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**MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF THE  
MYSTERY OF THE HOLY TRINITY**

**SUMMARY**

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## **CHAPTER I – THE ESSENCE AND LIFE OF THE CHURCH IN AND THROUGH THE HOLY TRINITY.**

All the dogmas about the Holy Trinity and the Holy Church are presented and explained in this chapter. Both in its intra-trinitarian existence (ad intra), and in its outer manifestations (ad extra), or within the Divine economy, the Holy Trinity works together in a complete harmony, guided by the same principle which is perichoretic love sau în actul economiei divine, Sfânta Treime lucrează împreună într-o desăvârșită armonie, (John 10, 30, 38 ). The Orthodox ecclesiology is trinitarian.

Life of the Church is the communion with the life of the Holy Trinity. The mysterious essence of the Church is based on the eternal Trinitarian grounds, in the mystery of the communion of the Divine Trinitarian Persons, in the sense that the Divine Trinitarian relationships represent the supreme model of the Christian community in Church. The life of the Holy Trinity is poured down in the life of the Church. The Divine persons of the Holy Trinity share their love in eternity, completely and mutually and spread it in the community life of the people.

The life of the Church in and through the Holy Trinity is revealed in the words of the of our Redeemer Jesus Christ who prays to his Father: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17, 21 ). Considering the image of the essential unity of the Trinitarian Persons, between God and the believers there is a community in spirit, in charisma, different from the unity of the Divine Persons. In the Trinitarian unity, the believers are raised by the Son and through the Son the Trinitarian unity is lowered down among the believers (I John 1, 1-3 ; 5, 20 ).

The relationship of the Holy Trinity is reflected in the relationship between the Holy Trinity and its creation: “My Father worked hitherto, and I work (John 5, 17). The Church is the Father’s house: “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14, 2). Thus, the Church is the house that was built by the Father, strengthened by the Son and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The House of the Father is thus the place of adoption: ”Avva, Father” (Romans 8, 15). God was in Christ” (II Corinthians 5, 19) when the Saviour is with Himself, and through the Holy Spirit the Church followers are adopted by the same Father (Galatians 4, 5-7), have been “sealed” (Ephesians 1, 13-14; 4, 30) as retainers of the afterlife. In the essence and life of the Church based

on the image of the Holy Trinity, we live and consider God as Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, we live in God as Trinity of Persons in communion.

We also emphasise the teaching of the embodiment of Christ as a plan prepared by the Holy Trinity out of its love for the people and with the purpose of their redemption. Christ the Saviour incarnated out of His love for the people (John 3, 16) și ne-a adunat în and gathered us in Him (Ephesians 1, 10; Colossians 1, 16-20).

After the man had fallen into temptation, God-the Father did not leave him perish, but He sent His own son to become human (John 3, 16-17), so that the man led a veritable and true life in wealth (John 10, 10). The incarnation, in this context, is meant to incorporate the man in the eternal Divine hypostasis and to make him God through His sacrifice and resurrection.

Thus, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ has a universal value by itself, uniting the heavenly world with the earthly world. The Son of God, the only and the eternal Son of the Father, was sent by the Father to free mankind from sin and from death. Through His incarnation, the Father of the Son becomes the Father of the community and the children of God (the people) enter a Trinitarian life and in a Trinitarian relationship with the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit. The theology and iconomy (οικονομία) are linked to the Holy Trinity, which includes mankind in His divine Plan; in order to restore it, redeem it from sin and from death, by the incarnation of the Word of God. This mystery has always been known by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit before times.

## **CHAPTER II – THE CHURCH IN THE REDEMPTIVE PLAN OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY.**

“Christ’s mystery” (Ephesians 3, 4; Colossians 4, 3) reveals its meaningful richness not only throughout the history, but also within the plan to redeem the world, cosmologically and anthropologically. History has always been a Messianic and eschatologic aim, and the means to reach this aim are periodically sent by God, He who takes care of His people. The crisis moments of the history are permanently accompanied by God’s care and intervention, by providential people, culminating in sending His only Son in the world (Hebrews 1, 1-3). This age marks the caring intervention of God in the worldly life. Adam’s fall into sin and then each sin particularly is a form of slavery and an exile of man, and the amendment or purification through sacrifice is the liberation from this slavery until the moment our Saviour, with impressive power,

set the man free and took them out of the dark into the light of the divine blaze. In this economy, God emphasises both the vertical line of His meeting with the man, and the horizontal one of an economy that is divinely organised in time and history.

