

TOWARDS A MINISTERIAL BALANCE IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Growing up in a small village, there were many special events which took place. As such, these events created many memories I now cherish. One such event that repeated itself yearly was our annual Bishop's Visitation. As a boy, I was always excited and at the same time extremely terrified to see my eparchial bishop on our parish Feast Day. The excitement was always based on the fact that we only had a chance to see our bishop once a year who came to church to pray together with us. His presence seemed to unite all parishioners even though we all came from different financial, educational, and political backgrounds. It was precisely the presence of our bishop that brought peace and the realization that each one of us had an important role in our community and especially at the Divine Liturgy. Every member of the parish participated and celebrated in the Divine Liturgy by singing, assisting the priest, taking care of the candles, or simply standing and praying humbly in front of the iconostas in the presence of the bishop. For a young boy, whose mother always taught to be well-mannered, respectful and polite to others and to always be dressed in our Sunday best, the Bishop's Visitation was a spectacular and meaningful event. All the children were very anxious for many weeks ahead as we were waiting to meet our bishop who was "someone very special who somehow had the ability to instil in us an acceptance of who we were as Ukrainian Orthodox Christians. The bishop had much respect and admiration among the members of the community which was also cultivated in our hearts by our parents not out of fear, but out of love. He was special in that we were never forgotten as individuals within a community.

The presence of a bishop on our Feast Day was also a very terrifying moment as he was in charge of the entire church. To this day I remember my parish priest who would do everything possible to make this day memorable for his parish and for his bishop. It was a culmination of many days of preparation and a day of tremendous anticipation. For a young boy the most impressive moment was to see the bishop entering the church and having everyone witness his arrival in preparation of the forthcoming Divine Liturgy. With one smile he would discharge all the nerves of everybody around him and stabilize the environment with his expressive stillness. With his loving and humble presence he would set the tone for the service and the rest of our community festivities. It was also incredibly important for me to see my bishop dressed into his vestments in the centre of the Church. At this moment all the people praised God in unison singing and thanking Him for all His blessings. It was a sweet joy for us to exalt the presence of a bishop by proclaiming this meaningful phrase: "Na mnohyi lita Vladyko". It was a loud and joyful voice of all those present, which would internally move even the most resistant heart of an unbeliever. It might be that in unison we created within us tears of joy and a feeling of hope that all of us yearned for. The next couple of hours spent with our bishop in prayer would be enough for us to move forward for the entire year. For me, he was a walking source of a spiritual flame that would enlighten and strengthen our daily life. The central point of this anticipation was always his first blessing when the entire congregation would humbly bow their heads and concur his words with praising the Lord. It was the presence of the Holy Spirit that carried us with his gifts (charisma) beyond anything known and experienced among people. The various images of our bishop that I witnessed as a small boy has shaped my present identity and permanently changed my life as an Orthodox Christian.

The experience described above could be similar to the many encounters of the generations of Orthodox Christians since Pentecost. Although we may witness a similar event at each Bishop's Visitation, our point of view may have changed or may be slightly different. In our present-day life we should

ask ourselves what is the importance in the function and role of a bishop/presbyter in the Orthodox Church. Although we might be mystified by a similar bishop's visitation in our parishes we have to ask ourselves of the importance of us having a bishop among us and our validation of his function. We should not be afraid to ask these questions. There is a tremendous amount of importance and theological content. In order to make this experience more comprehensible, the purpose of this presentation is to lead us toward an understanding where we can strive toward becoming united together as the same "Body of Christ".

This presentation is not exhaustive in itself, as certain parameters of Orthodox ecclesiology (teaching about the nature of the Church) are not discussed. This presentation could be classified as contextual or unique in our Church's situation although it might be applied to situations of various Local Orthodox Churches in the world. The analysis embraces only the most immediate concerns of the contemporary life of the Orthodox Church, which need to be urgently addressed. It does not deal in any way with the relationship of the Church with the state that is elaborated in the by-laws of a particular Local Church. The external relationship of the Church with society is subsequent to the inner nature of her life and as such needs to be elaborated in another analysis. I humbly hope, the analysis presented here will lead us into an intensive discussion which is so urgently required for the progress of understanding the ministry in the Orthodox Church.

CHARISMATA OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Sacrament of Priesthood, as it is understood in Orthodox theology, contains various fields of charismata (1 Cor. 12:4-11). All Christians are charismatic and they are gifted with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. According to Orthodox theology, a charisma is essentially a gift of the Holy Spirit, which every member of the particular parish possesses. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to everyone who is baptized and chrismated and eucharistically united to the local Church. In other words, there is no such person in the Eucharistic assembly who is baptized, chrismated, and who is deprived of the charismata.¹ We can't discard anyone from the life of a parish, as essentially everyone is indispensable for a proper functioning of the eucharistic Body (1 Cor. 12:21-22).² Be it a farmer, mechanic, lawyer, janitor or a physician: all of them contain something valuable and unique, which can be seen only in the prism of the Holy Spirit. We should never undermine anyone in our parishes, even our enemies, but treat them with the same love and compassion as anyone else.³ Because every charisma is a gift of the Holy Spirit, every person, in his or her own way, completes the gifts of the others for the salvation of all.

The gifts-charismata, as they are offered to Christians, are the gifts of rendering service. They are called to a ministry-diakonia (2 Cor. 3:6; 8:4). There is no Christian that is not called to diakonia-service. It is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who "...came not to be ministered to, but to minister" (Mt. 20:28). The only model of the Orthodox Church, based in the Gospel of St. Matthew, is: "*Jesus washing the disciples feet at the Last Supper*".⁴ The gifts that are offered are for the purpose of edifying the Church. It was St. Clement of Rome who already at the end of the first century identified these gifts in the following way: "*In Christ Jesus, then, let this corporate body of ours be likewise maintained intact, with each of us*

¹ Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, *The Ecclesiological presupposition of the Holy Eucharist*, in: www.trinitylight.net

² S. Verhovskoy, *Catholicity and the Structures of the Church*, in: SVTQ 17(1973)1/2, p. 20; John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, in: SVTQ 38(1994)1, p. 9.

³ In words of Metropolitan Philip, in the Church there are no masters neither slaves, look in: Metropolitan Philip, *On Ecclesiology*, www.metropolitanphilip.com

⁴ Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, "*Not so Among You*". *How Christian is Our Understanding of Church Authority?*, in: www.orthodox-christian-comment.ca.uk

*giving way to his neighbour in proportion to our spiritual gifts. The strong are not to ignore the weak, and the weak are to respect the strong...*⁵

The gifts of charismata draw us constantly in the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ, Who acts in us and sanctifies us and our service. The existence of the Church and ministries depends totally on Jesus Christ.⁶ Our Lord Saviour cannot be substituted with any image of human ideology. It is Christ who draws us to Himself and transfigures us internally as an Author of charismata. It is essential to underline, that those gifts-charismata do not draw us to anything else. They do not draw us to any political party or personal agenda. The charisma draws us essentially to everything that is beyond our human speculation. In the spectrum of charismata, we are essentially Christ-like in order for the Kingdom of God to be established in the world.

