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Thesis

***The prerogatives of the Bishop of Rome
from the Orthodox point of view***

SUMMARY

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Summary

The thesis entitled *The prerogatives of the Bishop of Rome, from the Orthodox point of view*, is based on the *care* of the Orthodox Church that the *life* and *words* of the Son of God incarnated, taught to the Holy Apostles, should be unchanged and bear the same gracious salvation to every member of the Church, until the end of the ages. *Life with God* and the *knowledge* of the mystery of the Church have been witnessed, over the centuries, many times after the *thought* of men, and not in the *spirit* of the Fathers of the Church, who had „the mind of Christ” (I Corinthians II, 16). But the removal from the *unifying* and *deifying thinking* of God, reflected in the *united thought* of the Fathers, can only lead to *worldly thoughts* that only divide, without the light of knowledge of the true *meaning* of man. In this sense, those in which the Spirit of God does not *think*, but the *spirit of the world*, can no longer understand *his personal vocation*, nor the *vocation* of the Church, as the place of realization of human *deification*. That is why the mystery of the Church can not be spoken with a thought that is not enlightened by the *grace of the Holy Spirit*, which must precede any *effort human*.

* In the first christian centuries, about the Church has been written less. The Son of God was not preoccupied with the *institutional* aspect of the Church, but rather with the perfect *human being*, the man called to become *himself* a Church: „The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke XVII, 21). The Fathers too have written little about the Church, which indicates that the Church has always been perceived as a *living* and *personal* reality, based on God's *knowledge* and His *dwelling* in man, through the Holy Mysteries. The Church Fathers *humble silence* is observed in case of each dogma, *synodal dogma definition* being merely the result of exceptional and urgent situations. The Church is *seen* and *unseen*, *earthly* and *heavenly*, *temporal* and *eternal*, *human* and *divine*, alike. Although there is a certain weight in *defining the Church*¹, however, the *necessity of formulating the ecclesiology* is imperative today, when in the interconfessional theological dialogue, the teaching on the Church, especially on the *hierarchy*, occupies a central place.

* The *first chapter* presents the Orthodox ecclesiology, according to which the Church is lived as the *Mysterious Body of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit* or as an *environment* where, through *communion*, *knowledge* and *love*, the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity lives together with all the believers, after the Savior's promise: „If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and *We will come to him*, and *We will dwell in him*” (John XIV, 23). Although the Church is fully founded with the *Descent of the Holy Spirit*, in it the Son of God *is* and *remains* eternally in the position of *Head* and *Fundamental Rock*, as the Apostle Paul teaches: „Christ is the head of the Church, His body, whose Savior He is” (Ephesians V, 23). Therefore, the saving act of the *Descent of the Holy Spirit* should not be understood as a *substitution* of the saving work of the Son, with that of the Holy Spirit, as if the Holy Spirit would work *separately* or *in the place of the Son*. Divine persons can not be *separated* in the salvation work of mankind. Referring to the mistake of *separating* the two Divine Persons, Father Dumitru Stăniloae says that the image of Christ in heaven and the Holy Spirit in the Church it is false, because such an image does not take seriously *the unity* of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, leading in Catholicism to the setting up of a *Vicarius Christi*². Lord Jesus Christ can not *be separated* from or *standing far* from His Church. Otherwise we cannot explain His

¹ † Mitrop. Dr. Irineu Popa, *Biserica în actualitate sau actualitatea Bisericii*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2018, p. 11, n. 16

² Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, II, Editura IBMBOR, București, 1978, p. 197

promise: „I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew XXVIII, 20), nor the ecclesiological image of *the vine and the branches*: „I am the *vine*, ye are the *branches*. Whoever remains in Me and I in him, he brings much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing” (John XV, 4). By the *unique* and *unreplaceable* position which He has in the Church, His very *person* is the main factor that unites all believers in Himself, as a *model* and a *source of power*.

The Son of God became the *Head* of the whole mankind, especially through His Incarnation and His dwelling in the faithful. Therefore, no other member in the Church itself can be *mentioned*, nor can be *called* by other *the head* of the whole Church. Only through a misunderstanding of the Church, as having a *seen* part (independent) and another part, *unseen* (isolated in heaven), can lead to the talking about a *visible head* of the *seen* Church, how did the Roman-Catholic doctrine, where the Pope was named the *Head entire Church (Caput Ecclesiae)*. The impossibility of having a *visible head* of the Church, is also shown by that no man can communicate to all members of the Church *fully* and *inwardly* the light of God's knowledge and the eternal life, nor can achieve *the perfect unity* between them, as Father Staniloae learns.

Jesus Christ is not only the *Head* of the whole Church, but also the *foundation* of the whole Church, as a *fundamental foundation* once and for all, according to His word: „On this rock will I build *My Church* and the gates of hell will not overcome it” (Matthew XVI, 18) where, according to universal patristic exegesis of the first millennium christian, *the rock* on which the Church is built is the *Person* of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the *Faith* in His divinity³. Regarding the establishment of the Church in *the person* of the Apostle Peter, the *fundamental dogma* of the Roman-Catholic Church, it is rejected by the majority of the Fathers of East and West, and by the very choice of *Twelve* Apostles, but not *one* alone.

* The second chapter presents the *motives* and *nature* of the Church's of Rome *preeminence*, as they were understood by the Churches everywhere in the first christian millennium. Four *foundations* were identified, the first and the most important one being a *political aspect*: the quality of Rome's *first capital* of the Roman Empire, as is shown in *Canon 28* of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), which says that „the oldest seat of Rome, because that city was reigning, Parents gave it the *presvia* of preeminence”⁴. This is the first theme to be added to a series of *Church issues*, such as the quality of being *the only Church founded by the Apostles in the West*, its association with the *preaching of Peter and Paul*, *the size of the territory* subject to Rome, seen as the center of the entire West, and *its old age*, as witness by Saint Irenaeus of Lyon (202)⁵. But other Churches also had the honor of being *founded by the Apostles*, such as the Church of Jerusalem - *the Apostles seat* and *the first and the oldest Church* - or Churches of Antioch, Corint, Ephesus, Philippi and Thessalonic. If *the primacy* of the Church of Rome would have been based mainly on the *preaching of the Apostle Peter* and on *its old age*, it must be said that the Church of Antioch was founded by the Apostle Peter, well ahead of that in Rome. There was only one uique aspect: the Church of Rome was *the only Church founded by the Apostles* in the territory of the Western Roman Empire⁶. Unlike the great Eastern Churches, the way in which the *apostolicity* of the Church in Rome was perceived in the West is impressive, but somehow justified, *apostolicity* being a *common* thing for an Eastern Heart, so that it can have the importance it had in the West.

An important aspect is that in the first centuries, historians and Fathers of the Church never portrayed the Apostle Peter as the *only founder* of the Church in Rome. Its foundation by the

³ Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei, *Despre Sfânta Treime*, IV, trad. pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, în PSB 40, p. 143

⁴ *Pidalion. Cârma Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Editura Credința Strămoșească, Iași, 2007, p. 222

⁵ Sancti Irenaei, *Contra omnes haereses libri quinque*, III, III, 2-3, Lipsiae, 1853, pp. 121-123

⁶ Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the roman primacy*, Editura Fordham University, New York, 1966, p. 43

Apostles Peter and Paul persisted for a long time in the West, that its two *founders* Apostles even being likened to the foundation of Rome⁷. Until the beginning of the second millennium, the roman tradition continues to refer to the two Apostles, Peter and Paul, who jointly founded the *authority of Rome*. This double *apostolic foundation* favored for a long time the maintenance of the ecclesiology of the early Church, as a *synodical* community, and not a *monarchical* one.

Then, the Church of Rome being far away of the imperial court influences and of the outbreaks of heresies, and Parents noticed her *right faith*. It will guard the right faith until late, and at the same time it will protect the confessors persecuted by kings or heretics in the East.

