

“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA  
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY  
“ISIDOR TODORAN” DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

# **THE EUCHARISTIC DYNAMIC OF PHILANTHROPY**

**PHD. THESIS**

**– ABSTRACT –**

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR,  
Rev. Prof. Univ. PhD. VALER BEL

PHD. CANDIDATE,  
CIPRIAN VALENTIN NICOARĂ

CLUJ-NAPOCA

2021

## CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	5
METHODS OF RESEARCH AND ELABORATION OF THE THESIS .....	7
PRESENT STAGE OR RESEARCH STRUCTURED THEMATICALLY AND CHRONOLOGICALLY.....	10
PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH OF THE THEME .....	20
<b>PART 1 .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>THEOLOGICAL – EUCHARISTIC ARGUMENTS FOR PHILNTHROPY .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1. GENERAL ASPECTS RELATED TO THE HOLY MYSTERIES. CHRIST – THE GREAT MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1.1. Theological preliminaries.....	22
1.2 The relationship between the Eucharist and the other Holy Mysteries.....	26
1.3 The Holy Mysteries as signs of the salvation in Christ.....	33
1.4 Inter-conditioning between the Holy Mysteries and the Church .....	40
<b>2. THE HOLY EUCHARIST – AS MYSTERY, REAL SACRIFICE AND COMMUNION .....</b>	<b>50</b>
2.1 Terminological and theological marks .....	50
2.2 Institution of the Holy Mystery and its main theological significance .....	55
2.3 Biblical reflection.....	64
2.3.1 Prefigurations in the Old Testament .....	64
2.3.2 Fundaments in the New Testament.....	78
2.4. The Eucharist – reflected in the Eastern patristic and theology.....	107
<b>3. THE EUCHARIST AS CORONATION OF THE LITURGICAL LIFE AND PREMISE OF CHRITIAN PHILNTHROPY .....</b>	<b>122</b>
3.1 The dynamism of the Orthodox Liturgy and of the Holy Eucharist.....	122
3.2. The Holy Eucharist as Mystery of the ecclesial unity .....	135
3.3. The Eucharistic body creates the ecclesial body .....	140
3.4. The communion (κοινωνία) of the Eucharistic synax .....	146
3.5. The eucharistic dimension of the mission of the Church.....	161
3.6. The divine Eucharist – food on the way of the Eterna Kingdom.....	165

<b>PART II</b> .....	178
<b>CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY AS REFLECTION OF THE DIVINE LOVE AND OF THE EUCHARISTIC COMMUNION</b> .....	178
<b>4 THE PHILANTHROPIC SERVICE - ETYMOLOGY AND BIBLICAL FUNDAMENTS</b>	178
4.1 Theological and terminological marks .....	178
4.2 Philanthropy – biblical reflection.....	186
<b>5 A PATRISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY</b> .....	207
5.1 The Eucharistic dynamic of philanthropy in the patristic sources from the first three centuries .....	207
5.2 The Eucharistic dynamic of serving the neighbor in the patristic sources from the 4 <sup>th</sup> century onwards .....	214
5.3 Christian philanthropy in Chrysostomic perspective.....	227
<b>6. HISTORICAL-LITUGICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b> .....	254
6.1. Historical coordinates .....	254
6.2. The unity between Liturgy and philanthropy .....	258
6.3. Serving the neighbors as a reflection of God’s love for people and of the Eucharistic communion .....	263
<b>7. THE SOCIAL-PHILANTHROPIC MISSION IN ROMANIA</b> .....	298
7.1. Historical retrospective.....	298
7.2. Christian philanthropy in contemporary Romania.....	307
7.2.1. Orthodox deacony – local landmarks .....	312
7.2.2. Deacony-philanthropic activities in the Protestant Churches.....	318
Conclusions .....	322
<b>B I B L I O G R A P H Y</b> .....	325

**Keywords:** mission, Eucharist, communion, Christian philanthropy, serving the peers, Liturgy after Liturgy, Eucharistic dynamic

## **Abstract**

### **Introduction**

The theme of this thesis (the relation between the Holy Eucharist and deacony/serving the neighbor) is extremely vast and generous, having a biblical-patristic foundation that is overwhelming in dimension and profoundness, as well as a rich theological reflection. Taking into account these aspects, one may write numerous theological treatises on the divine Eucharist, which reflect and rediscover the priceless thesaurus of the Holy Scripture and of the patristic writings.

View with the shallowness of the contemporary individual, deacony, in its meaning as serving the neighbor, seems to be a relatively new element, included recently in the missionary work of the church. The roots of this work are, however, extremely deep, its fundamental source being God's infinite love for man. This infinite love constitutes the common foundation of the Eucharist and of the Christian philanthropy and stands, obviously, at the basis of communion between man and God and among men.

The theme of our research is interdisciplinary because the philanthropic extent of the Eucharist constitutes a generous and very *actual* subject for all the theological fields (dogmatic, missiology, biblical exegesis, patristic, moral). The reasons that determined me to choose and research this theme are numerous and varied: together with my priest colleagues, especially with the younger ones, that is closer to my generation, I realized that most of our contemporaries, more or less spiritually attached to the Church, to its teaching and manner of conduct, are tempted to separate philanthropy from the Eucharist and from the other Sacraments of the Church to which we belong. Despite the religious liberty we have enjoyed for over three decades now, many of the nowadays Christians have a superficial perception on the divine Eucharist, they ignore or minimize its profound aspects and meanings and as a consequence, they do not understand that the Holy Eucharist represents a continuous revelation of the divine philanthropy and a strong premise of Christian philanthropy. The observation and factual thoroughness and manifestation of the relationship between the Holy Eucharist and philanthropy, Christian charity

overcomes the narrow and rigid frame of school theology and imposes itself in the social and religious context in which we live.