As we observe from the New Testament, in the expectation of the Second Coming of Christ, the Church begins to settle down to wait for the parousia (Second Coming of Christ).⁷ The Church establishes herself eschatologically not to compromise to the world but to witness to the world by sustaining the Christian community. In this context, the charismata or gifts of the Holy Spirit are the means by which the parousia is being incarnated in our reality.⁸ The witness to the parousia is extremely important on the account of the presence of God in the world and negation of God's indifference to the life of his people.⁹

The Spirit is expressed in us through the charismata - various gifts the community possesses. The gifts of the Spirit do not belong to us.¹⁰ They are not our property, but are the gifts given to us from above. It is a gift from Christ. We can't use them according to our own perception or abuse them the way they were not destined to be used. Because of this, we are enabled to perform acts-service, especially in the faithful. We are the distributors of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and as such we proclaim the Kingdom of God.¹¹

Within the Charismatic community, there are also some patterns of leadership as gifts. In the context of charismata, the gift of leadership is of special importance for the discussion of the eucharistic communities. These patterns of leadership and authority are especially significant for the maintenance of the doctrine of the Church and the celebration of the mystery of faith, teaching, and the proper function of the body of Christ. The gifts of Charismata of leadership correspond directly to the goals established by our Lord. In the opinion of St. John Chrysostom, the priest/bishop is the assignee and instrument of Christ.¹²

⁵ St. Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 38, in: *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by Maxwell Stainforth, London, Penguin Books, 1987, p.38.

⁶ S. Verhovskoy, *Catholicity and the Structures of the Church*, op. cit, p. 25; Bishop Athenagoras, *The Hierarchy of the Christian Church*, in GOTR IV(1958)1, p. 35; Professor Constantine Scouteris, *Christian Priesthood and Ecclesial Unity: Some Theological and Canonical Considerations*, in: www.cc.uoa.gr/theology; Professor Constantine Scouteris, *Formation of the Laos in and for Community*, in: www.cc.uoa.gr/theology.

⁷ John D. Zizioulas, *The Early Christian Community*, in: *Christian Spirituality. Origins to the Twelfth Century*, edited by Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff in collaboration with Jean Leclercq, New York, Crossroad, 1985, pp.28-29; Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, *The Ecclesiological presupposition of the Holy Eucharist*, op. cit..

⁸ This is a fundamental principle that governed our Orthodox Church for centuries. It is often compromised with the trends of our society to the point of discarding the essential elements of our anthropology. One of the examples, that can illustrate this point, is our swift willingness to compromise our funeral practices. The discussion concentrates here around the subject of cremation.

⁹ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Our Faith. Confessing Christ Today*, in: [whht://www.pravnir.com](http://www.pravnir.com)

¹⁰ Fr. Joseph Allen, *A Meditation on the Art of Ministry: No Less Than Peter*, in: SVTQ 33(1989)3, p. 279.

¹¹ St. Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 38, op. cit..

¹² Look in: Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, in: GOTR XXI(1976)1, p. 57.

There is great attention given to pastoral leadership. There is a need to develop an internal revelation of the community and its members to transmit the authentic faith in order to prevent distortions in that faith. If we do not transmit the authentic faith to our communities and parishes we are compromising and distorting the foundations of our Orthodox Church. There is a necessity to be faithful custodians of the faith. This is done through correct doctrine and worship. In a sense, it is an exercise of correct orthodoxy (correct faith) and exercise of correct orthopraxis (correct worship).

The charisma of leadership is being exercised in the eucharistic community for a specific reason. This charisma is sanctioned and defined by the community for the purpose of faith, sanctification, and unified activity of an eucharistic body. The parameters of leadership in the eucharistic community are strict and precisely defined. They are contained and guarded by the eucharistic body, and as such they do belong only to the Church. From another perspective, we have to emphasize that the charisma of leadership in the eucharistic body is a permanent reality of priests and bishops. As Jesus Christ is constantly present in His Body: the gift of leadership is inseparable from the daily life of a bishop/priest. As a priest and a bishop, they are constantly seen as members of an eucharistic community in whatever situation they find themselves. Wherever they are present, a bishop/presbyter never ceases to be a priest. The priesthood is not a matter of personal opinion or preference, but a function to be performed on behalf of the community.

The basic authority of the Church from the very beginning is recognized to be the Holy Spirit.¹³ Because the Body of Christ (Church) is a Divine reality and the leaders of the Church are only custodians of the faith, the only authority we accept is the Holy Spirit. The idea of the Holy Spirit being the ultimate authority in the Orthodox Church is apostolic and attested in the Book of Acts 15 with the Apostolic Council: “*For it seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay the hands*”. He is the One who directs us and gives us the whole truth. As a result, we may conclude that the election of authority is based on the participation of the whole Church and ordination is being carried out as the responsibility of those who have authority. The laying of the hands concludes everything.

In the Orthodox Church we have not only laying of the hands but also laying of the Book of Gospels. The Bishop’s authority comes from the Gospel. In a way, we must submit ourselves to the Gospel. The role and the function of the Apostles are unique and unrepeatable. There are no successors to the Apostles but there is a succession of apostleship: ministry and authority. The apostles are those who have witnessed Jesus Christ: especially to His Resurrection (Book of Acts 1). In the Book of Acts, there is a discussion about the witness to the Resurrection.¹⁴ Because of this witness, the role of the Apostles and their function is unique. Nevertheless, the same apostles appointed others in and with the Church to continue the work of the Apostles as a continuation of the work and proclamation of Jesus’ Resurrection.

¹³ S. Verhovskoy, “*The Highest Authority in the Church*”, in: SVSQ 4(1960)2-3, p. 82; look also in: Thomas Hopko, *Criteria of Truth in Orthodox Theology*, in: SVTQ 15(1971)3, pp.15-16; E. Stephanou, *Belief and Practices in the Orthodox Church*, New York, 1965, pp. 11-13. It is a misconception to think that the highest authority in the Church is an “*assisting body*” with the solemn approval from our hierarchy. It is a distorted image of the Church. If the presence of the Holy Spirit is not there, we are not different from a secular corporation, which does the job even more efficiently. The authentic authority is coming to us not from the basic presuppositions of our corporal world, but from the above. The power struggle in the Church presupposes a deformation of some basic principles of the ecclesiastical life.

¹⁴ J. Meyendorff calls the “council” of the “Twelve” the highest and supreme witness to the truth of Christ’s resurrection, in: John Meyendorff, *What is an Ecumenical Council*, in: SVTQ 17(1973)4, p.261. Look also in: Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Orthodoxy and Mission*, in: SVSQ 8(1964)3, p. 140.

