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Vocation and Spiritual Qualities of Priest, Canon Condition for the Effective Pastoral Missionary Work

Cosmin Santi

Cosmin Santi

“Valahia” University of Targoviște

E-mail: santicosmin@yahoo.com

Abstract

Sacramental priesthood belongs to the being of the church and is expressing it. Where there is no sacramental priesthood, there is no ecclesia, as the church is a sacramental community, with Eucharistic stewards of God's mysteries, placed by the Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit. The truly sacramental priesthood is exercised only in the Church and for the Church. Church Ministry must descend into all branches of the society he lives and works to prove the strength of faith. The reality of life is more complex and the priest cannot remain at its edge. The parish is the field of service and salvation, and the priest is a permanent factor in the parish. According to the daily realities, the priest must have the pastoral tact and the missionary zeal in order to find the best pastoral methods in preserving the unity of the ecclesial community that had entrusted him to lead his faithful ones to God's kingdom.

Keywords

vocation, priest, mission, pastoral, canonicity

Church priesthood became a topic of theological debate, especially after the Reformation, due to the concept of priesthood that was preached by Martin Luther. Therefore, without a history of results with respect to the priesthood as a sacrament we seek to continuously observe timeliness of the priesthood. Theology in the Church the one of holy, catholic and apostolic, Romanian theology and wide horizon Inter-Christian concern of the Ecumenical Council of Churches.

When the Fathers talk about the value and sublimity of the priesthood, they talk about the fundamental theological-dogmatic understanding all of the priesthood and their ecclesiological dogmatic position. But never until the Reformation or at least on the Reform mode was put into question its legitimacy. Thereafter both Orthodox theological literature and the Roman Catholic doctrine pays careful attention to the priesthood.

Romanian theological literature was also particularly concerned about the sacrament of the value and beauty, as proven by many studies of our specialized magazines and volumes of books written on this.

Council of Churches Faith and the department has put together a document in connection with Baptism, Eucharist and Ordination (Ministerium), a document that was sent to study all member churches, and in the knowledge and proximity to interfaith churches to respond, stating their doctrine of the Sacraments with decisive ecclesiological positions. This document is theological debates on new Priesthood, church is aware that the priesthood should be the central focus in almost all Dogmatic Theology: Christology and ecclesiology¹.

The most authentic representation of the Church which expresses correctly its place in the world is the form of ship. Both in its local and ecumenical dimension, the Church as a ship travels on the endless sea of the world. In the world the Church is called to accomplish its mission, namely to save the mankind and the world. And this thing is realized remaining faithful to its own life and its own way, avoiding identification with the world. The world is for the Church what is the sea for the boat that breaks the waves. It's just an outer frame in which the Church-ship continues its course over the centuries.

¹ † Ioan Mihălțan, *Preoția Mântuitorului Hristos și preoția bisericească*, Editura Episcopiei Oradiei, 1993, pp. 13-14.

So, it is natural that this framework surrounding world to create more problems in the course of the Church body. Even as members of the congregation, Christians do not always manage to remain uninfluenced by the surrounding world. As the Church assumes the penetration into the world as to redeem it in the body of Christ – the Church, often in the same way as the world exercises corrosive influences on members of the body of Church and restricts their growth and progress in the life of the parish. In every historical period the social life plays such a decisive role in the course of the parish.

The basic characteristic of our epoch is linked to the discovery of human power and demonization, namely the human absolutism. His power is no longer understood as a function of the power of God and as an effect of it, according to the word of the Apostle: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4, 13), but the man is proclaimed to be almighty and his own master. The transition from agrarian to urban life, leaving the open horizon of the rural area in which man is and feels to be “face to face” with God and His infinity, it closes the man in enormous cement buildings while suffocating him, or in the automated machines at work. Thus, the spiritual and supernatural center of human consciousness withdraws. God hardly may be distinguished and cannot determine our lives anymore. We are really in the era of the “death of God” prophesied by German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, the prophet of the all powerful human being. Of course, God does not die, but the death of God is accomplished in us. Faith in God is dead, loss of theocentrism and birth of egocentrism, which equals death or the death of God in man for man himself. Since losing the spirituality and consciousness link of God’s presence in his life, the man locks himself in temporality, necessity and corruption.

The special influence of technology in shaping our lives is well known. Technology today threatens to become a “redeeming” force. It creates the illusion that the man could solve all his life problems and become master of the world and life without God.

