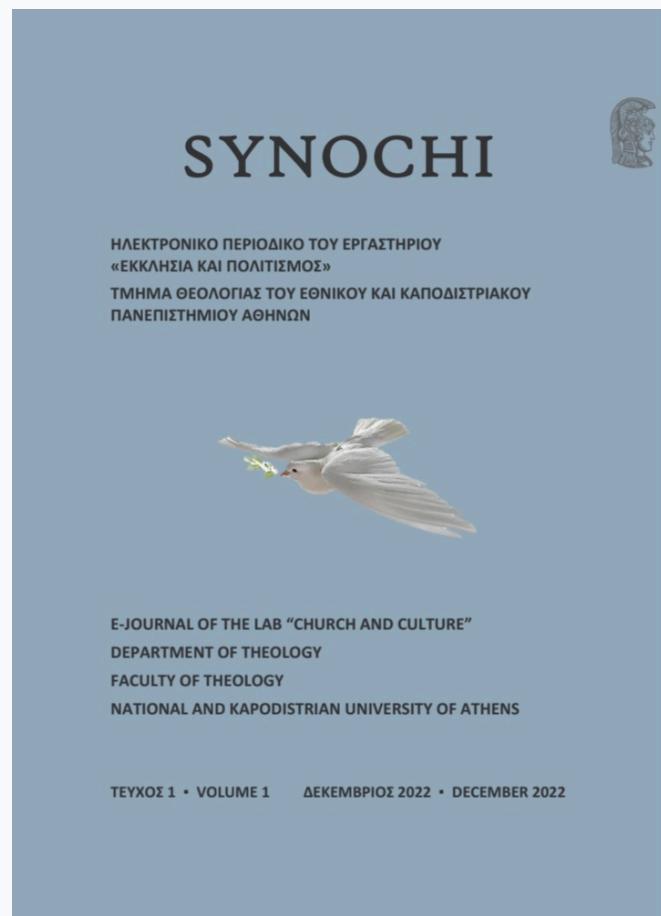


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**Milestones and presuppositions of liturgical renewal within the Orthodox Church**

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# SYNOCHI



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## Milestones and presuppositions of liturgical renewal within the Orthodox Church

Apostolou Fotiou<sup>1</sup>

The issue of liturgical rebirth and renewal is complex and multidimensional, as our worship is complex and multidimensional<sup>2</sup>. By the term liturgical renewal we mean mainly the promotion and restoration of the liturgical life of our Church in its original and authentic form<sup>3</sup>. Undoubtedly, the center of this is the culmination of the sacrament of Holy Communion, and around this center there are many elements that make up the mosaic of the divine orthodox Worship. The multifaceted and multidimensional of the Christian Worship was formed over the centuries with constant renewal changes<sup>4</sup>, with these being either morphological renovations of pre-existing liturgical forms, or additions of new worship elements, or replacement of old worship elements with newer ones. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the main feature of the Orthodox liturgical tradition, especially in times of liturgical flourishing, is its constant renewal and not its statics.

Following the renewal and modernization proposals of the Second Vatican Council, there were many objections regarding the need for liturgical renewal within the Orthodox Church, for fear of introducing foreign elements to the tradition<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church lived for centuries the agony of renewing its worship, long before its problems and the need for renewal became conscious in the West<sup>6</sup>. It is good for understanding this, to

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<sup>2</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, "Tradition and renewal in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church", in Acta of the 2nd Panhellenic liturgical symposium, "Λατρεύσωμεν εύαρέστως τῷ Θεῷ" *the call for liturgical renewal in the Orthodox Church*, Apostoliki Diakonia Publications, Athens 2003.p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Dimitrios, Tzerpos, "The demand for the active participation of the people in the Eucharist", Acta of the 2nd Panhellenic liturgical symposium, "Λατρεύσωμεν εύαρέστως τῷ Θεῷ" *the call for liturgical renewal in the Orthodox Church*, Apostoliki Diakonia Publications, Athens 2003.p. 361.

<sup>4</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above.p. 43.

<sup>5</sup>Ioannis, Foundoulis, *Teletourgika Themata*, Vol. II, Apostolic Diakonia Publications, Athens 2006. p.43.

<sup>6</sup>Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.44.

make a historical retrospective of the efforts of liturgical renewal made in the Orthodox Church.