¹⁵ Those appointed ones are also given the authority of service. The succession to the first Apostles is primarily functional as servants of God (communities) to His people.¹⁶ This authority is exercised in the Holy Spirit as this is indicated in the Gospel of St. John chapters 14-16. In the New Testament we have a few references of these people, who they were and who they were as part of the ministry of the community. Based on those few references we can conclude that they were apostles and prophets. These references also refer to those who have the power and gifts of healing and speaking in tongues. Those orders are being called to lead and to worship in the community.¹⁷ All the orders in the Church are relational.¹⁸ The bishop is related to the diocese and to his flock and his clergy. In the aspect of the liturgical assembly, he is especially related to the presbyters. In addition, the presbyter is related to the flock, which has been entrusted to him by his bishop. Everyone is related to the other and accountable to each other. The priests and bishops are accountable to the very end.¹⁹ The accountability presupposes our dependency on the existence of the other orders. The priests are dependent on the presence of the bishop, which is related to having antimimension on our altars. Consequently, the presence of a bishop in the local parish is authenticated only through the relational presence of a priest-presbyter in the eucharistic community.²⁰ Without relational accountability, the function of the Body of Christ would be inconceivable. In a way, a priest is an extension of the bishops' hands and his ministry. It is the bishop who is ultimately responsible for the particular parish or district. It is his prerogative and responsibility to visit and oversee the function of every parish of his eparchy. It is a false assumption to think that a bishop needs an invitation to come to a parish for a visitation. The bishop is present in our parishes not only through the priests, but his signature is preserved on every altar on every antimimension.

THE CONCILIARITY OF GOVERNANCE OF THE CHURCH

The fundamental governance of the Orthodox Church is conciliar. The term "conciliarity" means collegiality, responsibility, and accountability. Everyone has a role and a function to perform in our Church. In the Orthodox Church, worship is done in the presence of both: clergy and laity. Because of

¹⁵ It is essential to emphasize the message of Resurrection in our Easter sermons, especially a message of our hierarchy, that is supposed to be read on Easter Sunday. It is exactly here, that the authority of our hierarchy is authenticated. In the Easter message, our hierarchy shapes its authority. From the other perspective, the Resurrection is the authentic message to be proclaimed from the solia.

¹⁶ Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, in: SVTQ 29(1985)1, p. 34; John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁷ There are four essential orders: the laity, the diaconate, the presbyterate, the episcopacy. There are also other orders as well as we call them sometimes minor orders: such as sub-deacons, acolytes, readers ...etc. But the first four essential orders are constitutive to the nature of the Church. In the configuration of the liturgical assembly, we notice that the orders have their own places. The nave is the place where the laity assembles. The sanctuary is the place where the ordained clergy celebrates the worship. In the Orthodox Church, no one would receive the Eucharist by themselves. It is an indication that communion is a gift and not something to be taken by themselves. The Eucharist is not something to be taken, but to be received. This is one of the main reasons why the priests use their left hand to transfer the Body of Christ into the right one at the time of Eucharist. The same applies to the bishop. From the other perspective, authority in the Orthodox Church is not to be assumed, but to be received. As the right of ordination developed, we have also the development of each order. The configuration of the liturgical assembly expresses the authority within the community.

¹⁸ John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁹ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 65. In addition to the accountability of priesthood, the other essential qualities are the rejection of pride and love for authority.

²⁰ Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, op. cit., p. 34.

this interdependency, no presbyter or bishop can celebrate the Eucharist without the presence of laity.²¹ In a similar fashion, no action in the Church can be made without the consent of the other orders of the Church. The confirmation of the relationship between bishop/presbyter and the laity during the Divine Liturgy is conveyed by the word “Amen” – Let it be so”.

In a similar fashion, the conciliarity is expressed in other aspects and ministries of the Church. Every member has a role and participates in the life of the Local Church, although the role may not seem to have equal importance. In the context of the above-said we can conclude that the fundamental matrix of the ministry is functional. The Church empowers the bishop-presbyter to act sacramentally in relation to the entire body of Christ. According to St. Gregory the Theologian, the priesthood has a transcending reality and as a Divine institution exists only in the Church.²² The priest is essentially a man of prayer and sacramental action.²³ The most important goal in the life of a bishop/priest is not to focus on the organization of social clubs, but on the salvation of souls.²⁴ It is damaging to consider any other arrangement in the Eucharistic community. We have to recognize the damage that can be done to this unique relationship when there is an emphasis on the rights and privileges of a specific group. Permanent damage is done emphasizing too much importance on specific group of people in our communities. By doing so, this robs the Church of its eschatological character. We have to note that the discussion here is not how the by-laws regulate the relation of the Orthodox Church as an organizational entity within the society, but how the by-laws enter into the sacramental life. We need by-laws in order to function as a recognized body, but there is a line, where the by-law becomes a medium for other non-eucharistic agendas. More damage is done by when we bring “democracy” into the Divine order. The element of “democracy” damages a sensitive balance within the Body of Christ.²⁵ Any attempt to correct this state in a democratic or any ideological way will only deepen the rift between those who stand between the altar and the laity. The pattern of authority of the secular world is “*utterly inapplicable*” in the Eucharistic assembly: “*All authority has been given to Me. I am with you always*”.²⁶ The relational aspect of this very sensitive balance can’t be achieved unless we recognize our proper place in the order of the Divine institution. The Eucharistic assembly is not a democracy, but man’s participation in God Himself.²⁷ Ekklesia includes all living members of the Body of Christ, but not ideas or beliefs of certain individuals or groups.²⁸ The Church reflects the Triune God and as such there is a demand on behalf of the members to become like God (Luke 6:36). The Body of Christ, established by Christ Himself, lives according to its own organic life that constantly relates to God as the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The nature of the Church is constant and related to the Triune God. The relationship is accomplished in the Second Person of the Holy Trinity: Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is the place, where this economy is constantly present for the restoration of the Kingdom of God. The epiclesis (invocation of the Holy Spirit) is always an affirmative act of the Holy Spirit in the presiding bishop, regardless of man’s sanctity. Without the Eucharist, the Church cannot exist as the Body of Christ. In the epiclesis, there is no internal or external

²¹ Serge S. Verhovskoy, *Catholicity and the Structures of the Church*, op. cit., p. 20.

²² Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 60.

²³ Metropolitan Philip, *The Ministry of the Modern Orthodox Pastor*, in: SVTQ 25(1985)3, p. 176.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

²⁵ John Meyendorff, *What is an Ecumenical Council*, op. cit., p. 266.

²⁶ Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, “*Not so Among You*”. *How Christian is Our Understanding of Church Authority?*, op. cit..

²⁷ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Our Faith*, op. cit.. For more information on this subject look in: John Meyendorff, *What is an Ecumenical Council*, op. cit., p. 271; John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, Crestwood, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985, 219.