Saint Apostle Paul refers to this economy as the “the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God” (Ephesians 3, 9) or “the mystery of God’s will” (Colossians 2, 2), since only God could fulfil it. From the words of Saint Apostle Paul, Christ’s mystery is closely linked to the human-divine being of our Saviour and comprises in its dimensions the eternal plan of the Holy Trinity which accomplishes the universal economy to save the mankind. In order to accomplish this mysteriour plan, only the Son becomes flesh, not the other hypostases of the Holy Trinity. The divine plan is focused and materialised in the discovery of the God-human Person.

Christ’s mystery is realised by the identification of the Trinitarian hypostasis of the First-Born of the Father and the First-Born of the Virgin Mary. Becoming flesh, He acquires a double essence and characteristics and divine and human actions, being the most powerful bond between God and the humanity. In this hypostasis unity of the two beings, Christ’s person reveals and manifests Himself as the Son of God, which has freely assumed and acknowledged His entire human being, as unique God-Man, the mediator between God and His people (I Timothy 2, 5; Hebrews 8, 1-6 ; 9, 15-24 ; 12, 24 ). Therefore, Christ’s mystery is a complete and universal mystery, which includes at the same time God’s mystery and man’s mystery (Colossians 2, 9 ). The soul and subject of this mystery, which is revealed in the discovery, as Apostle Paul states (Ephesians 3, 3-4 ) is the Son of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 12, 1; Ephesians 3, 9; Colossians 1, 27; 4, 3) as the Father’s holy mystery before time, referring to the Church.

Thus, through the Son of God who became flesh our nature became divine and we became aware of numerous works of God. Through sacrifice and Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ has raised mankind from earth to heaven, settling it in a permanent communion in love with itself and with the entire creation. Saint Apostle Paul shows that, once the world was created, it is not left by itself, but it is looked after by God. God’s Son gives unity and order to the universe and His sacrifice on the cross redeems and “makes peace through the blood on His cross between all things in heaven and all things on earth” ( Colossians 1, 20; Ephesians 1, 10; Romans 5, 11; II Corinthians 5, 18 ), more specifically makes peace between the humankind and

God. Moreover, it was only within the Church that they became acquainted to the mystery of the divine economy, when they saw its action in time, and were gathered and put together in Christ's name, which is the "Head" (Ephesians 4, 15). The incarnation of God's Son made the people receive "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" (John 1, 14).

Saint Apostle Paul, referring to this divine economy, shows that God's coming among us and the fact that He became flesh and assumed the human nature is an unequalled kenosis, or the His emptiness of glory that He had before incarnation (John 17, 5). So the descent of the rich One, of the One who became poor for us, is an imperative condition of our divine becoming. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Corinthians 8, 9). This decision is the first and the last of the eternal will of God regarding the man and the world.

Considering those mentioned above, the kenosis means that the Son of God chose to become flesh, thus becoming humble and insignificant. The kenosis, as an act of freely obedience to His Father, is the new flesh of the embodied God. Kenosis or the renunciation of glory of the Son of God, during the act of incarnation, may also be called the renunciation of power and glorification, in order to become a subject according to the human nature.

Therefore, we understand that the glory He put aside when He became flesh is the divine image (Philippians 2, 6). Although we discuss kenosis, we need to emphasise that the emptying of glory by the Son of God does not refer to the newly assumption of the human nature during the incarnation act, but to the Son of God Himself. Thus, kenosis is regarded as a renunciation" or "emptying" of the eternal glory of He who chose to become like us, with the our human limits. The word of God, becoming flesh, adapted Himself, so to the limits of our human nature and preserved at the same time the sublimity of the divine dignity that belongs to Him as well as, in its essence, to the Father. That is why, God's kingdom is a reality that comprises the world from the past, now and forever, and our Lord Jesus Christ is and will be the emperor of the afterward time and of the divine glory, as Saint Apostle Paul puts it: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" ( Hebrews 13,8 ).

