

Parish space under the pressure of social and religious metamorphoses

Church's role in society is overwhelming in any historical epoch. The Church of the first Christian centuries put the society under pressure by its new and powerful message embodied in the lives of individuals and Christian communities engaged on the road to the Kingdom. The eschatological tension of the first centuries of Christianity put pressure on the polytheistic and idolatrous world of antiquity, although socially, politically and cultural it was dominant. Today, we find that the Church is being increasingly under the pressure of the society, communication channels and the options of the secular individuals. If in the first Christian centuries, the Church Christianized the pagan world, today the world runs in the opposite direction by neopaganism and oriental religions influences present in Europe, secularism and syncretism. The Church is not called to give the world economic or political solutions in the sense of substituting them, but to inspire the spirit of values of Christ's Gospel. The Church does not replace the social, political or economic order, but either remains in a impassibility regarding the actions of these statutes when they aimed only the immanent, on consumption and hedonism. The Church will be in post-modernity and in all ages, the embodiment of God's Kingdom on earth highlighting the eschatological meaning and purpose of all creation - man and cosmos - in Christ. The legitimate question is what are the chances of the Church and its mission in such a pluralistic context? In such a pluralistic society the chance Orthodox Church is to remain visible and therefore viable through increasing at all its levels the confession of Christ's way of life in the world. This confession meant to gather together in a unity without confusion the Church and Society theandric modeled according to the Person of Christ, will infuse society the life from the life of Christ present in the Church, turning it slowly in His image or in other words Christ will

increasingly become more present in society. People, though away from the Church and even of Christ through a deep influence of secularization in their lives, yet need Christ and the Church, because they need life and Christ is „the life world”, He came into the world so that the world may have life. Thus, life must be sought in communion with Christ who conquered death and this life is in the Church and it is given to us within the Church precisely to be included in His resurrected Body and thus become immortal in the grace of Christ.

But Christ reaches the society not only through the Liturgy, nor only by philanthropy but by Liturgy and Philanthropy together, Philanthropy is the synthesis of the ethos of the Liturgy expanded in society and the Liturgy is the frame of the creation and deepening of this ethos in communion with God with people and all creation in the Church. Thus, the postmodern society though does not give importance to the Gospel it continues to seek its own sense, needs the Gospel of love, as it regain an immanent-transcendent sense in the light of the Kingdom and of humanity transfigured in the Spirit of Christ.

However, the metamorphoses of contemporary society under the pressure of globalization, conflict, mutations generated by interest and economic situations, lead, on the one hand to the reconfiguration of social, cultural and religious world, and on the other hand to the acceptance of syncretistic religion form the various religions and to the offset of all that was until the end of the twentieth century an unwavering principle. Orthodox communities in the XXI century will be challenged to redouble ecumenical dialogue, which dominated the twentieth century with intensified interreligious dialogue in a practical missionary vision, without inhibitions and fear of betraying Orthodoxy values. The model of the mission will be Jesus Christ who takes the social context, without being enslaved by it and exceeds it by the relationship with the Father and the Spirit (the sotheriological vertical), by sacrifice, love and attention towards the person (the sotheriological horizontal). The mystery of dialogue in a society multi-confessional and multi-religious is a chance that, on one hand, Orthodoxy will not be landlocked, falling into the net of fundamentalism and pietism and on the other hand, distinguish between a certain cult and religion and absurd and extremist forms (ex. the radical Islamism, not Islam). Archbishop Anastasios Yanuolatos gives us a living testimony of serve with love of humanity, becoming one of the most competent missionary theolo-

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gians of Orthodoxy in the twentieth century, lighting the cosmic dimension of salvation in Christ.

If the current society remains oriented in this cultural, social and religious direction, I think our parishes' space will vary not only geographical but also the human structure, mental and community. However, the church as outer space, comprehensive and centrally in a community, decreased in many people's consciences. It is seen as one of the institution among many others. Spiritual life in a community will not be generated by the Church as a community center, but will focus on private religious conscience of every person, not the Church as the cosmic and spiritual center will be the one to lead the spiritual life of the community but the individual options detached from any reference to the objectivity of Revelation and the Church and formed by the contradictory perspectives of postmodernist ethics. Dilution of ecclesial conscience along with references dissolution of Revelation will lead to taking another mode of religiosity, of the natural man, lonely and with a private ethics, enslaved by passions and idols.

Globalization and social conflicts will facilitate such severe mutations that in the space of Orthodox parish will appear new population with other mindsets, beliefs and cultures, connected to other values than the Orthodox ones. Basically, multiculturalism and inter-religious dialogue will be the new real challenges addressed to Orthodox communities beyond the inter-Christian dialogue and the culture time dominated by science, technology and hedonism. Depersonalization and hedonism will transform man into an individual without roots, with the only authority of its own being. Science and technology will enslave human life so much that they will be idolized and man will walk away from the ethos and values of our Church and Christianity in general and they will be considered obsolete and relative. The authority of Tradition and dogmas of the Church will not be exposed as external authority, without the correspondent of the interior light. In the new of social-cultural and religious configurations of the spaces of parish will not have decisive resonance invoking the external authority or reliance of Tradition confused with customs and different arbitrary traditions and practices.

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