²⁸ John Zizioulas, *The local Church in a Eucharistic perspective-an Orthodox contribution*, in: *In each place: towards a fellowship of local Churches truly united: (report of a consultation in Geneva, December 10-13, 1976)-Geneva*, World Council of Churches, 1977, p. 60.

authority, as even God is not an authority, but the Truth.²⁹ In the presence of God, authority is something external. Without the Eucharist, we, as members of humanity, become another human organization, where the elements of democracy fall and rise again depending on the condition of the human mind. Without Christ, theology becomes an “empty dialectics” without any consequences on our life.³⁰ If democracy is a constantly developing phenomenon, then how can the Body of Christ be compared to democracy if the Body of Christ is constant and totally independent from the human mind: “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever*” (Heb. 13:8). The Church constantly strives to model herself on the model of the Kingdom of God and as such she never ceases to do so.³¹ The incorporation of codes and by-laws in the context of the eucharistic life of the Church is a strong indication of the weakness of the particular eucharistic Body. In order to protect its own rights and privileges we create clauses in the by-laws that in effect corrupt the essentials of trust among the members of the Church. In opposition to some of the trends in the Orthodox Church, the “Eucharistic ecclesiology” is not congregationalism.³² Lack of trust presupposes self-defence and prejudice that is actualized in the by-law. The lack of trust on behalf of laity creates a need for clarification and the need for more by-laws. A lack of recognition of the role of the bishop/priest by the laity in the Church forms an ecclesiological rift between laity and the leaders of the Church that leads to despotism and a lack of responsibility and accountability on behalf of the hierarchy. The implications of this rift are quite devastating. The lack of recognition of the position of one of the ministries is embodied with the establishment of difference. In effect, if the difference prevails in the eucharistic assembly, we divide ourselves and organize according to this difference to the point of peaceful coexistence that is safeguarded in our by-laws.³³ In effect, it is not one of the parties suffering at this point, but it is the eucharistic body that is marginalized and destabilized. As a result, people leave the Church where instead of God they find themselves living with criticism, distrust, and loneliness. It is of special importance among our youth, that upon seeing this defragmentation in the Church, they turn away from the Church as a rebellion against “*organized religion*”.³⁴ People need stability in our Churches in order to grow spiritually. It is the stability of faith, trust, love, relationship and compassion that bring people back home to Church. As long as there is no stability and trust among the orders of the Church, we will be unable to gain the trust among the members of the Church that is needed for the stability of our Church.

From another perspective, we can't negate or undermine the qualities of the political ideologies and contemporary social movements that contain in themselves certain elements for the betterment of the human race. This last sentence is fundamental for our understanding of the presence of Christ in the pluralistic world.³⁵ Although these elements are integral in our social and political sphere of a daily life, we must point continually to the eschatological character of the Eucharist, where the human contemporary condition is being continually transformed.³⁶ The eucharistic assembly is a mystery, the Body of Christ, that is rooted in the “*inexhaustible, infinite depths of God*”.³⁷ In other words, we have

²⁹ A. Khomiakov, “*On the Western Confessions of Faith*”, in: *Ultimate Questions. An Ontology of Modern Russian Thought*, edited with an Introduction by A Schmemmann, New York, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1965, p. 50.

³⁰ G. Florovsky, “the Ethos of the Orthodox Church, in: *Orthodoxy, A Faith and Order Dialogue*, (Faith and Order Papers, No. 30), Geneva, 1960, p. 41.

³¹ John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 8

³² John Meyendorff, *What is an Ecumenical Council*, op. cit., p. 263.

³³ Metropolitan John (Zizioulas), of Pergamon, *Communion and Otherness*, in: *Sobornost* 16(1994)1, p. 10.

³⁴ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Theology-Mission and Pastoral Care*, op. cit., p. 171.

³⁵ H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, “*Understanding and Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic World*”, in: WCC-Consultation on Interfaith Dialogue 1995-94. The approach taken by Archbishop Anastasios opens new way of thinking in the Orthodox Interreligious dialogue.

³⁶ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Our Faith*, op. cit.; H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, “*Understanding and Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic World*”, op. cit., p. 45.

³⁷ Right Rev. Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, *How to Build the Local Church* in: www.orthodox-christian-comment.co.uk

to act in the context of the present local situation preserving the right to look into the future of the Kingdom of God.

The above said has additional consequences for our discussion. The transfer of priests for a particular parish is not a privilege of individual members of the Board. In the Eucharistic assembly, it is ultimately the bishop who makes these transfers as it is he who is responsible for the Eucharist. The change of a priest affects the Eucharistic assembly and is done by the bishop alone. The transfers of priests in the parishes are changes strictly sacramentally oriented.

The function of a bishop can't be limited or defined by the by-laws of the Church. The sacramental function of a bishop supersedes any by-law or restrictions. The idea of certain privileges and rights assigned to a bishop has its roots in Medieval sacramentalism, where a bishop was understood as an individual who possesses his rights including the one belonging to a Synod.³⁸ In addition, the creation of an auxiliary bishop destroys the essential principle of the equality of the bishops. The existence of a so-called auxiliary bishop which is defined by the by-laws is an ecclesiological anomaly.³⁹ If the function of bishops is sacramental and identical for all of them, then all of them have the right to participate and vote on the issues discussed by the Synod of Bishops.⁴⁰ They are the same in the eyes of Christ. In order to re-establish the conciliarity on the level of the entire Church, we have to bring back and analyse, first of all, the conciliarity of the episcopacy. There is a tremendous need in the Church to redefine and evaluate once again the basic principles of ecclesiology. A consistent repetition of the past (universal ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church) is not and can not be the basis of the restoration of our ecclesiology and proper function of the eucharistic assembly. We need to restore genuine Orthodox ecclesiology that gives us a proper balance within the Church governance.

THE MINISTRY OF A BISHOP-PRESBYTER

The office of the priesthood belongs to the very essence and structures of the Church from the very beginning. This ministry of service was established by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It essentially belongs to Christ Jesus. The ministry of the Church is extended to the entire body of Christ: the Church and all members of this body who are the royal priesthood, are the consecrated people: the holy nation.⁴¹ The priesthood is ecclesial in nature and it belongs to the Church, even though individual persons exercise the ministry. The Church selects, ordains, and empowers persons on behalf of the community. Only those who are in canonical order in the Church have the authority to act on behalf of the Church. As an example: a computer will not function if it is not plugged into an electrical system. Unless a priest is not 'plugged' into the ministry of the Church, the priesthood bestowed upon him is not functional. The priesthood is always "diakonia" (service). The only authority is the authority of diakonia. It is not powered in and of itself, but is an authority of a service.

One of the characteristics of priesthood, since early Christianity, was holiness. According to the Book of Leviticus 21, holiness was demanded for priests. It was the holiness of God that was bestowed relationally upon the chosen people. This characteristic is also part of a chosen people and priesthood in the New Testament. A special holiness was demanded for priests, who handled "holy things". The priest was set apart in order to function for the holiness, especially for the time of his service, when he wore

³⁸ Prof. J.D. Zizioulas, *Conciliarity and the Way to Unity*, in: Churches in Conciliar Fellowship?- A discussion amongst European churches on unity and cooperation, Conference of European Churches, Geneva, 1978, 22.

³⁹ Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, op. cit., p. 43.

⁴⁰ According to J. Meyendorff, the equality of bishops is grounded on the same Eucharist celebrated everywhere, as there is one Christ, one Church, and the same Spirit, in: J. Meyendorff, *What is an Ecumenical Council*, op. cit., p. 262.

⁴¹ The term "clergy" - comes from Greek "cliros" - as someone who is set apart for a particular purpose.

special clothing. He was separated from the society. The priest was separated and provided with a salary in order to fulfill his priestly duties and responsibilities. It was not a popularity contest or a concert. The quest for personal holiness is not the popularity contest.⁴² A priest was called to a unique service and behaviour in order to achieve holiness. The clothing he wore was the clothing of service and not a fashion show of different kinds of priestly “attire”.