But all these *reasons* only show a *priority of honor*, as shown by the historical facts and the decisions of the *ecumenical synods*. Not even one synod has established the *roman primacy* in its roman-catholic form, alone a *primacy* recognized to the Church of Rome is one of the *honorary nature* and to the roman bishop one of *primus inter pares*. Although we know the *hierarchical order* of the five patriarchal Churches of the time, concerning the *precedence* of the roman bishop, it is hard to say precisely what this *preference* actually meant, what it was and how it was exercised⁸, and a certain difference in how to assess this *tradition* will be that which will later lead to the rift between the East and the West. In this respect, the roman-catholic apologist Pierre Batiffol (+1929) expresses disappointment that „no Holy Father and no ecumenical council has declared the primacy of the bishop of Rome”⁹. Also, cardinal Yves Congar (+1995) recognizes that the East „does not offer any theological testimony to the universal primacy of divine law of the bishop of Rome”¹⁰.

The first *canon* that speaks of the *primacy* (πρεσβεία) of the Church of Rome among the Western Churches is *Canon 6* of the First Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea (325), which is motivated by an extraordinary situation in Egypt. By this *canon*, on the basis of an already existing *practice*, the Churches of Alexandria, Rome and Antioch were recognized as the *primacy* of the Churches around them, without establishing a *priority* order among the three. On the *prerogative* of the Church of Rome, also speaks *Canon 3* of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381), which does not establish its *primacy*, but merely observes that it was already recognized: „The bishop of Constantinople has the *honory pronouncements* (τα πρεσβεία της τιμης), after the bishop of Rome, because she is *the new Rome*”¹¹. By this canon, the Fathers indicate the *principle* that Church organization has accommodated according to the *political-administrative* structure of the Roman Empire. But no *canonical* measure regulates the mutual relations between the great Churches. Only by *Canon 28* of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) will the canonical and definitive strengthening of the *preeminence* of the Church in Rome had been expressed, clearly indicating the principal motive of its *primacy*, that it *resided* in the imperial capital: „Because the seat of the *old Rome* was where the emperor was reigning, the Fathers gave it the authority of preeminence”¹². *Canon 28* have been reaffirmed ecumenically through *Canon 36* of *Trulan-Quinisext* Synod of Constantinople (691-692), who calls on the first two places the Churches of the *old* and the *new imperial capital*.

On *Church discipline*, when *within* local Churches or *between two* of them, there have been conflicts that could not be solved locally, sometimes they *appealed* to the Church of

⁷ Klaus Schatz, *La primauté du Pape. Son histoire des origines à nos jours*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 1992, p. 56

⁸ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Biserica, Trupul lui Hristos*, II, trad. M. Bojin, Editura Sophia, București, 2013, p. 28

⁹ Pierre Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri. Etudes d'histoire ancienne de l'Eglise*, în *Unam Sanctam*, 8, Paris, 1938, p. 75

¹⁰ Yves Congar, *After nine hundred years. The background of the Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches*, trad. Paul Mailleux, Fordham University, New York, 1959, pp. 61-62

¹¹ *Pidalion*, op. cit., p. 176

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 222

Rome. But the canones issued at the *local* synod in Sardica (343) - can. 3, 4 and 7 - were setting in Rome not so much a *court of appeal*, but a *review court*¹³. Therefore, Batiffol believes that through the three *canons* of Sardica, the bishop of Rome was *deprived of the right to judge in the appeal*, which is why they would even constitute a *compromise* made to the Orient¹⁴. The *appeals* at Rome, which were quite rare anyway¹⁵, it is noted that they were addressed to *the Church* in Rome, and not to *the bishop* of Rome, that is they required a *synodal* solution, not a *papal* one. Moreover, identical *appeals* were addressed by the unjust to other great Churches of the time.

The Church in Rome was recognized as a *preeminent* one among the other Churches, not because its *bishop* was the descendant of the Apostle Peter or *the heir* of his ministry, but *only* on the basis of the *canonical consensus*, determined by aspects of *political nature* and always conditioned by the *orthodoxy of its faith*. Therefore, we can say that *the precedence* of the Church of Roma and *the primacy* of the roman bishop can be recognized even today, but with three conditions: *the return to the right faith*, confessed by the Orthodox Church today, *the respecting of the the canons* issued by the *ecumenical councils* and *the manifestation of its primacy in the synodality* that characterized the Church in the first christian millennium.

* The third chapter presents *the evolution of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, according to Roman Catholic teachings*. Especially after the fourth century, after the movement of the imperial capital, Rome experienced a great *vacuum of power*, and some of the bishops of Rome even provided some defense tasks against the barbarians. Gradually, the roman christians saw in the bishop of Rome, *the religious and political center of the area*. This increased after the Holy emperor Constantine the Great has finally moved the empire's capital to the East. But, some tendencies of *Church supremacy* existed in Rome long before the imperial residence was moved in Byzantium, their base being primarily *the imperial and centralizing mentality of the romans*, and especially the inhabitants of Rome. The *material status* of the roman bishops should also not be overlooked. After christianizing the first roman emperor, christians began to benefit from favorable laws and support from the imperial court. The Churches could receive buildings and land, and the western land acquired an overwhelming wealth, and more than all, the bishop of Rome, who will be remarkable by material and spiritual investments, such as acts of charity and the formation of missionaries for the entire West.

Since the fourth century, the bishops of Rome have begun to present the *primacy* of the Roman Church *as divine right*, and not of *Church law*. The roman-catholic doctrine of *the papal primacy* - established directly by God, by the words: „You are Peter and on this stone I will build My Church” (Matthew XVI, 18), addressed to the Apostle Peter by the Savior Jesus Christ - had passed through several *stages*. First, the roman bishops declared themselves the *sole successors* of the Apostle Peter. It is very important that the *petrine tradition* flourished in Rome just as Rufin of Aquila (+410) translated into *latin* writings from the *Pseudo-Clementine literature*, including *Clement's Epistle to Jacob*, in which Pseudo-Clement says that the Apostle Peter made him the *heir* of his authority¹⁶. This is the oldest *apocryphal* source linking Apostle Peter and the *ordination* of a roman bishop. Immediately after *Pseudo-Clementine* literature came to Rome, there will be a focus on the *connection* between the Apostle Peter and the roman bishops. In the fifth century, the bishop of Rome will say that he is *Vicarius Petri*, *inheriting* from it a *priority* to be *legally* defined, taking form of *universal jurisdiction*, through a foundation of *law divine*.

¹³ Klaus Schatz, *La primauté du Pape. Son histoire des origines à nos jours*, op. cit., p. 49

¹⁴ Pierre Batiffol, *La paix constantinienne et la catholicisme*, Editura Gabalda, Paris, 1914, pp. 447-448

¹⁵ Francis Dvornik, *Byzantium and the roman primacy*, op. cit., p. 108

¹⁶ *Epistola Clement ad Jacobum*, II, PG II, col. 35

Amplification of the *roman primacy*, which takes place mostly after the Great Schism (1054), when the *synodal authority* in West drops dramatically, will transform old *Petri Vicarius* in *Vicarius Christi*, a title rejected even by roman-catholic theologians¹⁷, which appeared for the first time in an *apocryphal* writing of the eighth century: *Donatio Constantini*, who distorted the history of the Church and constituted the fake who enjoyed the greatest success in all history¹⁸. The way some of the bishops of Rome saw themselves in the eleventh century is reflected in the *Dictatus Papae* of pope Gregory VII Hildebrand (1073-1085) from 1075, which synthesizes *the supreme papal claims*¹⁹. Gradually, the pope will stay higher than the ecumenical councils, will claim an universal jurisdiction (*plenitudo potestatis*) and will define itself as a *principle of unity* for the whole Church. In other words, after the *role* of Apostle Peter in the early Church has been changed to suite to the new *trends* in Rome, „the followers of Peter” claimed for themselves the *place* Jesus Christ has in His Church.