Thus, it changes not only the external form, but also the internal structure and organization of current society. Because it changes the inner structure of man himself. From the rural human being we move successively at the industrial, or urban one, in order to reach the postindustrial individual, technological – informational one. After the national borders fell down, it

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was formed in our country as in the whole world, an uniform and unilateral man (*homo universalis*, *homo europeus*), who has no resistance to the “system” subordinating himself to it, to its lifestyle and whose only interest is the entertainment and the easy way life. Easy gain mania, abuse of public life, bribes, racketeering etc., make only the one who can deceive others without being noticed and steal remaining unnoticed to be considered the “right” man, becoming the example and the goal for many people, thus encouraging the opportunism, dishonesty and laziness².

“The different ideologies of our times are continually influencing and shaping the society. The religions, politics, corporations, politicians who are extending the spiritual confusion and hampering the work of the Church, since in this complicated darkness there is no room for the light of Gospel. Of course, our socio-political environment consists of the dialectics of two world wide socio-political systems: Liberal individualism and Marxist socialism, even in the distorted forms they take finally place in our world. Liberalism worships the individual, whereas Marxism deifies the state. First under the pretext of freedom of the individual, the individual is left free to violate the rights of the whole. Second, under the guise of righteousness, destroy the omnipotence of individual by dictatorial rule, while in capitalism man is a living instrument, a commodity price in the hands of the employer, whereas with in Communism, man is a tool creating animal.

Therefore, despite all their declarations and slogans, these systems cannot inspire a spirit of kindness, love, self-sacrifice, selfless and sincere brotherhood as Orthodoxy does. This duplicitous materialism shapes our social lives, the framework our parish is called to live in, act and grow in Christ. And these two systems which end today in their historical coexistence are necessarily imposing a new way of life that rejects the essentials of human existence which searches and corresponds exclusively to vital human instinctual nature and hysteria of the rapacious self-centered existence”³.

² Gherghios D. Metallinos, *Parohia. Hristos în mijlocul nostru*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan I. Ică, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2004, pp. 57-58.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

A feature of the urban environment is mobility of social groups (changing jobs, schools, homes, travel, etc.) and therefore the concept of parish successive disappearance as geographic location where the life of its members develops. Therefore, this means the disintegration of the unity of the parish, but at the same time a dissolution of parish life for many of its members who are forced for a shorter or longer period of time to keep changing their residences. Thus, it was created a new concept of parish, at least for those who aim to have a religious life: the notion of a spiritual, not a geographic parish, which means that either someone is constantly changing the parish for different reasons or becomes a member of a church that has no relation to his parish. In all these cases, however, it arises the inability of having a parish life, since it lacks permanence of the relationship between the shepherd and the flock, and the unity the flock members as well. Thus the church is transformed or confined automatically to a sort of church life such as the fulfillment of religious duties, but in this manner it ceases to be the center of all life, as it used to be in the rural society.

But life and outlook on life have changed in the rural areas as well. In our villages peasants seem to have forgotten to cultivate along with their traditions. The villages are impoverished as the young people once left for the cities and now all over the world looking for a job and a better life.

Most peasants are now old, who often take care of their grandchildren whose parents work abroad, a leading factor to a high divorce rate and abandonment of children; in towns and villages the unemployment is high, abandoned children or children left in the care of relatives since their parents are working abroad. These are children with a good financial situation but not taken care of, with a high dropout rate and juvenile delinquency. Above all, we are dealing with a de-Christianized society in both towns and cities. This is the actual place for priestly mission and ministry. If we add to it the superficiality, the increased aggressiveness, the propensity of young people to keep having fun, manipulation and false reality conveyed by the media, but also new forms of sectarian proselytism, we understand how difficult is the mission of the priest today. The parish priest is the one who knows best how the Church's mission is accomplished and most often he is left alone in this difficult mission. If you want to do an effective mission will be that all responsible and qualified members for this mission or task to leave aside the convenience and to engage in the real parish life, as active and responsible factor in the activity of the Church, one that spe-

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cifically develops a missionary action⁴. The theologian analyzes the living memory of the Church to feed from it and to present it further and in order for others to partake of it, to understand that we cannot live together, in an increasingly secularized and consumerist society, if we do not know God or not living in God and for God, without losing our identity and Evangelical precepts.

In the great European configuration of secular postmodernism, the discourse of the parish priest remains alive to the extent that he tends to find in modern man the need for spiritual life. Redefining the role of the priest in today's context it cannot ignore the contemporary framework of the classical guidelines and definitions, but it takes on a new and challenging form as modern man rediscovers the Eucharistic dimension of the parish as a place of communion with God, of Christic community which is perfecting itself in ecclesial communion.