Known from the historical study is the intervention of the patriarch Arsenios Autorianos (13th century) in the fluid, at that time, acolouthy of the "Euchelaion" (Holy Unction)<sup>7</sup>, by adding new prayers or gluing older ones, forming the current acolouthy of the "Euchelaion"<sup>8</sup>. Similar interventions were made towards the end of the Byzantine period, with series of prayers and acolouthies having been produced by the patriarchs Nilos and Philotheos, Gregorios Palamas and Symeon, archbishops of Thessaloniki and many others. In this context is the reform movement of Symeon of Thessaloniki in the Typikon of Agia Sofia of Thessaloniki with troparia and Canones borrowed from the monastic Typikon. In addition, there was the work "Diataxis" of the patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos and the subtitling of the sacred acolouthies by Symeon of Thessaloniki<sup>9</sup>. Of the same period is the movement of the Kollyvades<sup>10</sup>, which sprang from Mount Athos, with key interventions in worship, which have not yet been evaluated, without these being limited only to the issue of the funeral acolouthy and memorials, from which they jokingly gave their name but in other important matters of worship<sup>11</sup>. Typically, we mention the issues of the Pronomia of Sunday, the non-calling of the knees against it, the frequent Divine Communion, the restoration of the acolouthies to their original natural position, the reconnection of the sacraments with the sacrament of the Eucharistic Synaxis, the enrichment of the Eortologion, the creation of new prayers and more. From them, editions and translations came in the vernacular language and in proper paternalistic bases, editions of works of Fathers and Teachers of the Church, editions of sacred Canons, the ascetic anthologies of Philokalia, the lives of many young saints and much more. All this unquestionably ranks the Kollyvades as the pioneers of liturgical

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<sup>7</sup> Anointing of the Sick.

<sup>8</sup> Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.45.

<sup>9</sup> Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.45.

<sup>10</sup> Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.45.

<sup>11</sup> Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.46.

renewal in the Greek Orthodox world in one of the most difficult periods, such as that of Ottoman rule<sup>12</sup>.

The form of ecclesiastical worship in the Orthodox Church, as we know it today, is the result of a great evolutionary course, which ends near the 15th century, where the period of Ottoman rule begins, where under difficult conditions for the enslaved, we have full dominance of the monastic Typikon versus asmatikon Typikon.

In addition to the significant efforts of liturgical renewal of the past, also nowadays, we have renewal initiatives, which were made in recent years and more formally. As early as the 1800, Constantine Byzantios systematized and codified the liturgical typical provisions, which were preserved in the patriarchal tradition from the late Byzantine period, by setting up a special committee under Patriarch Gregory VI in order to eliminate the errors of the current Typicon. The committee adopted the views of Constantine and issued a new Typikon in 1938. The initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1932 with the establishment of a special committee<sup>13</sup>, which took care of the careful publication of the liturgical books such as the Typikon according to the Order of the Great Church of Christ opened the way for the formal ecclesiastical adoption of a parish Typikon adapted to the needs of the local Churches. The attempt to convene Pan-Orthodox preparatory Conferences for the Holy and Great Synod<sup>14</sup>, with issues concerning the renewal of liturgical life, such as fasting, the calendar and Eortologion, the participation of the laity in worship, the revision of liturgical books, and liturgical music etc.

In 1968, the Higher Priestly Tutoring Center was established on the island of Tinos, with its teachers sending a memorandum to the Holy Synod of the Greek Church, asking them to pay attention to the worship, so that it is performed accurately, with simplicity, with respect and without reckless additions. They also stressed the need for a critical view of the liturgical texts, as well as for the emphasis on the central position of the Eucharistic Synaxis

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<sup>12</sup>Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.47.

<sup>13</sup>Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.47.

<sup>14</sup>Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.47.

and the more active participation of the people in the reading of the prayers of the liturgy.

In addition, regarding the request for the active participation of the people in the Eucharistic Synaxis but also in the worship life, we have references to the First (1961) and the Second (1968) preparatory Conference of the Great Synod<sup>15</sup>. It is necessary to examine at the institutional level, the active and conscious participation of the people in the events in the temple, in the context of the **ἡμεῖς** (Us), which is not delivered only for the priests but for the entire church fullness. The people must let go of passive monitoring and move on to substantive participation. On the subject of the correct utterance of prayers, we first have an initiative of the Blessed Metropolitan of Sevres and Kozani Dionisios Psarianos and approval of the Holy Synod for the correct registration of prayers and utterances in the editions of the books of Archieratikon<sup>16</sup> and of the Ieratikon and the replacement of the ritual term "mystically" (μυστικῶς) with the term "in a low voice" (χαμηλοφώνως). In addition, we have set up a special Synodal committee to oversee the issuance of this new book of Ieratikon.

