because the most powerful overcome. Because iron put into the fire it becomes fire and not fire becomes iron, and we see red hot iron not like

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<sup>42</sup> Nicolae Cabasila, *op. cit.*, cap. XLII, în *vol. cit.*, p. 91. Vezi și Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>43</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Ene Braniște, *op. cit.*, p. 284-285.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

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iron, but as fire, because the properties of iron are absorbed entirely by those of the fire, so is the Church of Christ. If anyone would be able to embrace with his look, by the very fact that it is united with Him and participate in His body, that person would see nothing else but the body of the Lord Himself<sup>45</sup>.

**e) Participation in the Liturgy - between the danger of secularization and the need of renewal**

Of those presented by Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște, attending Liturgy meant in Church history the own, natural way of expressions of the faithful. This proper way of expression was always between concrete reality and the tension caused by the ideal to be achieved. And this is visible in the evaluation that Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște do to the “*phenomenon*” of participation to Liturgy in a historical- theological and pastoral perspective. Fr. Braniște shows that the “golden age” of active participation of believers in the Divine Liturgy, which characterized the Church of the first six centuries, entered in a phase of continuous decline in the early seventh century, and lasts until today. The first visible sign of this decline was “the weakening ecclesiological or community spirit... and the disappearance of general and regular communion”<sup>46</sup> of those who attended the Divine Liturgy. This was followed by the decrease of zeal and interest of faithful towards Liturgy, in general.<sup>47</sup>

Among the main reasons that led to this “decadence”, Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște mentions “*the weakening of catechumenate discipline and concomitant decadence of classic catechesis*”<sup>48</sup>, “*gradual development of the Liturgy*”<sup>49</sup>, the emergence of more complicated structures “more ornate” and therefore more difficult to follow and with it the appearance of a double service, one with a mysterious character, officiated at the altar and accessible only to the priest, and the other heard, seen and accessible to people, “perpetuation of dead languages” in worship,<sup>50</sup> situation that due to

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279-280.

<sup>46</sup> *Idem, Participarea la Liturghie...*, p. 576.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 577.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 578.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 579.

misunderstanding of those spoken by the priest failed, finally, in emotional individualistic spirituality. When people gathered together to hear the prayers in their own language prayer and communion intensifies until the voices and feelings merge in one, even as we pray in Liturgy “And grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honoured and majestic name”<sup>51</sup> while hearing the prayer in an unknown language keeps separated the voices and feelings of many, even if they are gathered together physically in the same place; the personal example and religious life of some of the celebrant and the superficial preparation of services;<sup>52</sup> competition made to Liturgy, the authentic and natural source of spirituality and Christian devotion, by some mystical current, which addressed a small group of believers (anchoretism, hesychasm, western medieval mysteries etc)<sup>53</sup> but was brought into the masses of believers and proposed as alternatives to the liturgical life of the Church, and, finally, “the progress of rationalist doctrines”.<sup>54</sup>

To head back this situation described in detail by Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște, which should arouse at least concern among the servants of the Church, there are proposed a number of solutions, some of which related to the person of the priest, other to the community that he leads on the path of salvation.

According to the Rev. Professor Ene Braniște, a good servant of the Holy Shrine, in addition to a number of natural, innate qualities needs to have *vocation and love*<sup>55</sup> for liturgical ministry, to possess a *thorough theological training*,<sup>56</sup> theoretical and practical, *to fulfill the rule of prayer*<sup>57</sup> for celebrating the divine services, and in particular for celebration of the Divine Liturgy, to officiate the services with *decency, piety, conviction,*

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<sup>51</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Petre Vintilescu, *Liturghierul explicat*, ediția a II-a, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Publishing House, București, 1998, p. 284.

<sup>52</sup> Fr. Ene Braniște shows gaps that occur frequently in the life of the priest and how this influences the behavior of the believers in the divine worship and their interest in attending the Church services. See also Idem, *Preotul de azi ca liturghisitor. Lipsuri și scăderi. Cauzele lor, Mijloace de îndreptare*, în “Studii Teologice”, II (1949), nr. 1-2, p. 97-118.

<sup>53</sup> Idem, *Participarea la Sfânta Liturghie...*, p. 580-581.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 581.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 600.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 601.