Today, the pastoral means of preaching differ from priest to priest, from urban to rural setting, from one town to another and from one community to another. Diversity of media options and new religious movements have taken out the priest from the "patriarchal" state where he could have the comfort of speaking "ex cathedra". Now he is called everywhere: in schools, to the army, in prisons, hospitals, to the mass-media etc. His response to these calls is considered to be response of the Church itself, although the association is mainly not the most appropriate.

Around the world, the Church is called to fulfill its mission, to redeem mankind, to offer the right solution and an alternative to our days society. This is his key role and to this accomplishment the priest must turn his attention first and those around him as well. The priest must be aware of the great mission that he was called for. He must be the first to understand the purpose of the Church and his parish and in our modern, technological society, not by matching his message to the spirit world, but to the spirit of Christ. The world is not waiting for the Church to become provisional, to come down and mingle with the world, but it aims deification and to eternalize those that are temporal. The parish is called to rediscover its spiritual Eucharistic valence which has in it the actual act of the Sacrament of Penance, which is made perfect by giving up the sins and sharing in Christ, but it also shapes itself by the direct and constant communication with the priest confessor.

⁴ Pr. Vasile Răducă, *Teologia Pastorală și Misiunea Bisericii*, in "Studii Teologice", SN, I (2005), nr. 3, p. 160.

It is difficult for the modern society to find way to a father confessor, as well as its correlation to the ecclesial communion is no longer valid. Contemporary man is focusing on finding the kind of priest who manifests loving and kind openness and be able to give an advice to those who ask for it “with and without time”. From the perspective of his mission, we can say that the role of the priest is amplified to the extent of his faithful service modeled on Christ, “the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10, 45). The priest is called to leave the ecclesial space, the apse of the altar and look for people who need his help, for those who are confused and distrustful of those around them, for those who cannot find the right path in life, for the suffering and the poor whom unfortunately the society has forgotten them and sooner or later, will become victims of the abuse of all kinds.

Today the priest often forgets that he is an educator in the first place. Life is a lesson, as well as the confession and preaching and to have good results he must be well informed. Therefore, the priest is called beyond any cultural, social commitment which has no doubt his importance, but he must be, first of all father confessor. The modern man, in spite of so many torments caused by technological and computerized society, needs to rediscover the priest and the spirituality of the church, in order to regenerate himself spiritually. He finds himself as a temple of the Holy Spirit and the parish community understand sit as an expression of the alive and dynamic Church, the word of God incarnate as the fruit of interpersonal communication, direct and actual interpersonal relations, and not just electronic links or virtual social networking of Twitter or Facebook type community.

Therefore, today the priest is bound to intensify his spiritual dialogue, to call to himself, with and without time, his spiritual children, but to be an open book for all those with curious questions and to receive right answers, using modern modern techniques and methods of today’s world, showing that he is open and always anchored in reality.

The parish priest today must have the courage to be natural and full of wisdom in preaching the word of God, being convinced that you are a priest as long as you give yourself to others, bearing in mind and in heart the words of St. Anthony: “Everyone loved him and all begged him to be their father”⁵.

⁵ Pr. Dr. Cristian Munteanu, *Preot și parohie azi*, in “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, CX-

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The priests have existed long before, in ancient times and long before the Old Testament priesthood. To the right time there was the right priest. Melchizedek blessed Abraham, King Salim and “Melchizedek was priest of the Most High” (Genesis 14, 18).

Christ the Saviour has renewed and perfected the priesthood, letting the apostles to ordain priests themselves. He kept saying: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 15, 16).

The priesthood is a gift, the gift of God. It is from above. It is a mission, apostolate, ministry. Therefore, the priest is a qualified interpreter, an accredited interpreter and mediator, he is “**Something Else**”, he is “**Someone Else**” than other Christians, someone with a special role between God and men. Priesthood is the sacrament by which those specially prepared are receiving it by putting their hands and the prayer of the bishop, it is the power of spreading the word of God, to sanctify sacraments and to lead the faithful to salvation⁶, according to the threefold activity of Christ the Savior, transmitted to the priests to this day through the apostolic succession, which actually forms the entire mission of the priest in the pastoral parish.

The Savior uses two metaphors about the priesthood: “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5, 13-14). Through these two metaphors, highlights the greatness of the priest’s mission, and the fact that the one who wants to take the yoke of Christ must be called to it. The priestly call must be worked out as the land that bears fruit. The dignity of spiritual leader of the faithful places the priest at the forefront of the social-civic moral life, as the one who lived as the actual exponent of morality, as one who should and must be moral pinnacle.