* The fourth chapter presents *the orthodox teaching about the primacy of the Apostle Peter*. In terms of *motives* and *nature*, *the primacy* of Apostle Peter among the other Apostles, I noticed the phrase „*first Simon, who is called Peter*” (Matthew X, 2) and *the change of his name*: „*Cephas, which means Peter*” (John I, 42), which cannot have any dogmatic implications. For his *old age* and *temperament*, the Apostle Peter often appears as the *spokesman* for the twelve Apostles, and when he takes part in any special events, such as the *Transfiguration of the Lord* or the resurrection of Jair's daughter, he is part of a restricted group, always with the sons of Zevedeu, the Apostles John and Jacob. Regarding the role of the Apostle Peter in the primary Church and how Apostle Paul reported to the Apostles and, in particular, to the Apostle Peter, we can categorically affirm the *equality* of all the Holy Apostles.

How is seen the *Apostles college* and *their service* reflects inherent in the way in which a Church understands its *structure* and the *service of the hierarchy*. Therefore, a Church in which the Apostles are seen *equal*, will be governed *synodical*, while a Church where one of the Apostles is considered *superior* to all the rest automatically will have a *monarchical* structure, as appropriate to *the papacy*, which places the Apostle Peter above all other Apostles. But the whole Gospel and the works of the Apostles totally reject the idea of a *princeps Apostolorum*, the unfortunate *title* attributed by roman-catholics to Apostle Peter. The very call of the *twelve* disciples to the *apostolate*, by the Savior, stands against the existence of an *Apostle-monarch*. If the Lord wanted a *monarchical* or *centralized* Church leadership in an *universal Apostle* or in a *supreme bishop*, it would have been at least useless that the Savior Jesus Christ take around Him twelve people, not only at the beginning of His preaching, but even till His sacrifice on the Cross and after. Moreover, the *twelve* Apostles, chosen after the *number* of the *twelve* nations of Israel, will carry out their mission not only in this world, but also after the end of it, when „they will sit on *twelve* thrones judging the *twelve* tribes of Israel” (Matthew XIX, 28).

Sacred Scripture and the Church Fathers taught that *the twelve* received from the Savior Jesus Christ an *universal* and *unique* ministry, owned *in common* and *each one* equally, as those who were *ordained* and *sent* to preach the Gospel *directly* by Savior to *all* nations, a *ministry* that could not be left as an *inheritance* to the bishops, who were entrusted only with the *teaching of faith* and *sanctifying grace*, and not with the *universal jurisdiction*. Then, from the *equality* of the Apostles, we have the *equality* of bishops. When there appeared certain *relations* between bishops (archbishop, metropolitan, patriarch), they were *administrative* and *honorary* aspects, that did not involved a difference in *power* or *grace* among bishops. Although there is much to

¹⁷ Yves Congar, *Jean Puyo Interroge le Pere Congar*, Editura Centurion, Paris, 1975, p. 210

¹⁸ Michael Whelton, *Papi și patriarhi*, trad. Virgil Baidoc, Editura Theosis, Oradea, 2010, p. 184

¹⁹ *Das Register Gregors VII*, vol. I, cartea II, 55, ed. Erich Caspar, Berlin, 1920, pp. 202-208

be said about *honorary prerogatives*, yet Scripture shows that there was not even a *honorary primate* among the Apostles, and even less a *primacy* of another *nature*, because it cannot be attributed to any *act* of the Savior or to any *apostolic tradition* the establishment of *honorary prerogatives* or of any *primacy of leadership* or *jurisdiction* between the Holy Apostles²⁰.

The place of each bishop in an *unique* and *indivisible bishopric* prevents any *isolation* of a bishop from all others, by claiming himself as an *unique successor* of the Apostles or as having a *superior power*. Each bishop is the successor of *all* the Apostles, for *each* Apostle is located in *communion* with *all* the other Apostles²¹. And afterwards, *each bishop is ordained by several bishops, on behalf of the entire episcopate*, receiving *the same grace and the same doctrine* that all the Apostles and all the bishops had. It does not exist a *linear apostolic succession*, as starting from a *single* Apostol - *petrine succession, johannine succession etc* - and continuing in a *single Church* or in a *single bishop*. A different *succession* than the *apostolic succession* could not fit into the thinking of the Church, as evidenced by the disorder that took place in Corinth and the intervention of the Apostle Paul: „I was told that there are *quarrels* ... that each one of you says, «I am of Paul, and I am of Apollo, and I am of Chefa, and I am of Christ!» *Did Christ divide? Have Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” (I Corinthians I, 10-13). There can't be an inheritance of a *single* Apostol, because *the apostleship grace* was *unique* and *unrepeatable*, it cannot be handed down to bishops. Also, there cannot be a *bishop* to inherit *anymore a lot* grace than all other bishops. By their very *choice* and *manner* of their ordination, all the bishops are *equal* in power. Therefore, any doctrine of a *supreme bishop*, sitting *above* or *out of the entire episcopate*, is alien to the thinking and to the life of the Church.

* In the fifth chapter, which presents the orthodox teaching on the *primacy* of the bishop of Rome, it is observed that in the first three centuries there was not any *universal* and *juridical primacy* of it, as shown clearly by the tensions that we find in the early Church, including: the controversy over the *date* of the Easter celebration, the question of the receiving in the Church of *the apostats (lapsis)*, the controversy over the *validity* of Baptism practiced by heretics and the practice of *appeals*. During this period, the supremacy tendencies of some roman bishops, as Victor I and Stephen I, have had not positive echoes in other Churches, in the East and in the West, but were rejected categorically, sometimes with harsh words (cf. the Epistle of Saint Firmilian of Capadocian Caesarea to Saint Cyprian of Carthage). The absence of a *roman primacy of universal jurisdiction* is also understood from the *patristic* testimonies of the first christian millennium: saints Ciprian of Carthage (+258), Basil the Great (+379), John Chrysostom (+407), pope Gregory I the Great (+604) and Maxim the Confessor (+662). Both Fathers and local or ecumenical councils shows that through their *consacration* and based on their *three-fold ministry*, all bishops are *equal* and cannot exist an *universal bishop*.

According to the last Vatican ecclesiology, which is „the victory of the papal system over conciliarism”²², the *catholic* or *universal Church* has no more an *unifying center* in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is everywhere the Same and identifies Himself with each local Church, making even each believer His faithful Church, but the Apostle Peter, who *lives* and *rules* the whole Church, in his successors in Rome. From the *communion* of bishops and Church *synodality* they reached the absolute *papal centralism* and the concentrating of all the power of *leadership* and the *teaching* of the Church in *the person* of the pope²³. But the Church is and

²⁰ Arhid. Ioan Floca, „Întâietate, întâietate jurisdicțională și primat de jurisdicție universală”, în *Studii Teologice*, nr. 5-6, 1989, p. 6

²¹ Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, II, op. cit., p. 238

²² Yves Congar, *Eglise et papauté. Regards historiques*, Editura Cerf, Paris, 2002, p. 59

²³ Ibidem, pp. 307, 309

remains *one* and *catholic*, *in* and *through* Jesus Christ. Therefore, the unique and human-divine *head* of the Church cannot have a *Vicarius*, the *unity* of the Church does not require a *central unifying seen*, and the Church remain *catholic* (*sobornost*) without the *universal jurisdiction* of a single bishop.

After centuries of *liturgical uncommunion* and even *non-communication* between the Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church created an abyss difficult to pass. Thus, in the current theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church, the *papal primacy* occupies a central place. The actual dialogue began only with the establishment of *The Joint Mixed Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church* in 1979, reached today at its fourteenth official meeting. In the dialogue, the orthodox part have constantly emphasized the role of the *ecumenical synods*, as expressions of authority in the Church, especially *the way* in which they were received by the Church, just *after* their recognition by all the local Churches.