There are some other characteristics for the priesthood as we identify them in the New Testament. They include discipleship, apostleship, residence in the local Church, and presidency over the Eucharist. All Christians are called to become disciples, and it is especially seen in the Gospel of St. John and Matthew 28: “...go out and make disciples of all the nations...” During His ministry, Jesus Christ called 12 disciples who had a special relationship with Him. They accepted the call from Him and followed Him. In retrospect, to respond to Christ and to accept his call is to become a learner and at the same time a listener.⁴³ According to St. Basil, a good shepherd is the one, who listens to his flock as a great and compassionate doctor with the potential to become a loving father.⁴⁴ A disciple knows how to listen to his people and how to learn from the experience with the community. The ministry of discipleship is a continually developing life-vocation that embraces all the elements of community life. The elements of listening and learning are of special importance. As a disciple, a bishop/presbyter knows how to listen. He is able to listen to any individual, concern, or ideology where he engages in the life of the members of the eucharistic community. It is not a passive attitude, but a constantly developing mechanism on the part of the leader of the Christian community, to place himself in a position of attention. Active listening absorbs all the pains and concerns of those who are being led towards final fulfilment. Careful listening requires from a priest/bishop a long-lasting patience and vigilance. The post of presbyter/bishop also requires a direct action and personal responsibility for the benefit of the community. A presbyter/bishop gives much attention to the tolerance of the flock by his personal meekness. He instructs the members of his community in anticipation of repentance.⁴⁵

The priesthood is a consuming and a life-time vocation.⁴⁶ It is a vocation patterned after the Life of Christ. This also assumes a life of hardship. The discipleship also means the acceptance of the demands of the Gospel: a call of acceptance, trust, and vulnerability.⁴⁷ A life of hardship also assumes an element of self sacrifice for his flock: martyrdom.⁴⁸ In his calling of priesthood, there is even an element of suffering.⁴⁹ St. Clement of Rome characterizes the discipleship as a humble, peaceable and disinterested way of life.⁵⁰ The priesthood is the acceptance of hardship in any capacity. It is not only hardship of

⁴² Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 63 and 67.

⁴³ Fr. Joseph Allen, *A Meditation on the Art of Ministry: No Less Than Peter*, in: SVTQ 33(1989)3, p. 277.

⁴⁴ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 57.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴⁶ St. Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 44.

⁴⁷ Fr. Joseph Allen, *A Meditation on the Art of Ministry: No Less Than Peter*, in: SVTQ 33(1989)3, p. 279; Joseph J. Allen, *The Ministry of the Church. The Images of Pastoral Care*, Crestwood, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986, p. 45.

⁴⁸ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 57. Self sacrifice is especially emphasized by St. Gregory the Theologian where in addition to sacrifice the frugality is particularly important, look in: op. cit., p. 64; Bishop Demetrios Trakatellis, “...Follow me) (Mk 2.14). *Discipleship and Priesthood*, in: GOTR 30(1983)3, 277; Bishop Kallistos of Diokleis, *The Seed of the Church. The Universal Vocation of Martyrdom*, Witney, St. Stephen's Press, 1995. According to him, all Christians are called to martyrdom.

⁴⁹ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 57; Metropolitan Philip, *On Ecclesiology*, op. cit..

⁵⁰ St. Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 44. The idea is also integral for the contemporary Orthodox thought, in: H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, “*Understanding and Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic World*”, p. 45. In this context, the line of L. Patsavos is the most expressive: “*From his*

vulnerability, but it is also a hardship of lack of time, hardship of our families, hardship of comfort. We are ready to be sent anywhere and to proclaim the Kingdom of God. I would be quite careful to define our vocation as a profession in the modern way of thinking. The only priestly profession is the profession of the cross that calls for pain and total sacrifice.⁵¹ If there is no Christianity without the cross, then there is no priesthood in the Church that is accredited with power and privileges. Because of the ascetic living tradition in the Orthodox Church, there is a continual negation of an easy and comfortable life for Christianity. This applies especially to the priesthood that exemplifies and verifies the life of Christ. It is “martyria” as identification with Him, Who died on the cross.⁵² Those qualities are no extra attributes of priesthood, they are demanded of him.⁵³ A compromise with comforts of a societal way of life contributes to the misconceptions of the priesthood that in reality pays lip service to the cross, eventually hating and avoiding the cross at all (Phil. 3:18).⁵⁴ It is a sort of a duplicity of personality of priesthood between superficial/ceremonial type of religiousness and the life that is disengaged from the portrayed one.⁵⁵

The priesthood is a mystery of correction.⁵⁶ The bishop-presbyter corrects abuses and the priest is responsible by teaching, by example, guidance, and counselling. But the correction is done in the spirit of love. A priest corrects as a father because he loves his children. He corrects out of love. The correction is applied not only to the members of the community, but it is also seen in reverse to himself, as laity also speak the truth.⁵⁷ He protects the faith, the community, and seeks to bring a correct relationship. From the other perspective, even the bishop/priest has limitations. But if we understand the fact that what we give is in relation with Christ, then his giving is inexhaustible – because Jesus Christ is inexhaustible. It is not the priest’s ministry, but the divine ministry of Christ.⁵⁸ The source of his power and strength is the one of Christ.

We should not forget that the bishop/priest is in a position to correct and to protect the eucharistic assembly. In order to defend the doctrine and for the proper function of the parish, he is called to act in a manner that will bring peace and stability to the eparchy and the parish.⁵⁹ St. Ignatius of Antioch, in order to express the stability and harmony among different orders of the Church, uses an analogy of a lyre: “... for your reverend presbytery, which is worthy of God, is tuned to the bishop, as strings are to the lyre: and thus, in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung”.⁶⁰ The call to act, even if it is

example the spiritual worker ought to retain untiring zeal in the difficult moments of one’s spiritual ministry, steady hope even after the most painful failures and bitter disappointments, patient, perseverance in all possible hardship and persecutions, fervent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of the faithful, heartfelt compassion for each need of body...”, look in: Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 64

⁵¹ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 61; Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Theology-Mission and Pastoral Care*, op. cit., p. 172; Bishop Kallistos of Diokleis, *The Seed of the Church. The Universal Vocation of Martyrdom*, op. cit.

⁵² H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, “*Understanding and Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic World*”, op. cit., p. 49; Bishop Kallistos of Diokleis, *The Seed of the Church. The Universal Vocation of Martyrdom*, op. cit., p. 1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁴ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Our Faith*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁵⁵ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Theology-Mission and Pastoral Care*, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

⁵⁶ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁵⁷ Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, “*Not so Among You*”. *How Christian is Our Understanding of Church Authority?*, op. cit..

⁵⁸ ⁵⁸ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵⁹ Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, op. cit., p. 35.