Sometimes the priests are not taking very seriously their mission. If an athlete would treat his calling with convenience, there would never have sporting performance. It requires primarily inner discipline of personal ambition and claim on their lives. This implies a constraint, a sacrifice. The sacrificing doctrine of a continuous education, the state of unceasing prayer, continuous improvement, progress and spiritual bond with unceasing fountain of grace and life with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The priesthood is not a profession or a regular job. Who sees it this way will be very disappointed and dissatisfied. A priest can not withstand

XIII (2005), nr. 4-6, pp. 163-169.

⁶ Protos. Olivian Bindu, *Preotul și misiunea sa*, in “*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*”, XXX-VI (1989), nr. 11-12, p. 68.

only a genuine and sincere vocation, even it is coming later. We need not refugee priests who see in priesthood a haven⁷. The responsibility of those who are coming here, it is first of all a responsibility towards to God, then to thier conscience, and then to those who have been entrusted to his pastoral care, to lead to salvation.

Of all the calls, priestly ministry is the most important and full of responsibility. And this because the priesthood is not merely a profession, trade or job, but it is, as always the theologians emphasized, a mission and a divine call. The priesthood is the mission of leading souls to salvation and perfection. It is serving in the ministry of Jesus Christ and His work continued over the centuries to bring of souls back to God. It is that mystery and ministry through which the Saviour remains with us until the end of time (Matthew 28, 20). The three works or ministries of the Savior continue through it namely: the teaching, consecrating and leading, keeping in this way, the unbroken link of teaching with the source of priesthood which is Jesus Christ. Therefore, the priesthood was always considered as a call to the fellow ship of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Christ the Saviour's work. From the awareness of the call to this ministry derives its special responsibility, which the most enlightened theologians and Fathers of the Church were afraid of, considering it an "art of the arts and science of sciences"⁸, as Gregory the Theologian calls it.

The priest has his gift from God and the call to show the way that leads to God, the path of the moral life: being a well-defined personality, the priest has the gift to be heard, his personal example⁹, as the entire business becomes fruitful among believers. "Steward of the mysteries of God and work with Christ" (2 Corinthians 6, 1), he will answer before God for every soul lost or gained.

Starting from the truth that Scripture always emphasizes that "no-one takes this honor, but is called by God as Aaron" (Hebrew 5, 4), the candidate or the young man who is preparing to become a priest, must constantly be aware that by priestly service, he answers a call, a providential election. Hence the awareness that his work is not only his own people but

⁷ See † Antonie Plămădeală, *Preotul în Biserică, în lume, acasă*, s.n., Sibiu, 1996, pp. 146-153.

⁸ Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cuvânt de apărare pentru fuga în Pont sau Despre preoție*, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1998, p. 181.

⁹ Pr. Grigore T. Marcu, *Sfântul Apostol Pavel despre personalitatea religios-morală a păstorului de suflete*, in "Studii Teologice", LXXIII (1955), nr. 2-4, p. 214.

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is a co-work with Christ Redeemer, a synergy, a teandric act. Since ordination, the priest can and should say as St. Paul did: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2, 20).

For the priestly ministry is as edifying and measure call that is made by Christ the Saviour, it must be seen in all its grandeur and sublimity of her and all liability arising from such ministry. Therefore, the candidate for the priesthood must meet a set of rules or canonical and liturgical ordinances which highlight the beauty of this service, making it not merely an occupation, but a mission.

First, it is necessary that the young candidate also feels a call to ministry. His option for the priesthood must emanate from an inner necessity to dedicate oneself to the mission of serving God. Let us not forget that secularization and particularly the desire of being rich, characteristic time and world we live in, can turn the desire to become a priest in a petty and mundane calculation, of profound mercantile character or to exercise a job as all others and being a source of income or of becoming rich. Because of this Apostolic Canon 6 says "The priest shall not take upon himself the care of worldly; and if not, to be deposed" (see also Canons 81 and 83 Apostolic). This means that any other occupation is incompatible with the priesthood, it could prejudice any priestly dignity: commerce, usury, leasing, occupying public offices etc. (See Canons 9 and 10 Trullo).

There are some cases when parents more than children see in the priestly ministry only the so-called easy job, forgetting or not knowing that, in fact, the priesthood is not easy or suitable for everyone. When someone wants to become a priest and have such thoughts, he does not understand anything of the beauty of the priestly ministry of the altar sublimity of this work and especially its responsibility.