From the point of view of the roman-catholic theology, *papal primacy* can be exercised in *two* different ways. There are scholars who wish to maintain *the primacy of the pope* in the form defined in the First Vatican Council (1879-1870), that is in the form of *absolute*, which was reached after many heavy fights, meaning that *the unity with the pope* is located beyond *the unity with the Lord Jesus Christ*, the latter being insufficient for a *local* Church to be part of the *universal* Church. This conception is supported by numerous papal papers, published from the Middle Ages to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). For example, in his letter encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (25 May 1995), pope John Paul II says that „all the Churches in full and visible communion are in communion with Peter and, *by consequence*, are united in Christ; with the power and authority without which such an office would be illusory, the bishop of Rome *must* ensure the communion of all Churches; for this reason, he is the *first minister of unity*”²⁴. In this first conception, which is the *official* one, there is an opening to the Eastern Churches, but without giving up the *papal primacy* formed in the second millennium.

The second way of practicing the *papal primacy*, although roman-catholic theologians insist on the unchangeability of its *essence*, still inclines towards a more biblical manifestation, towards the organization of the primary Church and the history of the ecumenical synods. On the recognition of several *patriarchs* within the Roman-Catholic Church, according to the model of *synodality* in the first millennium, which still characterizes the Orthodox Church today, it might have been best to speak at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), if it were continued in the initial direction of its convocation. Between the nature of the absolute power of the *papal primacy*, imposed by roman-catholic theology, and the *primacy of honor*, which was recognized to the bishop of Rome in the first millennium, will remain an unbridgeable gap, until this *office* will not be reviewed *theologically*, in an honest re-reading of the New Testament, the relationship between Apostle Peter and the other Apostles, and in the framework of the patristic and synodical Tradition of the first millennium. Then, a correct *exegesis* of *petrine* texts can only be achieved by the recovery of the universal patristic Tradition, in which the *roman exegesis* does not find sufficient grounds. Thus, starting from the Apostles group, since *the role* of the Apostle Peter among the other Apostles never involved a *primacy of power*, but fell into *full equality*, the theological dialogue between the Roman-Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church can be reached to a better ecclesiological synthesis between *papal primacy* and *synodality*²⁵.

²⁴ „Litterae encyclicae «Ut unum sint» de oecumenico officio”, 94, în *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 87, 1995, p. 977

²⁵ Joseph Famerée, „Pour une reforme oecumenique de papauté”, în *Annali di Scienze Religiose*, 6, 2001, p. 405

Therefore, the re-evaluation of the *apostolic* period remains the main source of the definition of ecclesiology, because „the whole spiritual life is founded and is built according to the model of the apostolic primary Church”²⁶. The primary period is all the more important in understanding the *nature* and the *function* of the *hierarchy* in the Church, since the priesthood of the Apostolic Age enjoys *service* rather than *mastery*²⁷. Further, the local and ecumenical councils, the canons and the entire patristic literature make up a *common ground*, from which *common conclusions* can and must be drawn. An example of a *common conclusion* is observed by cardinal Yves Congar (+1995), who acknowledges that the East does not offer *any theological testimony about the universal primacy of divine right of Rome*, while also underlining the different way in which the Church's of Rome *preeminence* was perceived in the East, where the roman bishops „did not regulate the life of the Churches”²⁸. Only through such recognitions of the *historical* realities of the first millennium can one come to a *common* view of the same ecclesiological notions.

At the last plenary meeting of the *Joint Mixed Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church*, held in Chieti (Italy, 15-21 september 2016), one of the most important documents issued by this commission was approved: *Synodality and primacy in the first millennium: towards a common understanding, serving the unity of the Church*. The document is very important because it reflects the true history: the *synodality*, which characterized the Church in the first millennium, and the *primacy of Rome*, which was one of *honor*. There is, therefore, an approximation to the common understanding of the *roman primacy*. The most important point in this document is the *agreement* that over the first millennium, *the seat of Rome occupied the first place, exercising a primate of honor (presbeia tes times)*²⁹ and not an *universal jurisdiction*, as is stated in most official papal papers. This position *primus inter pares* can be recovered by the bishop of Rome only by recovering the patriarchal organization, which will bring the pope back to the list - *primus inter pares* - which is now omitted throughout the Eastern world³⁰. The document then declares that the supreme form of exercising the *primacy* is the *order* in the *liturgical* sanctuary³¹. In conclusion, the document emphasizes the importance of preserving the *right apostolic faith* as a factor of *unity* between the Churches and the *apostolic succession*, while *synodality* and *primacy* were structures which were mutually exclusive and could not be excluded.

Although the document in Chieti does not express the official position of the Roman-Catholic Church, its importance is considerable, by recognizing those common aspects of the first millennium as regards the *roman primacy* in *synodality*, through an honest interpretation of historical facts, and the common heritage of *theological* principles, *canonical* provisions and *liturgical* practices in the first millennium constitutes a necessary reference point and a strong source of inspiration³² to continue the ecumenical dialogue.

The *apostolic ministry* and the *hierarchy* of the early Church must occupy a central place in the theological dialogue in order to be understood in its true *nature* and *function*, meaning in the

²⁶ † Acad. Dr. Mitrop. Irineu Popa, *Experiențe mistice la Părinții orientali*, II, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 2012, p. 521

²⁷ † Acad. Dr. Irineu Popa, „Responsabilitatea episcopului față de harul arhieriei sale și față de hirotoniții săi”, în *Mitropolia Olteniei*, nr. 5-8, 2011, p. 8

²⁸ Yves Congar, *After nine hundred years*, op. cit., pp. 61-62

²⁹ *Il documento di Chieti: Sinodalità e primato*, 15, în *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8 ottobre 2016, p. 6, col. 3

³⁰ Mitrop. Antonie Plămădeală, „Dialogul teologic dintre ortodocși și romano-catolici și perspectivele lui”, în *Telegraful Român*, nr. 11-12, 1986, p. 2

³¹ *Il documento di Chieti: Sinodalità e primato*, 17, op. cit., p. 6, col. 3

³² *Ibidem*, 21, p. 6, col. 4

organic unity *in and with the Church*, and *not over it*³³. Thus, *the petrine ministry* can only be affirmed by *the function of love*, which can only be expressed through the *ministry of the service* of the brethren, being thus the only form of leadership of the flock of Christ; obviously, this type of *ministry* - declared and willed by Christ Himself - can not claim any form of *juridical primacy*, and even more so, of a *monarchical-papalist* nature³⁴. But, in order to fit into this *primacy of the ministry*, which has no *institutional* or *juridical* content, it is necessary, before any other *formal* aspect, for a *personal* assumption of the service of the Church through *humility* and *love* without which there can be no genuine form of *ministry*, of *learning* or of *leadership*.

* The sixth chapter presents the *papal infallibility*, after first examining the *infallibility of the Church*, in the form of the *truth* that it formulated, confessed it and will confess it to the end of the ages. It is our fundamental belief that *the entire Church*, that „Body of Christ”, consists of head and limbs, can not err in faith, and not *a member* of the Church, separated from all others. Thus, *the Gospel of truth* or *the infallibility* is always guaranteed to the Church in the *communion of all* who make up the Church for the fact that *in all* and *in each* and *every* part, the Lord Jesus Christ is permanently present in His work of Savior, Teacher and Leader, with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, every member of the Church can get complicated in that spiritual experience, as to say, with the Apostle Paul: „No longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians II, 20); or: „We have the mind of Christ” (I Corinthians II, 16). In this sense, we can say that every member of the Church is *infallible* inasmuch as he becomes a *living member* of the *Body of Christ* and identifies himself with the faith of the whole Church, keeping true communion with all the other members of the Church. In the opposite direction, no member of the Church can be *infallible* by itself, not even the hierarchy itself, as long as it does not acquire a spiritual life and does not keep communion with all the other members, with the faithful people, in an organic unit, which form *The Mysterious Body* of Jesus Christ. This comes from the fact that one *alone* can not know *love*, but remains closed in limiting prophecies, in an isolation that can not escape the temptation of *selfishness*. Fathers teach that „the individualization of man in *egoism* casts away the gift of God from the soul, and therefore, he who thinks that he might save *himself*, would lose *himself alone*”³⁵. In the case of the hierarchy, the receiving of the *ordination* do not guarantee the righteous faith, how is indicated by the patriarchs and popes who have oscillated in faith or even fell into heresy, while all those who overcame heresies, even at the cost of life, clergy or lay people, were *holy* and *truthful people*, for „the *grace of faith* is inseparable from the *holiness of life*”³⁶. Therefore, the *whole Church*, by the *charisma of the truth* it possesses, remains *infallible* until the end of the ages, according to the promise of the Savior, which says that „the gates of hell will not overcome it” (Matthew XVI, 18), and this is simply because in the Church, the Son of God incarnate, and the Holy Spirit, together with the Father, remain eternal *workers* (John V, 17).