⁶⁰ St. Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to the Ephesians, 3-4*, in: *Early Christian Writings. The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by Maxwell Staniforth, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1987, p. 62.

connected with hardship, must be decisive, wise and thoughtful.⁶¹ We can't forget that we are being sent to our parishes to be inclusive, unifying all the members of the Body. We have to be in a position to respect the identity of the individuals in order for them to become truly themselves.⁶² This requires on behalf of bishops/priests spiritual courage and wisdom when dealing with the daily problems of contemporary man, especially our youth.⁶³ We have to be aware of constant changes in the societal life, that being overwhelmed by the sciences brings so many positive and negative messages to our families, parishes, and eparchies. It is the responsibility of the leaders of our Church to evaluate the message and utilize them in order to transmit the message of Orthodoxy.⁶⁴ This requires not only pastoral considerations, but it goes as far as an intellectual discussion with our members. There needs to be a continual increase of our knowledge not only in the theological sphere, but also in the philosophical or scientific disciplines.⁶⁵ People are searching for God in their own personal ways of life that embraces educational, philosophical or ideological speculation, and cultural creationism.⁶⁶ In order to respond to their search for God in their ways of life, we have to use the right methodological tools and ways of thinking of the modern man. The way to achieve this goal is always Christ-centered orientation where the Holy Scripture is being actualized.⁶⁷ At the same time we have to state that the world is not: "*compatible with Christ or the Church*".⁶⁸ Because of the complexity of obstacles facing the spiritual worker, the task is very complex.⁶⁹ This is the way of the Apostolic Fathers who adapted the ancient philosophy of the life of the primitive Church in order to bring the message of God. It is St. Basil who insists upon the spiritual shepherd to be "*watchful in present affairs, able to foresee the future...*"⁷⁰ In other words, a bishop/priest must possess a ministry of art that enables him to direct his parish towards the future by acquiring spontaneity, skills, and appropriate attitude or disposition.⁷¹ His spiritual weapon is the apostolic fire and zeal to those who may become witnesses of Christ.⁷² In the post-Constantine world we are no different from the Church Fathers in order to bring Christ using the tools of the contemporary society. As long as we are critical to the contemporary scientific goals, Christ will be in the hearts of those, who are searching for the truth in their own sophisticated ways of life.⁷³ Because we are in no position to accuse our members of the Church of their sophisticated way of thinking, we have to be critical in our methodology, mechanical tools, and way of thinking when discussing the ecclesiological nature of our Church.

⁶¹ Another very important adjectives of a bishop/priest is the ability to make a strong and precise decisions in order to make a right decision, look in: Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op.cit., p. 67.

⁶² Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Orthodoxy and Mission*, op. cit., p. 144.

⁶³ Metropolitan Philip, *The Ministry of the Modern Orthodox Pastor*, op. cit., p. 176.

⁶⁴ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Our Faith*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁶⁵ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Theology-Mission and Pastoral Care*, op. cit., p. 166.

⁶⁶ Very eloquent in this matter in metropolitan Philip in his: Metropolitan Philip, *The Ministry of the Modern Orthodox Pastor*, op. cit..

⁶⁷ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 63. In this paper he presents very disturbing reality of the American society.

⁶⁸ S. Verhovskoy, *Catholicity and the Structures of the Church*, op. cit, p. 38.

⁶⁹ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Theology-Mission and Pastoral Care*, op. cit., p. 158. According to him, one of the most crucial difficulties in the modern society is the phenomenon of secularism.

⁷⁰ I Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 59.

⁷¹ Fr. Joseph Allen, *A Meditation on the Art of Ministry: No Less Than Peter*, in: SVTQ 33(1989)3, p. 273.

⁷² Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Orthodoxy and Mission*, op. cit., p. 140.

⁷³ John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 12.

The role of the presbyter-bishop is also seen as a missionary figure. The presbyter-bishop is a residential figure.⁷⁴ He is localized and lives among the people about whom he cares. He belongs to a locality. Whether it is a parish or an eparchy, a bishop/presbyter belongs to them. As a residential and local figure, he is in charge of organizing the ordinary life of a local Church. Here is the charisma of administration. He organizes and stabilizes the community in danger of innovations. This might be applied to any aspect of the parish life: liturgical, pastoral, or doctrinal. In a way, the bishop-presbyter has to be vigilant.⁷⁵ It is very important in our daily life, when syncretism is a daily phenomenon. One of the qualities is also the fact that he leads a virtuous life that is expressed in the apostolic literature as “endearing kindness”⁷⁶ and “sainthood”.⁷⁷ The bishop/presbyter is known based on the fact, that he is the one who gives sound instruction. These are the personal and skilled traits. He must know the tradition of the Church. He is a pastor, a shepherd, and a teacher (1 Peter 5) who humbly ministers his flock.⁷⁸ In the Apostolic Tradition the bishop/presbyter is also the one who visits the sick.⁷⁹ But all the essential elements of virtue of a bishop are embraced by his love for Christ and his flock.⁸⁰ In the words of St. Isaac the Syrian: “*What is a loving heart? It is a heart burning with love for the whole of creation, for man, for the beasts, for the demons and all creatures. He who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without his eyes becoming filled with tears, by reason of the immense compassion which is his heart...*”⁸¹

A fundamental character of a presbyter-bishop is the ability to maintain the unity of the Church: the unity of itself and the unity of the faith. He maintains the unity of the Body of Christ in order to avoid division and anarchy. His authority is the authority of service but not of domination. The development of a “despotic episcopate” or a “spiritual elitism” goes against the very basic fabric of the Church.⁸² There is authority of authority, but at the very end, it is an authority of service and accountability.⁸³ In the words

⁷⁴ According to the contemporary theological analysis of the first Christian community, the residential model of apostleship belongs to the Lucian tradition, where the missionary type was developed by St. Paul, look in: Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, op. cit., p. 34

⁷⁵ Demetrios Trakatellis, “...Follow me) (Mk 2.14). *Discipleship and Priesthood*, op. cit., p.281

⁷⁶ Ignatius of Antioch, The Epistle to the Ephesians, : *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by Maxwell Stainforth, London, Penguin Books, 1987, p. 61

⁷⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 12*, in: *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by Maxwell Stainforth, London, Penguin Books, 1987, p. 104. According to St. Basil, a spiritual shepherd is the one who cast off any proud thought that may lead to “impoverishment of all virtues”, look: J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 57. It is also St. Gregory the Theologian that strongly insists upon the virtue of priesthood, look in: Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 61

⁷⁸ J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁷⁹ Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, op. cit., p. 40; also look into: Joseph J. Allen, *The Orthodox Pastor and the Dying*, in: SVTQ 23(1979)1.

⁸⁰ J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., pp. 56-57; Metropolitan Philip, *The Ministry of the Modern Orthodox Pastor*, op. cit., p. 181.

⁸¹ Look in: Metropolitan Philip, *The Ministry of the Modern Orthodox Pastor*, op. cit. p. 181.