When this introspection gives us the certainty that we want to serve God, the second thing you need to do is to ensure a thorough preparation for this ministry. Preaching the word of God, the answer to many questions that a world thirsting for theological information wants to have, mystagogical catechesis, and counteract sectarian proselytizing, alien to the spirit of Orthodoxy, there are as many problems and situations which do not allow any longer to be just a good priest or a minister liturgist in a world where information travels at speed and amazing possibilities, the priest must be a man of the book, always ready for dialogue and especially to face the attacks of all kinds. Let us not forget that, as always reckoned the priest must be by definition an intellectual, a true man of good and holistic education.

Third, the church servant must excel through an exemplary moral life before and especially after receiving the sacrament of ordination. Moral life of the sacred minister is evidence of consciousness of his vocation and ministry. In addition to these three general conditions, vocation training, moral life of priestly ministry that provides dignity, purpose and fulfillment candidate for the priesthood must also comply with other species, the more canonical order, which further strengthens the significance of priest's mission, ensuring its proper conduct.

The first and most important condition is that any candidate for the priesthood to be a man. The controversial issue of ordaining women, indulged in Protestant churches is completely rejected and not accepted in the Orthodox Church. Ministry of women in the Church are numerous and useful, but they are not likely priestly. Wife and mother, a teacher of religion and religious, orthodox Christian woman has a wide field of service, not even daring to think of sacramental priesthood.

Among religious conditions in addition to that of being baptized Orthodox and to keep the true faith is required and that any candidate should come from an Orthodox family, but not heretical or schismatic one. Taking into account that the general religious are respected, it is necessary to insist on the moral aspect which gives dignity and authority to the priest and priestly candidate. They are especially important because they regard also the future priest's wife, as Orthodox priests are married unlike monks and a few others. There are worrying cases of divorce, infidelity, mismatch between the priest and his wife, also regarding family life, children's education. Our church canonical ordinances require the priest to marry a person who is morally stained (virgin)¹⁰. Apostolic Canon 18 reads: "He took in marriage a widow, or a cast out (expelled) or lewd or slave, or any of those on the scene (actress), cannot be a bishop or presbyter or deacon, or a clergy." This canon recommends priests to marry virgins, to ensure the best possible conditions for family moral clergy and marriage lest women whose status or reputation are morally compromising the priest and his pastoral mission. Also, the canons governing and absurdities which may arise in marriage priest. "The priest cannot chase his wife on reason (excuse) of godliness. And if you would shun it, to curse; and dwelling (staying unyielding), to be deposed" (Apostolic Canon 5). Divorce or separation of

¹⁰ Pr. Nicolae D. Necula, *Tradiție și înnoire în slujirea liturgică*, Editura Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2001, pp. 367-371.

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cleric's wife on grounds of piety, but also for any other reason irrelevant, initially punished with excommunication and if persists in mistake is punishable by defrocking. The issue is widely debated regarding clergy marriage in the holy canons, which stipulates that the priest married twice can no longer serve, and who had concubine rendering the marriage unlawful (Canons 3 and 26 Trullo, Canon 27 of St. Basil the Great).

Priesthood is nice, but it should be honored. Requirements towards the priests have always been great, but today are even greater. Mentalities have changed today. We're not dealing with the same type of believers as our forefathers. The demands of the people towards priests increased. Culture, which has become a mass culture through radio, television, press, internet, thus, access to information in any form (this information explosion) have changed critical sense of the the believers. If they were more lenient in the past, but today there are not¹¹. First, today it requires from the priest to be a man of vocation, a scholar and a man of honor.

Vocation is a divine calling, mysterious, rising from the grace of God, not from the human person of the priest, but from the love of God for us; but it joins the powers of the soul and manifests the gifts chosen by the power of the priesthood¹². Priestly vocation are all the divine and human forces joined in the call to make it worthy of the terrific mystery of Holy Orders. If the priesthood is a mystery, that ardor of the Holy Spirit in the holy priest vocation is a call to this bright and holy ardor for exercising his mission within the Church canons and teaching. To check the candidate's vocation for the priesthood, the canons provide temptation (checking) those entering the clergy: "If anyone was submitted without research (appointed) presbyter, or making them into temptation and confessed his sins, people are moved and laid hands on a one against the canon, the canon he receives it (the clergy), for Catholic Church (claims) only what is blameless" (Canon 9, First Ecumenical Council). Thus, before entering the clergy the candidates should be checked regarding their proper religious and moral qualities, followed by their profession.

In the etymological sense, by vocation we understand the call to a particular job. Priestly vocation is an act of divine providence sprang from the outpouring of God's love and His grace upon human beings, with which cooperates, lifting it to heights unimagined and unknown.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

¹² Pr. Ioan G. Coman, *Vocație și pregătire pentru teologie*, in "Studii Teologice", VI (1954), nr. 5-6, p. 239.