On *papal infallibility*, it can be seen a very late evolution in the roman-catholic theology. Only in 1075, *Dictatus Papae* of pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) declare the *infallibility* of the Church of Rome, which he said „has never erred, and never would ever, as Scripture testifies”³⁷, but as we see, „it refers to the *roman Tradition* as such, and not exclusively to the *person of the pope*, which means that it does not exclude the possibility that some popes to reach heretics”³⁸.

³³ † Acad. Dr. Irineu Popa, *Responsabilitatea episcopului față de harul arhieriei sale...*, op. cit., p. 9

³⁴ Pr. Nicolae Dură, „Episcopul Romei si statutul sau canonic”, în *Ortodoxia*, 1-3, 2007, p. 10

³⁵ † Acad. Dr. Mitrop. Irineu Popa, *Experiențe mistice la Părinții orientali*, II, op. cit., p. 30

³⁶ Alexei Homiakov, *Biserica este Una*, trad. Elena Darevici, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2017, p. 22

³⁷ *Dictatus Papae*, în *Das Register Gregors VII*, vol. I, cartea II, 55, ed. Erich Caspar, Berlin, 1920, pp. 202-208

³⁸ Klaus Schatz, *La primauté du Pape*, op. cit., p. 181

The pope's infallibility was decreed as a *dogma* only on 18 July 1870, during the First Vatican Council (1869-1870), when pope Pius IX approved the Dogmatic constitution on the Church *Pastor Aeternus*. Regarding the *infallible magisterium of the roman pontiff*, it is stated that when the pope addresses the entire Church in terms of *faith* and *morals*, he does so with the *infallibility* the Savior has given to his Church, and the pope's decisions are „unchangeable by itselfes and not by the consent of the Church”³⁹. *Papal infallibility* was founded on the the *petrine primacy of divine right*, transposed into a *roman jurisdiction primacy* over the universal Church. In other words, the one who is *supreme in the jurisdictional authority* must also be *supreme in the teaching* or in the *doctrinal authority*. But the fact that the decision was approved by the council „not without debate and also after a strong resistance from a large number of prelates”⁴⁰ shows that the new *dogma* was motivated by *political* issues - the loss of Papal States and the imminent formation of the Italian national state - and not by an internal *conviction* of the whole Church.

After the defining of the new *dogma*, bishop Josef Fessler of St. Polten (Austria), the secretary of the Vatican Council, wrote a short treaty on *papal infallibility*, in which he set out *two* conditions for a papal decision to be held to be *infallible*: (1) the decision be linked to *faith* or *morality*, and (2) the pope to express his *intention* to declare that doctrine as the truth revealed by God, necessary for salvation, to be believed by the whole Church⁴¹. By the *intention* thesis can be justified any papal falling from faith, arguing that when falling into heresy, the pope *has not proposed* and *did not intend* to be *infallible*. As a result of the pope's *intention* in the exercise of his *infallible* office, one must also note the *condition* imposed on the pope who pronounces a teaching of faith, namely to speak *as a pope*, and not *as a private theologian*, that is to exercise his *supreme authority* over all christians. This division is however characterized by a juridical spirit, impossible in terms of the Church, because there can be no *two ways* of learning the faith, one *official*, which requires the whole Church, and one *particular*, in which the pope could afford to make mistakes and even learn heresies. By implicating the *intention* in the prerogative of *papal infallibility*, *papal* theologians solved all *the doctrinal drops* of the popes: *in the moments of fall, the popes were not infallible because they did not intended to be so*⁴². The case of pope Honoriu is also *solved* by the doctrine of *intention*. But it is not possible for a theologian to possess the *truth of faith*, but to still learn heresies, which are justified by the *intention* not to address to the entire Church. Origen was condemned for some *theological opinions* by an ecumenical synod (553).

The French theologian Larchet believes that the *testimony of history* on the mistakes of the roman bishops and some *heretical popes* constitute „the main counterpart”⁴³ on *papal infallibility*. This is why, not incidentally, the prerogative of *papal infallibility* was complicated by the *the pope's intention* to teach the universal Church, deciding that the pope is *infallible only* when he *intends* and when he teaches *ex cathedra*.

We note that the *unique* and *irreplaceable* role that the *consensus of the whole Church* - understood in the unity of the hierarchy and the people - has in recognizing and accepting an *infallible* truth of faith, remains fundamental. Thus, the only way to check whether a *papal document* has or does not have an *infallible* character was and remained *the consensus* of the universal Church, expressed in time and space and not a *legal form* or the presence or absence of *the intention of the pope*.

³⁹ Henry Denzinger, *The sources of Catholic dogma*, 1837-1840, Editura Loreto, New Hampshire, 1955, p. 457

⁴⁰ Klaus Schatz, *La primauté du Pape*, op. cit., p. 230

⁴¹ Joseph Fessler, *The true and the false infallibility of the popes*, New York, 1875, p. 65

⁴² Henry Newman, *Letter to Duke of Norfolk*, New York, 1875, p. 82

⁴³ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Biserica, Trupul lui Hristos*, II, op. cit., p. 86

Although „the term *infallibility* is not mentioned in the texts of ecumenical *canonical* legislation of the first millennium”⁴⁴, it can not be denied that the bishops of Rome, both in the first centuries and the end of the first millennium, have been recognized by the whole Church as *moral authority* in the formulation of the doctrines of faith, especially within the ecumenical synods, where their epistles were received with great enthusiasm, expressing the consensus of the Western episcopate. However, there is no testimony in the first millennium, that the popes possessed or were recognized the prerogative of personal *infallibility* in the matter of faith. Therefore, even roman-catholic apologists say that before 1870, the popes did not know that they were *infallible* with the same certainty of the faith that the popes had later, but were *infallible* in fact. Moreover, Joseph Fenton (+1969), professor of dogmatic theology at the Catholic University of Washington, says: „It is obvious, of course, that *before 1870 a man could not be guilty of heresy if he denied or questioned the doctrine of papal infallibility*”. Given the *eternal* character of the dogmas, we cannot understand the *non-condemnation* as heretics of all those who before 1870 denied or doubted this *late-dogma* attributed to the pope, rather than *denying* her character of *dogma*. With the formulation of each dogma, all heretics who, prior to the definition in question, denied that dogma, were anathematized. The *monothelite* patriarchs and pope Honoriu were anathematized by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 680-681) *after their death*, with the formulation of dogma about the *two works and wills* in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the assertion of *papal infallibility*, apologists have turned the following text: „Simon, Simon... *I have prayed for thee to thy faith fail not*. And you, turning back, *strengthen your brethren*” (Luke XXII, 31-32), which will constitute the only scriptural foundation on which the *dogma of infallibility* is seized, although Sacred Scripture does not teach the *infallibility* of a single Apostle. Regarding the text cited, roman-catholic historian Brian Tierney (born 1922) says: „There are few patristic comments on this text, but no Holy Father interpreted it by saying that Peter's descendants were *infallible*”. Also, testimonies during *the patristic period* do not exist because the bulk of judgments, appeals to Rome, he admits to his authority, praise impartiality and rectitude of his statements about the danger of disobedience his words have nothing to do with the doctrine of *infallibility*. Saint Irenaeus of Lyon (+202), Saint Ciprian of Carthage (+258), Blessed Augustine (+430) and Vincent de Lerin (+445), but neither the other Fathers in the first christian millennium know this new doctrine. For example, referring to the *patristic period*, cardinal Bellarmine recalls only the following two aspects: first, that the *patriarchal sees* of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch were sometimes chaired by *heretical bishops*, while the Church in Rome was protected from this calamity, where he concludes the *pope's infallibility*; the second, that the popes condemned the heresies *on their own*, and the ecumenical councils only have *approved* their decision, where concludes that the East really recognized *infallibility* of the roman bishops. But Bellarmine confuses *infallibility* (dogmatic aspect) with *authority* (canonical aspect), understood even in its papal sense, placing the *pope's infallibility* on the skeleton of *the papal primacy*, seeing the recognition of *papal infallibility* in any *authoritarian* act of the roman bishops.