⁸² Paul Meyendorff, *Notes and Comments. Primacy in a United Church*, in: SVTQ 52(2008)2, p. 229; Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, op. cit., p. 59; Metropolitan Philip, *The Ministry of the Modern Orthodox Pastor*, op. cit., p. 180. More emphasis on this aspect look in: Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, “*Not so Among You*”. *How Christian is Our Understanding of Church Authority?*, op. cit.; John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁸³ Our parishes have to represent unity. We have to ask ourselves if it is right for the priests to vote in the life of organizations. The priest should be the one who safeguards the unity of the community. A vote presupposes a defeat of those who are not in agreement with the specific question. A priest has to be the adviser who brings all

of St. Gregory the Theologian, the use of force in order to discipline his flock is not worthy of man and as such “*it is frustrating*”.⁸⁴ Dominance in the context of the eucharistic body excludes the essential element of service. In effect, the Church is deprived of the fundamental presence of Christ in its midst. Those patterns, including bishop/presbyter, are interdependent and necessary for the existence of the Church. There is no ministry in the Church independent of the other ministries. There is no ministry that is above and beyond the Church.⁸⁵ There is no ministry in the Church that is self-sufficient (1 Cor. 12).⁸⁶ The ecclesiological theory of independence created by bishop/presbytery creates a very dangerous precedent that leads to indifference and irresponsibility in the life of the Church.⁸⁷ The laity, being excluded from the matters of ecclesiastical life as co-workers of Christ, revolt by becoming spectators, critics, and enthusiasts of indifference.⁸⁸ The traumatic loss of ecclesiastical balance that coordinated the entire Body of Christ into a Divine symphonic organism evaporates into oblivions. This statement is fundamental in the discussion of the ministry in the Orthodox Church. We can also look at this from the other perspective, where a priest is subservient not to the Gospel but to the dominance of the parish executive or the job description in the by-laws. In both cases, the sensitive balance of service is ultimately lost on the expense of the truth of Body of Christ. Any parish emerged in this kind of loss of balance between priest/bishop and laity will have to face difficulties of its true being as a Body of Christ. The defragmentation of the symbiotic coexistence of the ministries of Christ and continual power struggle within the ministry of Christ pushes us into a “*falsification of Christianity and schizophrenic tendencies*”.⁸⁹ Our inability as Church to rise above politics qualifies us internally and externally to carry the message of Christ to the world which in itself is a negation of the basic existence of the Church.

A Bishop has a greater role in administration. We have to state very clearly that the bishop of today is not the bishop of the early Church. This is one of the reasons why we have the college of presbyters. But we also have to understand the relational character of all ministries. The Church of Rome was governed by the College of presbyters. The idea for necessity of having one bishop came out from the necessity to maintain the doctrine of the Church intact and the unity of the Church. One of the main characteristics of a bishop is that he is the one who sustains and protects the unity of the Church as well as maintains its relationship to the other local Churches. This must be done in a collegial order with other orders of the Church. Other characteristics of a bishop is the fact that although there is a selection of the other orders, he is the one who ordains and maintains the unity

An iconic language presents bishop-presbyter in a relational way. He is a typos (the icon that always points to that which is beyond). The bishop-priest points to Christ as Type or a Pattern.⁹⁰ According to St. Ignatius: “...and therefore it is clear that we must regard a bishop as the Lord Himself” (Ephesians 1:6). This idea will be further elaborated by St. Cyprian who strictly defined the necessity of the presence of a bishop for the existence of the Local Church: “... is the people united to the bishop, the flock clinging

the elements to a consensus. It is of special importance in our parishes, where the idea of consensus would be more preferable.

⁸⁴ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 62.

⁸⁵ Professor Constantine Scouteris, *Christian Priesthood and Ecclesial Unity: Some Theological and Canonical Considerations*, op. cit..

⁸⁶ S. Verhovskoy, *Catholicity and the Structures of the Church*, op. cit, p. 20; John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁸⁷ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Theology-Mission and Pastoral Care*, in: GOTR 1977, p. 170.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 170.

⁸⁹ Bishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Theology-Mission and Pastoral Care*, op. cit., p. 179.

⁹⁰ John. D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, Crestwood, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985, p. 229; Joseph J. Allen, *The Ministry of the Church. The Images of Pastoral Care*, Crestwood, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986, p. 42; Arnold Ehrard, *The Beginning of Mon-Episcopacy*, in: CQR CXL(1945)

to its shepherd. The bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop".⁹¹ It is correct to understand the priesthood as an icon under the principle that St. Basil articulated: "The honour showed to the icon is referred to the prototype. Therefore the priest as an icon of Christ is not honoured in and of himself. The honour is referred to Jesus Christ. There is no intrinsic personal sanctity in the priesthood". As an icon he is in a relational existence. This means that every ordained person is placed in a particular concept of a relationship. He does not act by virtue of personal qualities, but allows through his actions to act. His personal qualities are not essential and his behaviour do not validate the office. The projection is not one's ability and virtues, but in all humility to release one's self of these private ways, so that the Lord may act. The most important fact is the aspect of emptying oneself for Christ in order to become an agent of Christ. We don't select some individual because he is apparently holy by nature. The Priest is the one who represents Christ. The priest acquires holiness as every Christian acquires holiness through asceticism (spiritual and identity struggle). Holiness is a gift that is being acquired by every Christian and given to him by God. The bishop's function is to make present the spiritual reality that surpasses him. The person who stands as "alter Christus" does not represent Christ as an individual, but part of a community. It is the Church that is the Body of Christ. It is the Church that empowers, ordains, and assigns the bishops to the Church. Christ himself is part of a community and the Holy Spirit creates community.

TOWARDS THE MINISTRY OF BALANCE

The first premise underlines the fact that no bishop acts alone. He has a relational existence. He is unique in the fact that he has a relational aspect with the College of presbyters and assisted by deacons and people. Every prayer of the Orthodox Church ends with "Amen". The term "Amen" is the most powerful word that gives ascent and action in the Church. They make the action of the leadership of the Church by ascending the "amen". We also need the responsibility of the laity as the laity is called the general and "indispensable conscience of the Church".⁹² The bishop is the head of the community and a part of the community. He needs the "Amen" of the people and the recommendations of the presbyters. This has implications on the aspect of the conciliarity of the Church. This means that there is a conciliarity between the bishop and presbyters, presbyters and laity. The Bishop is enabled by the faith community to act as priest. This priest-bishop doesn't possess the identity on his own.⁹³ It is a gift that he exercises on behalf of the Church. The priesthood exists solely to make Christ present. He is the concrete presence of the Lord in the midst of His people. He is a sign and an icon of the presence of Christ. He is Christ's ambassador and he takes the place of God in the midst of the Congregation.⁹⁴ According to St. Ignatius: "...he stands in a place of God". As the one who stands in the place of God, he is an example of imitation to the eucharistic assembly.⁹⁵

The priesthood is relational as the identity of the Church is relational.⁹⁶ The priesthood is not only related to the priesthood of Christ, but he is related as well as the people of God. He comes out of the people of God. He himself is a member of the royal priesthood as well as the one who is set apart from the rest: the

⁹¹ St. Cyprian, *Letter LXVI*, 8, quoted by: Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, London, Penguin Books, 1993, p. 251. The idea of a strict dependence of a Local Church and a bishop is elaborated by the contemporary Greek theologian John D. Zizioulas in his many articles. One of his latest addition to the subject is his doctoral dissertation: John D. Zizioulas (Metropolitan of Pergamon), *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop During the First Three Centuries*, Brookline, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001.

⁹² John Zizioulas, *The local Church in a Eucharistic perspective-an Orthodox contribution*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁹³ John Zizioulas, *Comments*, in: Study Encounter IV(1968)4, p. 191; in his other study, J.D. Zizioulas underlines the fact that individualism or isolationism is synonymous with death, look in: Jean Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Prayer and Life*, in: Emmanuel 85(1979)4, p. 196; John Zizioulas, *The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Church*, in: One in Christ XXIV(1988)1, p. 299.