Priestly vocation has two aspects: one subjective and one objective. The subjective vocation means a number of godly qualities: the desire to pray, go to church, to fast, to read Christian books, to honor the religious people etc. Vocation objective is calling the Church to the mission of the priest, that crowns the powers of the soul and prepare him who is ready for the priesthood.

The interest of the child for teaching, for reading, for certain activities betray inclinations and can be starting points for the development of skills. The will and perseverance to overcome difficulties and persevere in a certain direction denotes the presence of predispositions, interests and skills.

Family is the first environment where the child grows. From children's games that mimic certain professions, like the doctor, teacher, engineer, certain conclusions can be drawn for educational guidance. Parents have the duty to observe all these manifestations of children, to provide them with means to cultivate inclinations and to encourage them.

But the school is the one who discovers and cultivates the skills and inclinations and directs them towards future profession. The character emerges gradually moving from a romantic choice at a younger age, to a rational and realistic educational results obtained based on knowledge of their opportunities and that accurate information on professional content.

Skills are complex priestly ministry. Since childhood we have a series of general skills: an inclination toward prayer, an attraction to the church and holy things, respect for religious people. But priesthood is primarily the desire to glorify God, to unite with Christ to redeem and sanctify peers. The essence of priesthood is the love of God and apostolic zeal, dedication and sacrifice for others, to unite with God.

If the family is Christian, pious, aware of the value of faith to raise children in that environment, a priest will seek to recruit those with the priestly vocation. Then the priest shall examine the young person, if you have general skills in school, because priesthood means a serious training, certain theological and secular studies that require great intellectual qualities. Next, they will observe the manifestations of piety and faith to the child.

The young need to perfect his moral education. He develops certain ethical habits, moral character forging them steadily. Irreproachable morality of life is imposed first by the holy character of the jobs, then the

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situation to his flock, which should be an example, teacher and model of virtue to be followed.

Besides deep faith, piety and love of the church, the young will have to get used to a large extent with love for others whom he will have to shepherd as a priest. Another feature which should endow the soul for priesthood is called humility. It manifests itself in modesty in attitudes, in words, in deeds and towards teachers. Meekness is another feature that should develop in school. Temperance is one of the true Christian moral virtues absolutely necessary, most important for future priest. It is acquired through long practice, the struggle with cravings and the outside world. It is desired in food, in drink, in clothing, in words and in all demeanor. It puts balance to the young person, between body and soul, and keep him save from countless physical diseases. For intemperance leads to gluttony, lasciviousness, stinginess that harm the body and are the darkest stains in the work of the priest. St. John Chrysostom says that the body and soul of the priest must be very clean during the time of offering the sacrifice since the holy angels stand by the priest that time. He added that the priest's soul to be cleaner than sunlight, for the Holy Spirit do not ever leave him and that they can say, and now I no longer live, but Christ lives in me¹³. And self-control is one of the most important qualities that are required of the priest. The biggest stumbling block that has fought the priest is transforming himself. Wisdom is another essential virtue that the priest should be adorned personality, tact and prudence are the fruits of maturity of thought, or a prolonged experience. The priest is called by his mission to take the entire program ascetic, referring to his spiritual formation, and to later be able to teach his flock. It is incomprehensible that the priest considered to have fewer obligations than his parishioners.

Dress and behavior traits of the priest are also of great importance for the image of a true priest. It is mandatory for the priest to carefully monitor the behavior of civilian life, social and family life. Dress and behavior of the priest must be characterized by seriousness and dignity stemming from his being naturally.

¹³ Pr. Ioan Constantinescu, *Reflecții cu privire la problema vocației și a pregătirii preoțești*, in "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", LXXXVII (1969), nr. 11-12, pp. 1173-1176, 1177-1178.

In connection with the vocation, which is the sum of mental factors, native and acquired through education and culture, converging with the ideal priesthood, a teacher of the Church stresses “who is called to be called”¹⁴ ideal that can be reached only by channeling all aspirations, skills and powers to pastoral work.

From the divine origin and mission of priests and further work redeeming work of the Savior in the world, resulting sublimity or high dignity of priestly ministry. But fair is so high and the priesthood, on both large and serious is the responsibility of the priest because the one who has been given much, much will be required. What gives strength to engage priest to receive the yoke of priesthood is permanent and never failing help of divine grace, which heals them on the powerless and those with missing do, he promised Savior, as His presence with His servants to end of the world.