However, the tensions that marked the First Vatican Council resulted in a formulation *moderate* formula of the *papal infallibility*. Regarding the *infallibility* of the Church, Father Dumitru Stăniloae notice that it has not been totally canceled by the *infallibility of the magisterium*, but they had to be recognized again showing *active*; and still is recognized the ability of the Church to *keep and bear witness* unmistakably defined by the bishops. It was

⁴⁴ Pr. Nicolae Dură, *Episcopul Romei si statutul sau canonic*, op. cit., p 13

therefore necessary to resume the theme of the *infallibility of the Church*, since neither the relationship between the *infallibility of the Church* and that of the pope was quite clear, nor the one between the *infallibility of the bishops* and that of the pope. It was not explained *how* the bishops help define the truth of faith and *how* christians could *believe* and *confess* infallible faith.

Regarding the *infallibility of the pope*, it was redefined in the article that exposes *bishops' duty to learn*⁴⁵. The formula defined more clearly, it said that „a bishop do not enjoy the prerogative of *infallibility*”, but each bishop „states the *infallible* teaching of Christ” *only* when „teach in communion with the roman pontiff”, and the reason why believers must obey the teachings received from their bishops is „entirely distinct from the genuine pontifical magisterium of the roman pontiff”. Since the pope is called „the shepherd and supreme teacher of all believers” and „supreme teacher of the universal Church”, his *definitions* appear infallible „*by their nature and not by virtue of the consent of the Church*”, and they „do not need any other approval and admit no appeal to another court”. But even now, the *way* in which the pope „resides in a special way the harp of the *infallibility of the Church* itself” is not clear. After all, the *dogma* is considering only the *report* of the pope and the college of bishops, which remains entirely *below* and *subject* to the pope.

The Second Vatican Council has developed the doctrine of the pope's absolute power and „*papal infallibility* has been led to the last development possible”⁴⁶. In the second session of the council (September 29 - December 4, 1963), the majority of the episcopate renewed vigorously to acknowledge the *infallibility* of the episcopate, *independently* of the pope's one. In order to earn a place *next to* the pope, bishops have call most from their *ordination* which were employed in the episcopacy and who wanted to be recognized as a right to teach *infallibly* and *independent* of the pope. Compared to the doctrine imposed upon the First Vatican Council, supported by the *minority* conservative at Vatican II, that the pope has *the jurisdiction* to a power greater than the power received from bishops *by ordained* them, and that only by *decision* of pope an ordained bishop is inserted into *episcopal college* and participation in *responsibility* for leadership and learning the whole Church, now the fight will be taken to say that *ordinance* (grace) is superior to any *juridical powers*. Most bishops wanted to assert that the highest source of *power* in the Church is the *ordination* of the bishops and all bishops, including the pope, receive their power *in solidarity (in solidum)* from a single *mystery*, the pope has no more *power* than other bishops. He can teach and lead only *in solidarity* with all the bishops, who do not participate in a papal decision in this leadership and learning of the Church⁴⁷. The power of all bishops is not a *Church law*, but one of *divine right*, it is not subject to the *legal authority* or *jurisdiction* of the pope, but arising directly from the *mystery of ordination*. Gathered in council, the bishops exercise their own power, not by *delegation* from the pope, but the *independent* and *fully* and authority of episcopal college is exercised both *in* council and *outside* of it, not just as a delegation from the pope, but as an effective participation in the leadership of the whole Church.

Most of the council's members were focused on the origin of *divine right* of the episcopal college and on the *authority* of the service, which derives directly from the *ordaining* ceremony, and not from a *delegation* of the pope. These theological positions criticized the definition of an episcopate *juridical* dependent on the pope, and not sacramentally grounded. The bishops still wanted independence from the pope, based on their conscience of the Church's *infallibility*. Therefore, in order to moderate the *juridical* position towards the episcopate, some of the pope's

⁴⁵ „Vaticanum II. Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia”, III, 25, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 57,1, Vatican, 1965, pp.29-30

⁴⁶ Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, „Doctrina catolică a înfașibilității la I-ul și al II-lea Conciliu de la Vatican”, în *Ortodoxia*, nr. 4, 1965, p. 459

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 474

supporters separated the manifestation of the episcopate into an *inner* part, coming from the sacrament, and another one, *external*, its exercise, which the pope's addition allowed.

The dependence of the entire *episcopate* on the pope, as *members* depend on their head, image used often in the acts of the council, lead to the final conclusion: no bishop can be part of the *bishop's college* without the *consent* of the pope, into a *hierarchical communion* of all bishops with the supreme pontiff. In other words, by *ordination*, the bishop receives only a set of *tasks*, but not the necessary *power* to exercise them, the latter being obtainable only by the *communion* of each bishop with the *pope*. The powers received by every bishop, *virtual* or *potential*, through ordination, can become *working* or *updated* effectively only following a *juridical* determination from the pope. Therefore, the final form of the doctrine, which affects both the leadership of the Church and the definition of the doctrine of faith, is profoundly altered by the involvement of a hard-to-understand papal *juridical* act. That is, as is clear from the interpretation of the *formula*, it is not sufficient that (1) a bishop be *ordained* by the bishops of his region and (2.) that he express his *will* to be in *communion* with the pope, to be part of the episcopal college, but it is absolutely necessary for the ordained one to be *called* by the pope and *permanently maintained* in the position he is entrusted with. In the same way, it is not enough for a council to *define* a truth of faith, even expressing *communion* with the pope, for what it has defined to have an *infallible* character, but it is absolutely necessary for the definition to be subsequently *confirmed* by the pope. Therefore neither the *membership* of the bishopric, nor the *doctrinal authority* of a council, can exist in the absence of a *legal act* of the pope, who must *approve* and *confirm* them⁴⁸. Regarding pope's *initiative* and position, one can see that he is not *conditioned* by anything in recognition or denial of the quality of a bishop, to be a *member of the episcopal college*. In this way, it is removed even the last trace of the *conditioning* of the pope. While the power of the pope is *absolute, personal, independent*, expressed through those notions refused by most bishops in the council, the power of the bishops, separated or assembled in the synod, is completely derived from that of the pope, who, although he is not the source of *grace* required for *ordination*, requires a *jurisdiction* that is *somewhat* superior.