⁹⁴ Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p.228.

⁹⁵ Lewis J. Patsavos, *The Image of the Priest According to the Three Hierarchs*, op. cit., p. 61.

⁹⁶ John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 7

clergyman. As such he is an icon and embodiment. In his ministry he becomes a harmony that exists only on the basis of the function of the others.⁹⁷ He speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ (St. Paul's phrase). It is exactly in the eucharistic assembly that the Church is realizing itself as the Body of Christ. The members of the Church are becoming the members of the Body of Christ continuously. The ordained minister acts as an icon of the Church commissioned by the Church. This is the only distinction that separates him from those who seal his action with their "Amen".⁹⁸ In the congregation the priest sees his priestly function and ministry as his vocation. In his calling, the bishop will always be supportive of priests, deacons, and laity, and will communicate with them in his wisdom and fatherly love: "...lay down his life" (Jn. 10:11, 15).⁹⁹ The communication/conciliarity between bishop and laity is a constant process that is embraced by spiritual hesychia, humility, love and freedom. It is a constant struggle that is embraced by metanoia.¹⁰⁰ The awareness of necessary presence of the laity in the eucharistic assembly and the recognition of the position of bishop in the sacramental life of the Church is a dynamic movement of spiritual struggle that never ends.¹⁰¹ An appropriate placement of those ministries in the eucharistic body and profound understanding of their position and function safeguards the ecclesiastical balance so badly needed in our Orthodox Church. We need each other in order for Jesus Christ to be a transforming presence in His Church, to be a new "way of being".¹⁰² The very sensitive ecclesiastical balance, that defines the relationship in the Church, is fundamental for us to act as the Body of Christ. The ecclesiastical balance necessitates not power, egoism, and privilege, but personal humility, respect and recognition on part of the entire Body of Christ. It is crucial to understand the balance between one and many: the eucharistic assembly cannot exist without bishop/presbyter, but at the same time the same bishop/presbyter should be a part of the community, never excluded or above.¹⁰³ Ministerial balance necessitates the presence of a bishop/presbyter who acts on behalf of an eucharistic community, although never separated or negated by the community. He acts on behalf of the community to make the community a Body of Christ that authenticates him as a presiding minister only because the community empowers him to act. It is an eucharistic balance of ministry that presupposes the presence of one on behalf of all, as only all give ascent to the sound of one. At this point, a balance confirms an eucharistic arrangement of presidency, that qualifies us to ascend towards the Divine. This Eucharistic balance between one and many eliminates any ideological or stereotypical segregation or distinction. The balance presupposes for all the members of the eucharistic community to become the same Body of Christ. This is not man's ability to function, but God's descent to the created. Although we have diversified charisma (gifts) in this arrangement, the difference is not exclusion, but a unifying block that recognizes the uniqueness and necessity of each other. Eucharist has to be understood as an event that brings dispersed people together in order to become the one Body of Christ.¹⁰⁴ In the eucharistic setting all the ministries are mutually transforming. They are never self-absorbed or exclusive. We need each other in order to be co-responsible and co-accountable for each other (Rom. 12:5). In other words, we are a communion, sisterhood and brotherhood (koinonia).¹⁰⁵ and in that communion we are responsible to each other.¹⁰⁶ It is

⁹⁷ John D. Zizioulas, Episkope and Episkopos in the Early Church. A Brief Survey of the Evidence, in: Episkope and Episkopate in Ecumenical Perspective, Faith and Order Paper 102, p. 33.

⁹⁸ John D. Zizioulas, *The Early Christian Community*, op. cit., p. 30.

⁹⁹ Bishop Maximos (Aghiorgoussis) of Pittsburgh, *The Parish Presbyter and His Bishop: A Review of the Pastoral Roles, Relationship and Authority*, op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Metropolitan John (Zizioulas), of Pergamon, *Communion and Otherness*, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁰¹ John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit..

¹⁰² John D. Zizioulas, *The Early Christian Community*, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁰³ John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit., p. 10

¹⁰⁴ John D. Zizioulas, *The Early Christian Community*, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ A very definitive outline of the Orthodox perspective of the term "koinonia" is given by John Zizioulas in: Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, *The Church as Communion*, op. cit.; John D. Zizioulas, *The Early Christian Community*, op. cit., p. 30; John Zizioulas, *The local Church in a Eucharistic perspective-an Orthodox contribution*, op. cit., p. 50.

in the communion that we look for the highest authority in the Church.¹⁰⁷ Koinonia is a responsibility of life and joy as well as it is a transition from dissolution and dissatisfaction into a dynamic process of seeing each other as a potential icon of God. We need a spiritual uplifting of all the people of God in order to act and transmit the message of God to the world. In the eucharistic context, we need to retrieve the genuine love in order to perfect each other. Because God is love and everything in the Body of Christ exists because of God's love, the discussed ecclesiastical balance will prevail, as this is not our but God's will.

CONCLUSION

In the contemporary Western world, where there is much sensitivity to the aspect of power, it is essential to affirm the proper balance in the Orthodox Church between all the levels of the eucharistic assembly. This is not a new way of looking at the governance of the Orthodox Church, but an affirmation of its fundamental existence since Pentecost. The original idea of conciliarity was never lost in the liturgical consciousness and spectrum of life of the worshiping body. We still profess the same ecclesiological foundation of St. Paul and St. Ignatius of Antioch regardless the change of time or conditions of life. We are professing this ecclesiastical truth, as the stability of the Church is never preconditioned by human endeavour. The eucharistic-conciliar leadership in the Orthodox Church constantly leads us towards its final fulfilment that is never obstructed or changed. Recent events in the life of the Orthodox Church in the world bring us to the point to authenticate again what was lost in the external life of the governance of the Orthodox Church. We have to be perfectly clear that this authentication of ecclesiastical balance in the eucharistic community is not a new development or change of the ecclesial governance itself. Bringing back the essential elements of ecclesiastical life of the Body of Christ is a challenging process that requires us to rethink our approach to the leadership in the Church. With the complexity of contemporary life, we need to re-evaluate ourselves with humility on all levels of Church governance. This process is continually found in the celebration of the Eucharist as the destination point of our life. It is exactly here that we find the assurance of the presence of God that preconditions peace, stability, and sensitive balance. It is necessary to question and challenge ourselves in front of the entire spectrum of the Church life. When this comes to the point of responsibility and accountability in front of the entire Local Church, Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority. The presence of God in our midst becomes our foundation and assurance of our equality and responsibility for each other. Living the ecclesiastical balance of the Local Church gives us assurance that the voice of every member counts. Even the voice of the most obscure personality in the Church will have his/her role to play. It is only on the basis of personal humility that the sensitive balance in the ministry of the Orthodox Church will be achieved regardless the role or the age of the members of a particular Local Church. The ecclesiastical power will cease to exist in order to give its place to brotherly love. At this point, we will be fully aware of the heavenly origin of the Church that all of us love so dearly.

¹⁰⁶ Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, *"Not so Among You". How Christian is Our Understanding of Church Authority?*, op. cit..

¹⁰⁷ Op. cit..