Besides calling and preparation priest must be endowed with a number of virtues and qualities chosen, which all contribute to his pastoral success. But moral purity is to excel in the life of the priest. He must be a living example through his moral life, by deed and Christian living through a stringent line between what they learn and do. The moral life of the priest is required in his capacity of spiritual father of the parishioners. The priest is called by everybody father, the parish priest, Father of his spiritual sons. A true parent is the one who gives his life for his children, to do everything in his power to keep them from temptation, to protect them from all evil, to keep them from everything that could defile them there. The priest of today is called to serve the Church in a society in constant transformation and renewal and a time pretending pastoral methods or mode of the priest to be other than classical, adapted to the new life of the believers.

Contemporary Romanian Orthodox priest must be well prepared for the mission, with solid and broad scriptural and theological knowledge, a connoisseur and defender of the true faith, ready to answer any questions for them. He must then be a perfect servant. The priest as the mediator of divine grace must do divine services and holy Masses. Religious services must be made as dignified as accurately and be attractive for believers today¹⁵. To this are added the duties of taking care for household, namely the

¹⁴ Vasile Petrică, *Entuziasmul pastoral*, in “Mitropolia Banatului”, XXXVIII (1988), nr. 1, p. 89.

¹⁵ Pr. Nicolae D. Necula, *Preotul și pastorația în gândirea Prea Fericitului Părinte Patriarh Iustin*, in “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, CIII (1985), nr. 3-4, pp. 219-228.

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proper maintenance of places of worship that are done in the holy services. Status is the first card church by the priest, then recognize his zeal and devotion to priestly ministry, seriousness and importance that it looks to the mission and ministry to which he was called.

A current word, a modern term, related to the vocation of the priest shows that the priest must have credibility. And it can not have it unless it is a genuine priest. The priest must be placed in other relationships to the world. The priest should be at the level of mentality and culture of his time to be useful to those around him, to be able to meet the expectations of his believers who face complex problems and new situations. The priest and the Church must always find an answer and solving current problems of secular society, finding them in the eternal treasure of divine Revelation and in the living Tradition of the Church.

Priests have their mission to eternity, to the extent that meet and present to the world, to the world as it is here. The priest does not make the task into nothingness and abstractions, but real people of his time. With regard to authenticity, we have to prove that we are true priests when people accuse us that we are not. We must prove, first, that really believe in God. It's the first condition, the first thing to be proved, because it casts doubt. The priest is really going to sacrifice his personal interests. The best gift of the priest to his parishioners is to answer their calls. The believer rewards authenticity, but despises begging and Phariseism. We have to prove all this, of course, not demonstrative, not aggressive, but by decorum, deed, by humility and discretion.

Those who feel inside a certain vocation for the priesthood, priests are not ashamed of believers, clothes and their mission. Only such a priest can help the faithful and the Church. The priest must go head up, not hidden under the collar, under big hats, but worthy, because he believed in his mission and knows what he thinks and is not ashamed of his faith. The priest must be equal to himself: at home, in church, on the street, in the family, in words, in deeds, in prayer, in any place and at any time. The priest must be constantly equal to himself.

Besides cultural aspect, which gives as much authenticity, priest is the example of his life. The negative example contradicts the word positive. The priest must be positive, enthusiastic, not dreamy, unrealistic, to give hope, to see believers in their really light. The whole life of the priest must be a Mass and continuing preaching. The life and preaching priest after

Mass to Mass. As the church is a sacred place in the middle of the village, or in a neighborhood of the city, so the priest must be a priest, a man sanctified and sanctifying, wherever they are. The priest should remember: it must be a man of prayer, of meditation, a window to God. If he remains worldly he exits priesthood. The priest must be merciful, good, forgiving, encourage, to be a father of all. He must always confirm this appellation.

The priest must always have terrific, sublimity awareness of his mission that he is the servant of Christ. He is the icon of Christ in the liturgical community and liturgically in Christ's name. Jesus Christ himself reaches to the priest making him His active organ. This means that Christ himself ordines mystery to him by his grace to liturgical learning and pastors with seriousness and responsibility that Christ himself works through him. If the priest does not put all his being to the Christ, not only did not properly fulfill his ministry, but also largely prevent the saving and sanctifying work of Christ.

Therefore, the priest must commit religious services regularly, with full responsibility and the spiritual preparation required. The service is to be lived and felt every time with all intensity to transfiguration and not only fulfilled as a formalistic ritual. To be committed with a missionary spirit in which gestures and rites really transmit what they intend to. Unless they match the rite and spiritual reality that he wants to convey, it falls into a cultic formalism, hindering effect or spiritual work, personal and liturgical acts of worship in general.