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honor and cherish,<sup>58</sup> to preach with dedication<sup>59</sup> to highlight the aesthetic function of worship<sup>60</sup> and to choose his collaborators (singers)<sup>61</sup> devoted to their ministry. About the priest who possesses such qualities, Father Braniste says:

“We can not imagine how many souls may win for the Church of Christ such an enlightened, talented and full of piety priest, fully aware and deeply penetrated by the sublimity of the Holy Office which he fulfills ...! By his life and piety, the sobriety and respect of his ministry, the warmth and humility of his praying, the solemnity and dignity of his attire and appearance, however, especially when they are combined with outstanding musical talents, or elegance and natural movements and gestures can not have only but the happiest influence on those around him. A servant like this contributes to building the kingdom of God on earth, by his way of ministering, more than ten preachers and missionaries together. He is the magician who possesses the secret to radiate from his being, transformed in clean vessel of grace and the temple of the Holy Spirit, that miraculous power of conquest, that sacred thrill and unearthly atmosphere.”<sup>62</sup>

Among the solutions that concern the faithful, Father Braniste proposes *educating and disciplining the people*<sup>63</sup> to achieve a good behavior in church, renewal of *mystagogic catechesis*<sup>64</sup> and improving its quality, we would add *encouraging, nurturing and organizing public singing of the people*<sup>65</sup> in the church, encouraging believers to provide for Mass offerings

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 603.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 608.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 609.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 610. See also Idem, *Câteva virtuți necesare preotului ca păstor și om*, in “Glasul Bisericii”, XV (1956), nr. 8-9, p. 473-482; Idem, *Îndrumări către preoți privitoare la datoria și modul de a predica*, in “Mitropolia Olteniei”, XXIX (1977), nr. 7-9, p. 539-554; Idem, *Însemnări despre calitățile religioase morale ale păstorului ale Arhimandritului Gherasim*, în “Ortodoxia”, XI (1959), nr. 4, p. 631-632; Idem, *Viața interioară și trăirea religioasă a preotului*, în “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, XCIX (1981), nr. 7-8, p. 751-769; Idem, *Vocația pentru preoție*, în “Ortodoxia”, XXXI (1979), nr. 2, p. 213-232.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 607.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 611.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 613.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 619.

*of bread and wine*,<sup>66</sup> knowing that this obligation was assumed by priest or one person in the parish, improving the pace of sharing the body and blood of Christ, problem occurs frequently in our Church<sup>67</sup> and pastoral agenda that hopefully next year that is dedicated to, among others, and the Holy Eucharist, to be given adequate answers to present pastoral context and continue perseverance to persuade the faithful to *actively participate in the religious services*<sup>68</sup> instead of an attitude of passive spectators.

### f) Final considerations

An overview of the work of Father Professor Ene Braniște enables us to see that Holy Liturgy was one of the favorite research topics since the beginning of his activity. From the studies regarding the interpretation of Liturgy to its history, from the typical and practical aspects to the pastoral ones, all highlight diversity of concerns and the exceptional ability to identify major themes of interest and research in the areas of liturgy and pastoral, areas which he served with exemplary dedication. Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște did not write just for the sake of writing or from a narcissist attitude, to see himself writing, but from a necessity to which he replied that a researcher with vocation.

Referring to pastoral issues that were the subject of his researches, in particular those relating to Liturgy, some clarifications are required at the end of this study. First, we must point out that the themes of his studies regard the concrete pastoral realities of parish contemporary with him. Although Fr. Braniște was not directly engaged in the ministry, as he preferred to stay away from the duties of parish priest, he had regular contact with the priests of the parish, both as professor and in priestly conferences

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 628.

<sup>68</sup> Pr. Petre Vintilescu, *Împărtășirea la Sfânta Liturghie privită sub aspectul spiritualității creștine. Deasă ori rară împărtășire?*, în "Studii Teologice", V (1953), nr. 5-6, p. 382-404; Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae D. Necula, *Se poate da Sfânta Împărtășanie tuturor credincioșilor care iau parte la Sfânta Liturghie?*, în vol. "Tradiție și înnoire în slujirea liturgică", vol. 2, Episcopia Dunării de Jos Publishing House, Galați, 2001, p. 286-292; Diac. Ioan I. Ică Jr., *Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine. Dosarul unei controversă – mărturiile Tradiției*, translation by Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2006.

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and regular courses for promotion into priesthood, which gave him the opportunity of a realistic and deep knowledge of the life of the parish. Pastoral issues that he didn't know enough did not become subject of his research. On the basis of a good knowledge Father built his arguments and provided pertinent answers and solutions.

Secondly, we have to show the loyalty of Father Professor Ene Braniște for the past, for the experience of the Church from its very beginning until his time. On the theme that we have presented in the present study, Father Braniște demonstrated that the state of crisis that parishes was in his time, as well as today, cannot be understood apart from the references to the way of life and manifestation of the Christian communities of the first centuries, and the ways suggested today to improve the participation of the faithful at Liturgy will succeed only by permanent appeal to the experience achieved in the past.

Third, we note that the methods and means proposed by Rev. Prof. Ene Braniște to achieve active participation of the faithful at Liturgy are valid on long term. Even though the studies that we have cited here were written several decades ago, they still keep their freshness and actuality.

Finally, we mention the fact that the issue presented in this study represents an exhortation addressed to researchers in the area of Liturgical and Pastoral Theology, to turn to good account the work of Father Professor Ene Braniște not only as a tribute to our great liturgical theologian, but also to give answers to questions of present interest, specific to this area.