Also, the issue of the connection of the ritual of marriage with the Eucharistic Synaxis is mentioned in the new 2 editions of the book of Archieratikon.

It is characteristic that from the very first days of the presidency of the blessed Archbishop of Athens Christodoulou, the issue of the liturgical renewal of the Greek Church was officially raised<sup>17</sup>. With the issuance of no. 9/2292 / 16-10-1998 of the archbishopric circular "on liturgical Renaissance"<sup>18</sup>, we have the starting point for a coordinated and in-depth study of the liturgical problems that concern our Church today. Archbishop Christodoulos himself spoke of the need to renew the cult by purifying the

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<sup>15</sup> Dimitrios, Tzerpos, *Liturgical Renewal, Essays on the liturgical education of the clergy and the people*, Tinos Publications, Athens 2001. p.42.

<sup>16</sup> Psarianos, Dionisios, Metropolitan of Serbia and Kozani, *Archieratikon. Containing the divine and holy Liturgy of John Chrysostom, the Kingdom of the Great and the Presbyterians, as well as the Classes of all ordinations, the sequence of the engagement and the wedding, the funeral and the memorial service and other prayers and supplications*. Apostoliki Diakonia Publications, Athens 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Dimitrios, Tzerpos, as above, Athens 2001. p.11.

<sup>18</sup> Dimitrios, Tzerpos, as above, Athens 2001. p.11.

sacred acolouthies (services/ offices) from arbitrary additions, which were attached to the texts over the years.

In fact, with the establishment of a Special Synodal Committee under the name "Special Synodal Committee of Liturgical Renaissance", which is an advisory body of the Church on matters of Divine Worship, shows the practical interest of the Greek Church in solving the liturgical problems of Orthodox worship. To this end, 17 Liturgical Conferences of Executives of Holy Metropolises have been organized to date. Archbishop Hieronymus continued and strengthened the work of the committee, recognizing its contribution and necessity.

The proposals of the above Conferences are related to the correct ecclesiological and theological criteria of the Divine Worship, to the promotion of the Eucharistic Synaxis as a collective expression of the ecclesiastical body, to the participation of the people in the psalms and especially to the Eucharistic, the understanding of the liturgical language. the proper reading of the prayers, the orderliness in the Holy Temples, the simplicity in the priestly attire, the non-encouragement of clerical tendencies, the respect of the schedule in the acolouthies, the seriousness and immersion in the Holy Mysteries.

An important action was the convening of the 2nd Panhellenic Liturgical Symposium of executives of Holy Metropolises, which took place in Volos<sup>19</sup>, in 2000 under the responsibility of the Liturgical Revival Committee, with general theme "The request for liturgical renewal in the Orthodox Church today", and with main topics of discussion the liturgical language with the use of national languages, the active participation of the people in the Eucharistic Synaxis, the ecclesiological view of the sacred sacraments, etc. Through the announcement of the 2nd Panhellenic Liturgical Symposium in 2002, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece determines the return to the worship of the Primordial Church as the content of the liturgical renewal. We have the term "rebaptism", which shifts the conceptual weight from the worship itself to

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<sup>19</sup>Dimitrios, Tzerpos, as above, Athens 2001. p.12.

those participating in it. It speaks of liturgical renewal and not of liturgical innovation.

Because, therefore, the Orthodox people remain essentially alienated from the act of worship and very seldom feel as co-minister of the sacraments, it is necessary for theology, the pre-eminently prophetic function of the Church, to help achieve a genuine liturgical rebirth in order to redefine the "is" (Eίναι) and the identity of the Church<sup>20</sup>in an Orthodox way.

The academic space, therefore, is a helper of the Church in the effort for liturgical rebirth. Already from the middle of the 20th century, professors Panagiotis Trembelas and Evangelos Theodorou in Athens and professor Ioannis Foundoulis in Thessaloniki, worked for the liturgical scientific research, but also the reconnection of the faithful with the Eucharist and in general liturgical life of the Church<sup>21</sup>. Worthy successors, the professors of the Theological Schools of Athens and Thessaloniki are constantly taking initiatives in collaboration with the "Special Synodal Committee of Liturgical Renaissance", for the publication and editing of liturgical texts, the worship of young people, dialogue with clergy and its promotion liturgical pastoral care.