Prayer, expression, singing to be clear, appropriate content, expressive, accompanied by humility and piety, to implement community prayer and able to contribute to creating the atmosphere of piety and collective experience¹⁶. Sermon be prepared and delivered with apostolic spirit, with zeal and religious feeling also the mission of the priest is called to adopt the entire program ascetic, referring to his spiritual formation, and later be able to teach the flock.

In order to improve the needs of the believers the priest has God's help and power. Through his life, the priest sacrifices to God every day. He always must deny himself, because the priest must be in all circumstances, in all places and at all times, just like gold or silver, without sound false and without mixture of other metals.

¹⁶ Pr. Valer Bel, *Misiune, parohie, pastorație*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 73.

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The priest was chosen among Christians and belongs to the Lord and he is called and sanctified by his vows and loose sins of the people. The priesthood is the special ministry and it requires the most perfect life. Life is different from the common life of the priest. He lives in human transformation as servant of God. Live purification and sanctification of the man at the height of the bearer of the Holy Spirit. His soul must shine in good works. His mission is sacred and holy only serving with clean hands. The priest lives a clean life for his salvation, to be most worthy servant of the Holy Shrine and its peers.

Life Mysteries priest must match holiness which commits them to have a life that holiness shine and warm through. The priest truly reflects the brightness of the sky and warms mankind world as a clear mirror of the Sun of Righteousness. The priest can not live and serve in mask or disguise as an actor. When he seek not art but the truth, and the truth is served with a clean face, with sincerity and naturalness. The treasure of the priest is not and can not be other than his pure and full of good deeds life. The gems of the priest are works of faith, of hope and of love¹⁷.

So, in a society where more and more talk about renewal, the new man, the priest can not remain in a state of passivity, but you have to work thoroughly on its edification of believers, showing them that is the path to truth, good and beautiful, so that the “new man” to be identified with the “new creation” as Scripture speaks, not man secularized, which replaces God.

For it is absolutely necessary a more careful observation of contemporary existential issues in a constantly changing society in which the spiritual and material men, where there are new social structures and religious currents, the centrifugal tendencies towards ancestral Church.

In such a situation, the priest should have pastoral and missionary zeal which one do to find the best pastoral methods with which to preserve the unity of the ecclesial community entrusted to them, and to lead his faithful to God's kingdom.

In the midst of his faithful, the priest is appointed to mediate reconciliation with God, proclaiming with and without time, the divine teaching

¹⁷ Ierom. Nestor Vornicescu, *Viața și morală duhovnicească a preotului*, în “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LXXVI (1958), nr. 3-4, pp. 334-338; see Pr. Ene Braniște, *Viața interioară și trăirea religioasă a preotului*, în “Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, XCI (1981), nr. 7-8, pp. 751-769.

them and guiding them on the path to salvation. We must realize and be convinced that such work is not easy, especially since, our modern world is in constant change, novelty and challenge the generally meets in all areas of human life¹⁸. This reality sets before the faithful a variety of problems, questions, new requirements are causing real transformations and mutations of thought and attitude.

The Christian priesthood, the holy priesthood and updating expression and universal Savior, is in essence the same yesterday, today and forever, should take into account as it develops its concrete so stable substance and spirit of weather conditions. The priesthood is the condition of existence and continuity of the Church, the pillar and power. The Church exists, maintain and forward in time by her servants.

The priest is the minister by which Christ pours out His graces on the faithful. He is the one through which the faithful raise their prayers to God. The work of Christ meets with believers, divine grace believers aspirations. Our time priest is called to be deeply penetrated by the spirit of Christ, who is eternally alive and the same. He first called by Christ to cooperate with Him and with people everywhere, not only for proclamation of the Gospel, but also to support the struggle of the peoples for a new life in love, justice and peace.

Our time priest is called to carry out pastoral work in the spirit of genuine Orthodox tradition, giving new luster to the Christian priesthood. As such, he must be an example in front of his parishioners, to accomplish abundantly holy duties to God, the Church and the country. It is well known that the strength of the Christian priesthood lies in fidelity to Christ and to the people. Only after this can summon more effective interweaving flock to Christian duties with the duties of citizens, to ignite the spirit of the altar for the common good, honest and diligent work aimed at prosperity, to which is added to the thing uniting all good and peaceful life between all people.

¹⁸ Pr. Tomas Hopko, *Educația teologică și modernitatea*, in "Studii Teologice", XLVI (1994), nr. 4-6, pp. 92-93.