Moreover, we studied and explained the teaching of the Holy Scripture referring to the establishment of the Church, to the characteristics and features of the Church and to Christ's ministration in Church. The Church is not only the body of Christ, but also it represents the plenitude of the divine life spread in the world by the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father ( John 15,

26) by Jesus Christ, and through which Christ is present and is working in the huminity of His body, the Church. Christ delivers us because He dwells among us through the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Holy Spirit is the one that gives existence to the Church, representing the beginning of the incarnation of Chirch in all the people and thus the beginning of the Church. The descent of the Holy Spirit is thus an act of Passover from the redeeming work of Jesus Christ in His personal humanity to the extension of this work in people.

Although Pentecost is closely bound to Christ, resurrected and placed in His own Glory to the rightside of His Father. The persons of the Holy Trinity are not alone, but give account of one another. Through the Holy Spirit descents in our hearts Jesus Christ Himself, and this is possible since His body is filled with Holy Spirit. Our Lord says to the Saint Apostles: And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry you in the city, until you will be endued with power from on high'' (Luke 24, 49). Jesus gives and sends the Spirit of the Church at Pentecost, but that which makes Jesus present in the life of the Church is the Holy Spirit. Saint Apostle Paul states that:''No man can say: that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit'' (I Corinthians 12, 3).

The most important attribute of the Church is its unity, based on the unity of the Holy Trinity (John 17, 11; 20-23).

The second attribute of the Church is its holiness. This originates in its purpose. It is holy because its Head is holy. The holiness of the Church is the holiness of Christ Himself. The holiness of the Church is both divine, objective, and human, thus subjective, that is why it is also called divine-human. The Church is holy due to the truth it holds (John 14, 6 ), which was consigned to it by Christ and was sanctified through the Apostles to the Church ( John 17, 17 ). Our Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed his blood on the cross in order to cleanse and sanctify the Church (Ephesians 5, 25-27).

The third attribute of the Church is its sobornicity. The fundament, the background of sobornicity is the life, the perichoretic love of the Holy Trinity and its foundation is the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in His mysterious body (John 17, 11, 20-26; Ephesians 4, 4-6).

The fourth attribute of the Church is the apostolicity. Just as the Lord is sent by the Father (John 20, 21) so does He send His disciples (John 20, 21-23 ). Moreover, Jesus Christ promises to the Apstles that the Holy Spirit will fill them with power (Acts1, 8). The apostolicity

of the Church means the identity of the work and ministration of the Church with the work and ministration of the Apostles. Therefore, the Church is built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2, 20). The Apostles are the Christ’s ministers, and stewards of the mysteries of God (I Corinthians 4, 1 ).

The ministration offered to the man, to the society and to the world by the Church, originates in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Mathew 20, 26, 28). The entire worldly life of Jesus Christ is based on sacrifice and service. His sacrifice on the cross is part of His ministration. During the Holy Liturgy, Jesus Christ represents the most important model of love and piety that sacrifices Himself for the sinners and for the forgiveness and redemption of those who nailed Him to the cross (Luke, 23, 34).

The Christian ministration has a human dimension, because in Jesus Christ dwells God “among the people” (John 1, 14). The Christian ministration implies that loving the people and being at their service you fulfil the will of God and His command: ” That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one to another” (John 13, 34-35). The service of the people and for God are mutually supportive. Thus, God calls us to be collaborators and to look after us and our fellow creatures. All the effort in our mutual ministration is our collaboration with God (I Corinthians 3, 9). And we are part of fulfilling the word of God. The Son of God becomes flesh to fulfill the will of God, but he also delivers the people and redeems them: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4, 34). Jesus Christ told the Apostles: “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9, 35). And He also said: “For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you ”(John 13, 15 The Saint Apostles responded to His call to minister the people ( The Acts of the Apostles 1, 8; Romans 16, 25; I Corinthians 1, 21; II Corinthians 4, 5; I John 1, 1-3; I Peter 4, 11 ) and embarks themselves to this service, feeling, willing and thinking through Christ: We have the mind of Christ” ( I Corinthians 2, 16 ). It results that the Word of God, in any time and in any place is linked to the mission of the Church, to its faithful and hardworking servants, to all the Christians, because all of them originate in Christ and all have to admit Him in their life: ”Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10, 32).