Regarding language, it is important in the Divine Liturgy that the language of the Gospel be the mother language of every people. From the apostolic years the preaching was done in the language understood by the people. Yet, all worship should be in the spoken language of every people. The Orthodox East has a wide variety of liturgical languages.

For the last 20 years there has been an attempt to read the passages of the Gospel in parallel, before the sermon or instead of the sermon, in the spoken language, a language with many peculiarities, which does not differ much from the language of the New Testament. Characteristically, the linguist George Chatzidakis states that of the approximately 4900 words of the New

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<sup>20</sup>Petros, Vassiliadis, *Lex Orandi. Liturgical theology and liturgical rebirth*, Indictos Publications, Athens 2005. p.19.

<sup>21</sup>Stefanos, Alexopoulos, "The State of Liturgical Studies and Liturgical Research in Greece Today" in Basilius J. Groen, Steven Hawkes Teebles, Stefanos Alexopoulos (eds.), *Inquiries into Eastern Christian Worship, Eastern Christian Studies*, Vol. 12 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2012), pp. 380-382.

Testament<sup>22</sup>, half are used by the Greek people and nowadays, 2200 are understood and only 400 are completely unknown (to Greeks)<sup>23</sup>. In addition, the conditions for a liturgical renewal were set, new editions of liturgical works were presented and the question of translation or creation of new hymns was raised.

The term translation is good to be avoided, as we are not talking about rendering a word in another completely different language<sup>24</sup>. A translation would exacerbate the problem of comprehension. Some speak for a need of compilation, with others considering it a desecration of worship. In addition, an effort is made to activate the lower ranks of the priesthood, such as the Reader or the deacon women (deaconesses), for a more active participation of the church fullness as well as an effort for the renewal of the liturgical books.

Certainly, the request for liturgical renewal in the Greek Orthodox Church is a complex and sensitive issue, which encounters many obstacles. The absence of a central governing body in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, which has a centralized system of government, creates a problem of coordination, when in fact we are talking about dozens of local churches, of different nations and languages. Renewal efforts are usually isolated and uncoordinated. In addition, the lack of high-level liturgical centers<sup>25</sup>, which systematically prepare and raise awareness of issues related to functional renewal, is a slowing factor in the liturgical renewal.

The Orthodox Church, no matter how real the needs for liturgical renewal are, is obliged to act thoughtfully and slowly, for fear of offending its weakest members, who are particularly sensitive to matters of liturgical change. That is why, it would be good to set conditions for renewal. Specifically:

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<sup>22</sup>Georgios, Filias, "A General examination of the liturgical language as a means of participation of the people in the worship of the Church", in Acta of the 2nd Panhellenic liturgical symposium, "Λατρεύσωμεν εύαρέστως τῷ Θεῷ" *the call for liturgical renewal in the Orthodox Church*, Apostoliki Diakonia Publications, Athens 2003.p.188

<sup>23</sup>Georgios, Filias, as above, Athens 2003. p.178.

<sup>24</sup>Georgios, Filias, as above, Athens 2003. p.182.

<sup>25</sup>Ioannis, Foundoulis, as above, Athens 2006. p.49.

1) Every renewal effort must not touch the essential and unchanging core of worship, which is Eucharistic Synaxis (the performance of the sacrament of Holy Communion)<sup>26</sup>.

2) Renewal experiments should be avoided, which will create not only objections and reactions of some members of the Church, but also splits and schisms<sup>27</sup>.

3) Renewal efforts should not be a demonstration of extreme progressiveness, but should be possessed by an anxious desire to build the mystic body of Christ<sup>28</sup>.

4) Renewal must stimulate the reflexes of the faithful to protect them from the anti-Christian spiritual currents of every age.

5) It is necessary to introduce new linguistic formations in the liturgical practice and not a translation of the existing ones, which would destroy their aesthetic quality for centuries<sup>29</sup>.

6) It would be good for any liturgical renewal to be done as quietly and discreetly as possible, and be accepted by the fullness of the Church in an effortless manner<sup>30</sup>.

7) Return to the spirit of the first Byzantine years with acolouthies (services) shorter and simpler than the monastic ones<sup>31</sup>.

8) The parishes must become centers of catechism and liturgical renewal<sup>32</sup>.

At a time when the demand for more active participation of the people in worship is more relevant than ever, both in the Orthodox Church and in the rest of the Christian denominations (as well as in the Roman Catholic Church, we observe that the renewal effort of the Second Vatican Council did not have the expected results) the issue of liturgical renewal is imperative.