Had the bishops received the power of *leading* and *teaching* the Church after the sacrament of their *ordination*, after the Second Vatican Council, they no longer possess after ordination only a *passive* or *latent* state of the two *powers*, understood as *missions* or *tasks*, which then requires a *judicial* delegation from the roman pontiff. We say that it was only after this council that the *papal infallibility* achieved the form that pope Pius IX surely wanted: the *episcopate* is totally *conditioned* by the pope and the *pope* fully *unbundled* by the episcopate. The pope is not *dependent* on anything in the *seen* Church, to which it has been placed in a *superior* and *separate* position, obviously outside any real *communion*, and by its unnatural position he somehow limits even the *direct* and *full* mode of the *power* of the Lord Jesus Christ and the of the Holy Spirit to work in the bishops of His Church. The way in which God shows Himself *worker* in His Church has no place in all believers, even in the communion of all bishops, but *in the person of the pope*, who have to be understood as the only *gate* through which *godly powers of leadership* and *learning* come down throughout the whole Church.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae notes that at the Second Vatican Council, the struggle between *jurisdictional* and *sacramental*, which characterized the Roman-Catholic Church more and more pronounced in the second christian millennium, was gained by the first aspect: „For the time being, victory has been gained by the *jurisdiction*. The *teaching* function is not related to the mysteries, but to the *juridical* power, the *ruling* position. He knows the truth and hands over to

⁴⁸ *Vaticanum II, Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia*, III, 22, op. cit., pp. 25-27

those who have *control*, by serving this privilege of having the truth and learning of others so that he can maintain *his*”⁴⁹. But at the same time, he considers that the *insistence* with which most bishops have defended the *sacramental* source of the episcopate's power may be a step forward in *clarifying* the roman-catholic doctrine on the relationship between *sacramental* and *juridical*, which has yet not been completed.

In the disputes brought about by the Second Vatican Council between *bishops* and *the pope*, both subjects have committed the same mistake, bishops following the pope in a battle situated *above* the Church and even *outside* the Church, inheriting a *law* of the Church, while the whole Church has authority even over the final decisions of the ecumenical councils. The common history of the first christian millennium shows that „the synods, to be received and ratified, must be weighed with the measure of the righteous faith”⁵⁰, which is held by the entire Church, and not confirmed by an episcopal, patriarchal or papal decision. Moreover, the bishops have received their *faith* from the Churches in which they were born and grew up, without being able to identify in this sense a *single center*, not even in their local Church, and even less in Rome or in other side. At the ecumenical councils - those authentic expressions of *synodality* and *unity* of the Church, centered on unity of faith and love, and never on Rome, as witnessed even by western historians -, each bishop expressed his agreement and signed the definition proposed by the synod, *only* because it expresses exactly the faith of the clergy and of the people in the local Church that each bishop was pastoring. Only as the bearers and witnesses of the faith of the local Churches, bishops assembled in the synod can *infallibly* express the teaching received by the whole Church from the Apostles, who have not surrendered a *thesaurus of faith* only to the hierarchy, but to the whole faithful people. Therefore, only such an expression of the role of the whole Church in preserving and learning the faith could have given the bishops, within the Second Vatican Council, a solid *foundation* against the pope's claim.

In their struggle against *papal supremacy*, the bishops completely ignored the fact that they shouldn't wear this fight *apart* from their local Churches, which alone could offset the papal arguments, based on the *petrine primacy* and *infallibility*. The episcopate committed a big mistake, basing its position only on the *christological* aspect of the ordination, and not in the same time on the *ecclesiological* one, as the ordination of a bishop could be committed *outside* the Church. By understanding ordination as a *spring of power*, not in the Church, but *above* it, the bishops, following faithfully to the pope, referred to the Church as to an *area* to be mastered, led and taught, but also in a superior and separate position, overlooking an elementary aspect of the christian life, namely that each bishop, like the pope, inherited *faith* and all *teaching*, not from a single individual source, but from a permanent living in the sacramental and didactic life of the Church, in the most varied forms.

Unlike the old doctrine, which abounds in *legal* terms, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* defines the Church the *Mysterious Body of Christ*, „enlivened by the Holy Spirit, in which the laity have the duty to confess to the world the *truth of faith*”⁵¹. But about the *infallibility* of the Church, understood as a *charism* of all believers together, to which no chapter is devoted, is spoken only in one fragment. Although in the original formula (1870), the *infallibility* of the whole Church was limited to a *passive* form, only in the form of *faith* and *confession*, not of the *teaching* that was reserved for the *magisterium*, however, it was not asserted as deriving from a special function of the bishops, who, in their turn, receive it from a supreme pope. But in the *Lumen Gentium*, the new formula of *papal infallibility* was defined as

⁴⁹ Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Doctrina catolică a infailibilității...*, op. cit., p. 482

⁵⁰ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Biserica, Trupul lui Hristos*, II, op. cit., p. 88

⁵¹ Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Doctrina catolică a infailibilității...*, op. cit., p. 473

the *only* source of *teaching* of all the truths of faith and morals, from which each bishop derives his teaching authority and the power of not mistaking in the preaching of the faith, and - through the bishops - the same power of the pope pass on to every believer. In other words, a bishop or a believer can not be safe of mistake unless he is *in communion* with the roman pontiff, that is, „the *passive infallibility* is relativized”, allowed in the hurried definition of 1870. But, in the final formulation of *Lumen Gentium*, Father Dumitru Stăniloae notes some *flagrant contradictions*⁵². As the text states that *all people* have the prerogative of a *supernatural sense of faith* (*sensu fidei*), by believers can *penetrate deeper* truth faith, Father Stăniloae asks: „If the faithful people may enter by *judgment deeper* in the faith, does it not help by this in understanding it and its future formulations? Is this only a *passive infallibility*?”⁵³. However, the formula gives to the Church only the power to *receive* and to *keep* the instruction given by the *magisterium*, and not the power to contribute actively in the *understanding* and, thus, in the *formulation* of the faith. We see, therefore, that the issue of *papal infallibility* has not yet been solved coherently.

However, the doctrine of *papal infallibility* led Saint John Popovich (+799) to say that „no heresy rose so radically and so completely against the God-Man Christ and His Church, as did the *papacy*, by the dogma of the *infallibility of the pope-man*”, and that „no doubt, this dogma is the *heresy of heresies*”⁵⁴. In his turn, Father Nicolae Dură claims that *papal infallibility* is „scandalous and contrary to both the *biblical* and *patristic* teachings and to the *canonical* legislation and doctrine of the first millennium, the epoch of unity with ecumenical resources, because it is without *biblical*, *patristic* and *canonic* grounds”⁵⁵. Although the expressions are radical, they express the thinking of the Eastern Church, for which the teaching of a *single infallible bishop* is unthinkable, as was for the universal Church of the first millennium, when the *communion of bishops*, that is, the *ecumenical council*, in which the bishops express the faith of all the local Churches they were leading was the ultimate authority in solving the conflicts concerning the definition of the teaching of faith and the fight against heresies. *The Encyclical of the Orthodox Patriarchs* of 1848 defines *how* in which the Orthodox Church preserves the truth of faith, as follows: „In us, neither patriarchs, nor councils, have ever been able to introduce new things, because the defender of religion is the very *body of the Church*, that is, the *people* themselves, it is eternally unchanged and the same as that of its Fathers”⁵⁶. Those who are not in the hierarchy have the *authority* to receive the right faith and to reject any innovation; they *legislate* in matters of faith, but oppose any doctrinal or moral *deviations* without taking the place of bishops: „The bishops remain teachers of the faith, authorized interpreters of the Word and heralds of truth, but *the owner* and *keeper* of this truth is *the people of God* in ensemble, bishops, priests and lay people together”⁵⁷. Bulgakov shows both the fundamental role of the faithful people as the *possessor* and *guardian* of faith, along with the hierarchy, as well as the special role of the bishops, *teachers*, *exeges*, and *propounders* of truth. In keeping the righteous faith, loneliness or isolation, then, are detrimental, as Patriarch Daniel also teaches: „The right faith is not kept in isolation, but in communion of thought, confession, and living with the Church”, that „only the communion of the saints of all times preserves the right salvific and sanctified faith”⁵⁸.