### **CHAPTER III – JESUS CHRIST’S WORK THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH**

This chapter deals with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures regarding the Sacraments, as the work of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in the Church. The Church is the teandric organism in which the believers live the sacred communion with God, the source of love (I John 4, 8). The Holy Spirit is the divine person through which Jesus Christ spreads His divine grace in the Church. The Holy Spirit comes within us through Christ, who says: “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16, 14 ). Hence, Saint Apostle Paul says: “Quench not the Spirit” (I Thessalonians 5, 19 ).

The unique work of the Holy Spirit is to present Christ as Lord ( I Corinthians 12, 3 ), in an existential way directly related to the nature of the believer. The descent of the Holy Spirit within us is done in the Church. We cannot receive the Holy Spirit without being members of Christ’s Body and we cannot call Christ Lord, namely to acknowledge His divinity, except through the Holy Spirit.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in Church and in the community of the believers is tied to the moment of the descent of the Holy Spirit over the Saint Apostles, but it is prolonged and extended in the Sacraments and in the Church service. In Jesus Christ there is the foundation of the Sacraments of the Church. The essential aspect in the Seven Sacraments of the Church is the co-penetration of the divine and of the humankind. The institution and performance of the Sacraments are rooted in the unity between the Logos and the human body. Only if the Logos has become flesh, Jesus Christ transformed His Body gradually, through Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascent to heaven. Christ’s work in the Sacraments is considered to be related to the fact that He instituted them. But He instituted them in order to practise them for the first time, remaining their invisible performer and the support of the Church. He baptised Himself (Mathew 3, 13-17) and that is why He ordered that all people should be baptised (Matthew 28, 19; Mark 16, 16; John 3, 5), declaring that He himself would be present in the practice of these sacraments (Mathew 28, 20 ). He Himself received the Holy Spirit, as human, after the Baptism, and then all of us are to receive It in the Anointing Sacrament (Mark 6, 13; Jacob 5, 14). He forgave the sins and continues to forgive them through the priests, empowering the Apostles through the Holy Spirit, as part of His permanent work in performing these sacraments (John 20, 22-23). He lays the basis for the Eucharist through His sacrifice, His death on the Cross, His Resurrection and

through the first Eucharist, commanding the Apostles and to their followers to perform it in His memory (Luke 22, 19-20). He blessed the wedding (John 2, 1-11) and cured those who were in sickness. Based on all these, the fundament of the Mysteries and of the sacraments is the incarnation of the Word and the His redemptive actions.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself and entered the Holy of Holies in heaven, remaining there for ever and ever, making us part of His glory (Hebrews 1, 3; 10, 12). We receive Christ's permanent state of sacrifice in the Sacred Mysteries, in the sacraments. So this state is the heavenly foundation of all the sacred mysteries. The Sacraments are holy acts instituted by the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, through which in a visible form the invisible God's grace is partaken with the people.

Thus, the Sacraments, as extensions of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, extend divinity, because they originate in Christ's body, full of grace and divine light, united with the divinity in eternity and raised on the rightside of the Father. The arguments in favour of the divinity and humanity of Christ are in His deeds and His teaching: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me" (John 10, 25). Orthodoxy is the salvation in Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever (Hebrews 13, 8).