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<sup>26</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above, Athens 2003.p. 48.

<sup>27</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above, Athens 2003.p. 49.

<sup>28</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above, Athens 2003.p. 49.

<sup>29</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above, Athens 2003.p. 50.

<sup>30</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above, Athens 2003.p. 50.

<sup>31</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above, Athens 2003.p. 50.

<sup>32</sup>Evaggelos, Theodorou, as above, Athens 2003.p. 51.

The new conditions we are experiencing on the European continent as a result of the issue of immigration and the movement of populations create new needs such as that of the evangelization of those who have not yet known Christ, with worship having a primary role. In addition, the re-evangelization of "God's people in modern secularized societies", which arises due to the phenomenon of secularization<sup>33</sup>, creates the need for ecclesiasticalization of the world and its active participation in the Eucharistic ethos (in the "service after the Liturgy")<sup>34</sup>.

In this context, the strengthening of the baptismal services for infant baptism, but also the revival of the baptismal and mystical catechisms for the baptism of adults and the connection of the sacrament of baptism with the Eucharist can strengthen the presence of Church in the life of the newly baptized from the first days of their Christian life.

Lately, in the matters of liturgical renewal, the possibility of connecting sacraments with the Divine Liturgy is discussed, especially of baptism, as mentioned above, but also of marriage<sup>35</sup>. The mystery of marriage, which was associated from the beginning with the divine Eucharist, is not a simple blessing of the union between a man and a woman, nor a simple sanctification of a biological process, but also it is transcendence in the perspective of the kingdom of God<sup>36</sup>. Marriage, an ecclesiastical sacrament, as part of the Divine Liturgy since the early Christian years, was associated with the Eucharistic Assembly and was a matter for the entire Christian community. Nowadays this inclusion of marriage in the Divine Liturgy has almost been forgotten, and it may be good to restore it<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup>Keramidas, Demetrios, *The Orthodox view of re-evangelism in a globalized environment (based on the texts of the Pan-Orthodox Synod)* Proceedings of the XIV Inter-Christian Symposium Thessaloniki 28-30 August 2016. p.144.

<sup>34</sup>Keramidas, Demetrios, *The Orthodox view of re-evangelism in a globalized environment (based on the texts of the Pan-Orthodox Synod)* Proceedings of the XIV Inter-Christian Symposium Thessaloniki 28-30 August 2016. p.145.

<sup>35</sup>Foundoulis, Ioannis, *Liturgiki A', Introduction to Divine Worship*, Migdonia Publications, Thessaloniki 2004. p.287-298, see also Skaltsis, Panagiotis, *Marriage and Divine Liturgy. Contribution to the history and Theology of Christian Worship*, Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1998.

<sup>36</sup>Mantzarides, Georgios, *Christian Ethics*, Vol.2, H.M. of Vatopedi, Mount Athos 2015. p.342.

<sup>37</sup>Skaltsis, Panagiotis, *Marriage and Divine Liturgy. Contribution to the history and Theology of Christian Worship*, Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1998. p.287.

Edward Farley, speaking of the importance of symbols and their reactivation in postmodern society, states that "many of the problems of modern society are due to part of the loss of 'profound symbols', that is, the values with which every society identifies itself and fulfills its aspirations<sup>38</sup>. What is required, then, in the request for an authentic liturgical rebirth is not merely liturgical ceremonies more appealing, comprehensible or adapted to modern societies, but a return to the living Tradition of the Church. It is no coincidence that in recent decades there has been a flourishing of monasticism both in Athos and elsewhere, with a parallel flourishing of monastic and pilgrimage tourism, which reveals an anxious effort of modern man and Christian to experience worship in its authentic and traditional form.

The official Church has undoubtedly realized this need of the faithful, which is why the issue of the renewal of worship has always been included in the work of the preparatory sessions of the Holy and Great Synod.

The Holy and Great Synod of Crete (2016) was without a doubt a pivotal moment for the Orthodox world in its path towards the formation of a common attitude towards the modern world challenges, although it did not finally deal with the issue of the Liturgical Renewal. Perhaps the conditions in the Orthodox world are not yet ripe for the question of the renewal of worship to be discussed on such a broad basis.

Nevertheless, the Holy and Great Synod of Crete paved the way and laid the foundations for its post-synodic synodic course. We expect, in the future, the synodic work of the Orthodox Churches to continue the coordinated and in-depth study of the Liturgical problems of Orthodox worship.

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