⁵² *Vaticanum II, Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia*, II, 12, op. cit., p. 16

⁵³ Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Doctrina catolică a înfașibilității...*, op. cit., p. 473

⁵⁴ Sf. Iustin Popovici, *Omul și Dumnezeu-Omul*, trad. pr. Ioan Ică, Editura Sophia, București, 2010, p. 213

⁵⁵ Pr. Nicolae Dură, *Episcopul Romei și statutul său canonic*, op. cit., p. 12

⁵⁶ *Enciclica Patriarhilor Ortodocși de la 1848*, 17, trad. Teodor M. Popescu, în *BOR*, nr. 11-12, 1935, p. 676

⁵⁷ Serge Bulgakov, *L'Orthodoxie. Essai sur la doctrine de l'Eglise*, trad. C. Andronikof, Lausanne, 1980, p. 90

⁵⁸ † Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, *Evangelia slavei lui Hristos*, op. cit., p. 74

In conclusion, we can say that *papal infallibility* can not have a *dogmatic* justification, being imposed on the Church on the basis of a *petrine primacy* built in Rome. But the lack of any *dogmatic* foundation should lead to its annulment, as historian Hoffmann says: „The extreme development of papal authority carries in itself the germs of its own destruction, but the fact that this dogmatization was possible and that it continues to be accepted is the sign of a much deeper disease, which should, although still refused, be sought for its causes”⁵⁹. Therefore, it recommends *reevaluating historical facts*, the only way to identify both the *causes* and *remedies* necessary to recover the lost Tradition.

The lack of a *dogmatic* foundation of the *papal infallibility* is explained by Father Dumitru Stăniloae even by the lack of a *special sacrament* to give the pope an *extra power*, unlike all other bishops: „If the teaching and leadership is closely related to the realization of the Mysteries... a bishop can not have in the Church the primacy of jurisdiction and infallibility in the field of teaching, without the support of this primacy in a *special Mystery*, that is, without the right to commit some Mysteries exclusively or without supremacy in the realization of Mysteries. The bishop of Rome, not having the *exclusive* right to commit Mysteries, or not to receive a special grace through a *Mystery special*, can not decide alone or in teaching or leading the Church”⁶⁰. Through a correct understanding of the sacraments, both on ordaining bishops and on grace work in the faithful, the doctrine of the *infallibility* of the pope appears unfounded, since there can be no *weaker* ordination of the bishops and other *special* of the pope, nor a *lesser* one of bishops and a *more authentic* of the pope, nor a *passive* work of the Holy Mysteries in believers from everywhere.

Without denying what has been kept from the apostolic, patristic and canonical Tradition of the universal Church, we see that the dogma of *papal infallibility* will never be testified by the orthodox believers, because it excludes not only the *catholicity* of the Church, that the whole „Body of Christ” is understood to be present and a worker in every member of the Church, but also „the process of accepting the dogmatic decisions promulgated by the ecumenical councils, by the local Churches, which through that *consensus Ecclesiae disperses* enforce obligatory observation law and the application of those decided by these sovereigns of Christian ecumenicity”⁶¹. Therefore, in the theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church, those *sensitive* doctrinal themes must be approached, in order not to waste time in *humanist*, *social* or *political* discussions, for *doctrinal* differences cannot be addressed by acts of *Church diplomacy*.

Receiving any teaching of faith that detracts from the incarnate Son of God implies our breaking from His unique and indivisible Body, in which He alone is the *Head* and the *Temple stone*, and the *Unity*, and above all the *Source of Faith*, the Only One Who can uncover God the Father, according to His word: „No man *knoweth* the Son, neither the Father alone, nor the Father *knoweth* him, but only the Son, and the Son whom I will *reveal to you*” (Matthew XIV, 27). In other words, because „the Son reveals God as his Father, *producing in man the faith in Him*, as the Son especially sent by the Father”⁶², there can be no other *source* or other *producer* of faith than the God-Man, the Savior Jesus Christ.

⁵⁹ Joseph Hoffmann, *Histoire et dogme. La définition de l'infaillibilité pontificale à Vatican I. A propos de l'ouvrage de A.B. Hasler*, în *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Theologiques*, 62, nr. 4, 1978, p. 556

⁶⁰ Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, II, op. cit., p. 247

⁶¹ Pr. Nicolae Dură, *Episcopul Romei și statutul sau canonic*, op. cit., p. 13

⁶² † Mitrop. Dr. Irineu Popa, *Ca toate să fie iarăși reunite în Hristos, cele din ceruri și cele de pe pământ*, Editura Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 2014, p. 275

* The ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church does not support *universal juridical offices*, because the only Priest, Teacher and Shepherd of the *universal Church* is the Son of God incarnated, that „yesterday, today and forever remain the same” (Hebrew XIII, 8). Therefore, in its current conditions, perhaps more than ever, the return to the *apostolic ministry* appears to be fundamental. Thus, „*the petrine ministry* can only be affirmed by the *function of love*, which can only be expressed through the *ministry of the service* of the brethren, being thus the only form of leadership of the flock of Christ; obviously, this type of ministry - declared and willed by Christ Himself - cannot claim any form of *judicial primacy*, and even more so of a *monarchical-papalist nature*”⁶³. But, in order to fit into this *primacy of service, personal* assumption of the service of the Church is necessary, through *humility and love*, without which there can be no genuine form of *ministry*, or of *learning*, or of *leadership*.

The prerogatives of the bishop of Rome must be sought and found, in their authentic form, in historical facts, in the decisions of the ecumenical councils and in the writings of the Fathers of the first christian millennium, in which the faith and the life of the Church appear framed in a saving *synodality*. But to regain his status as *bishop of the Church in Rome*, quite equal to the other bishops, and *patriarch of the West*, totally equal to the other patriarchs, the pope must sacrifice those centuries in which western theology fell prey to reason and political interests. It is useful, in this sense, not only the authentic parts preserved from the apostolic, synodal and patristic Tradition, but also the *words and deeds* to the roman bishops with holy life in the first christian millennium, who did not attempt to overlap with the episcopate or the entire Church, nor deny the superiority of the ecumenical synods, nor intervene in the leadership of other local Churches. But, in this approach, God's intervention, love and humility are absolutely necessary.

Any true understanding of the Church can only be grounded on *how* the Incarnate Son of God has been reported to it. We know that the Savior *prayed* for the Church before His sacrifice, when asked God the Father to guard the Apostles and those who would believe in Him through their word, that is to keep the Church: „Holy Father, keep it in your name, in which you gave it to Me to be one as We are... But not only for them, I pray, but also for those who will believe in Me, through their word *that all be one*, as you, Father, in Me and I in You, so that *these in Us may be one*, that I may believe that You have sent Me” (John XVII, 1-26). Interpreting this *ecclesiological* act, Father Patriarch Daniel says: „Christ shows us that *it is not enough to speak of the unity of the Church, but we must pray for it*; we must pray that we can preserve and confess together the right christian faith, that we can preserve and cultivate together the right christian living, and that we can preserve and show together the holy unity of the Church... Jesus Christ does not speak of the *unity* of the Church in a sermon, but in a state of prayer, knowing how difficult it is that, in a world often inclined to sin, conflict and division, the *unity* or communion of faith and holy life be preserved and promoted”⁶⁴. In other words, the way of *prayer* remains the most secure way to keep an authentic ecclesiology or to recover it. Such prayer we find also in the *Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great*, where the Church prays to God, saying: „Gather the outcasts, those lost return and unite them with Thy holy Catholic and Apostolic Church... Make it stop the division of the Churches... the rebellions of the heresies spoil them with the power of your Holy Spirit”. In conclusion, by anything in this world - and much less by *offices of univiversal jurisdiction* - but only through *the working presence* of the Son of God in humanity and the Holy Spirit, *in and through* which God the heavenly Father

⁶³ Pr. Nicolae Dură, *Episcopul Romei si statutul sau canonic*, op. cit., p. 10

⁶⁴ † Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, *Evangelia slavei lui Hristos*, op. cit., p. 71

manifests the *love* and *care* of God, all the faithful can boldly say without a blame: „*We are all in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit*”⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan*, XI, 11, trad. pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, în PSB 41, Editura IBMBOR, București, 2000, p. 1061