#### **CHAPTER IV – THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH AND ITS WORK**

In this chapter, we present biblical and patristic arguments on which the divine cult is based. The redemptive work of Our Lord Jesus Christ is lived in the Holy Liturgy as if it were performed in the middle of the Church. Thus, the entire divine cult with the real presence of Jesus Christ becomes a microcosmos (Galatani 4, 4-7). The entire divine cult is the ecclesial celebration of the Holy Trinity. The ecclesial cult is also Trinitarian in its contents and its dynamics. The essence of the liturgical act cannot be determined without reference to the Trinitarian mystery, in whose communion we are introduced. The Church is full of the Holy Trinity. The entire Christian cult is an ecclesial and personal celebration of the Father, through Christ in the Holy Spirit. In addition to this, the Christian cult expresses the gift of consciousness and of the new life that comes from the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Our Saviour "who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8, 1) is nailed to the cross for His Church.

Our participation at the eternal presence of the redemptive work of Our Lord Jesus Christ is done through the Sacraments and especially in the Holy Eucharist, through which we receive Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, the Orthodox cult is an epiclesis, a calling of the Holy Spirit. The Sacraments are occasions for the renewal and descent of the Holy Spirit. The epiclesis is of divine origin: “And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14, 16) says Jesus Christ to His Apostles. Thus, the Church through epiclesis prefigures the Pentecost, brings heaven on earth.

In Orthodoxy, the entire cult is epiclesis. The Christian cult is also pneumatologic. The Church calls it at the beginning of each service to penetrate the being of every Christian and to purify it from sin and to sanctify it with its divine spirit, as expressed in the prayer Heavenly God. So, receiving the Holy Spirit is a community ecclesial act. The Christ blessing takes place in a Trinitarian invocation, a characteristic feature for the Trinitarian conscience of the Church (II Corinthians 13, 13). Thus, the ecclesial cult manifests itself in an obviously mutual manner to serve the incarnated Word and the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is the principle of unity and ecclesial life. In “demonstration of the Spirit and of the power” (I Corinthians 2, 4) lies, therefore, the work of God’s Word in the world, of the spoken word as Saint Apostle Peter says, “with meekness, with fear and in good faith” (I Peter 3, 15). The Holy Altar (Table) is the sign of the divine presence. Our Lord Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Priest and Archbishop, who offers to His Father permanently for our salvation (Hebrews 8, 1-2).

The cult expresses in all its liturgical forms the divine grace of Jesus Christ, His victory and His presence in Church, the eschatologic Christ, as a prefiguration of the perfected cult in heaven. The Holy Liturgy is the earthly translation of the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by the Great Archbishop surrounded by angels. In essence, the entire cult performed by the Apostles in the ecclesial community is presented in the Acts of the Apostles: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2, 42 ). The Church has always confessed in Holy Spirit the eschatologic presence of God’s kingdom in the world, teaching people to participate at this eternal life through the Sacraments and personal prayers. Under these circumstances, the Christian, with the help of the divine spirit, has the possibility to enter the communion with God and in the supreme praying state to participate at the divine light in God’s kingdom.

In fact, through the Sacraments and continuous praying, as the sole possibilities to keep Our Lord Jesus Christ in our souls and to live the transformation of the soul, man achieves communion with God in light. Especially prayer places the man in a mystical and holy communion with God and makes him live the sweetness of the eternal life. But first, the man has to assemble his thoughts and to put aside the worldly preoccupation and worries in order to join God and to become a purified mind, concentrated on the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, through the divine spirit the man has the possibility to experience on earth an eschatologic reality which incorporates his spirit and body in the divine communion of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit, both in the Sacraments and in the prayers comes to our help and fulfills our desires, as Saint Apostle Paul teaches us: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8, 26). In this manner, the world can participate at the life of God’s kingdom, through a sacred life and the mystical experience of the Holy Spirit. That is why our Lord Jesus tells us that: ”The kingdom of God is within you” ( Luke 17, 21 ).

In conclusion, the divine iconomy, common for the three persons of the Holy Trinity is called redemption, salvation, revision and divinity and has to be fulfilled for each and every person that is part of the Church. It would be perfected in the eternal life when, after everything has been united with Christ, God will be all in all (I Corinthians 15, 28). Jesus Christ cares for and loves all the people so that all people would call on Him for “this is the eternal life: they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17, 3). Therefore, humankind is restored in its head, but it can also be restored in its members, for “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Ephesians 5, 30).