The rediscovery of this vivid and natural relationship between the Eucharist and Christian philanthropy is utterly necessary in the difficult, even dramatic circumstances in which we live (the pandemic, pauperization and social convulsions, moral confusion, insidious attacks which are often directed against the Church, clergy, family).

As Christians, a quality that we received in the Holy Baptism, and through the priestly service that we assumed in the moment of Ordination we are not only highly motivated, but also truly compelled to reveal plenary and to preach the imperishable value and the overwhelming importance of the Holy Eucharist and of the dynamic relationship that is established between this Mystery of Mysteries and philanthropy or the good Christian act.

Since the aspects regarding the Holy Eucharist are numerous and significant, influencing the whole theology, from the patristic era to nowadays, their entire and detailed approach is rather difficult. The extent of the subject and its profoundness determined most of the theologians to focus only on certain aspects of the Eucharist after having presented a list of all the aspects, approaching them separately.

Philanthropy (often called “the mystery of the neighbor”) represents a very important branch of the mission of the Church and it is not just a secondary or decorative element of social assistance. Along the years of catechetical and priestly service, as a teacher and later on as a priest, I observed that both young people and adult Christians are vulnerable in front of the challenges of the world that may come in several harmful ways.

Thus, it is required to rediscover the prefigurations, the biblical arguments and the patristic reflection on the Holy Eucharist and on the philanthropic service, a thorough approach of the ontological relation between the divine Eucharist and philanthropy, between the Holy Chalice and the altruist sacrifice, between the altar of the liturgical service and the altar of serving the neighbor.

A real challenge in accomplishing this work was constituted by the fact that, although regarding the Holy Eucharist, the bibliography is rather vast, including many biblical and patristic sources and theological writings, with respect to philanthropy, there are less works, especially during the past three decades. As for the dynamic relation between the Eucharist and philanthropy there are only a few studies written.

A special impulse was given by the actuality of the theme and by the fact that it is often debated during the ecumenical meetings. I was also motivated by the fact that today, most of the Western theologians (Catholic and Protestants) acknowledge the value and actuality of the patristic philanthropic model (Basilian or Chrysostomic, for example), and the Orthodox theologians present within the Western theological environment the manner in which this model was applied along the centuries within the Eastern Church.

Consequently, despite of the fact that the relation between the Eucharist and philanthropy it is yet insufficiently researched, it represents a highly interesting subject that surpasses the confessional borders. I consider my thesis *not to be exhaustive* and it opens the way for new theological researches dedicated to this continuity between the divine philanthropy, manifested transcendentally through the divine Eucharist and Christian philanthropy, called fraternity, charity, deacony or serving the neighbor, good deeds, mercifulness or mutual help.

#### **PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH OF THE THEME**

*“The Eucharist represents the factor of sacrifice and unity in relation to God and the neighbors”.*

*My personal contribution resides in the fact that I brought back to the attention the theme and its importance for the life and mission of the Church, through the use of most of the main sources that occurred after the concept of “Liturgy after Liturgy” was produced by father Bria, which approached the two essential factors: the Eucharist and philanthropy.*

On the one hand, the Holy Eucharist, with its multiple and profound aspects, represents an endless theme of theological discussions and it is reflected in many writings that extend chronologically from the era of the Early Church and patristic until nowadays. On the other hand, Christian philanthropy also enjoys an ample reflection, its value being rediscovered everywhere.

I consider that the newness of the theme I approach in this thesis consists of *emphasizing the ontological relation*, vivid and dynamic between the Eucharist and philanthropy. This relation is not formal and theoretical, but existential and reversible, because “The Eucharist makes the Church” (Ekleisia) perceived as a community of Christophers, who experience their faith and prove their love for God and for their neighbors through deeds, and simultaneously the Church (Eucharistic synod) states and *proves its creed and inner cohesion through the worthy*

*communion of the community of faithful from the same holy and divine Chalice.* The Eucharist unites us with God and in the same time, it unites us with our neighbor.

The relation between the Eucharist and philanthropy is emphasized especially by the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ added to the fundamental duty to love God also the commandment to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 10:27). A fundamental mark in the theological approach of my thesis is constituted by the fragment from 1 John 4:9-11 and 19-21, where the author underlines the idea that God is the one Who loved us first and that it is our duty to respond to this endless love by loving one another.

*“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also”.* (1 John 4:9-11 and 19-21)

Starting from the fundamental truth that “God is love” (1 John 4:8 and 16) and considering the Holy Eucharist as a culminating point of manifestation of the divine love and sacrifice (1 John 4:9) we see that *the divine philanthropy is permanent and works within this unifying Holy Mystery.*

Regarded in a new perspective, well substantiated from a patristic and biblical point of view, Christian philanthropy must not be excessively institutionalized and laicized, but theologically fathomed that is perceived as an appropriate answer given to the divine philanthropy. In fact, we do not deal with a new approach of the existential relation between the Eucharist and philanthropy, but rather with a rediscovery of the natural philanthropic valences and consequences of this Holy Mystery. To this respect, we remark that in orthodoxy, philanthropy is far from any proselyte spirit or interest and it represents the transposition in act of the teaching of faith. It represents a way of life, a dynamic adhesion to the fundamental principle frequently and clearly proclaimed in the Holy Scripture. (“God is love” 1 John 4:8; “Owe no one nothing except to love one another, for he whom loves another has fulfilled the law” Romans 13:8; 12:10-13).

The Holy Eucharist constitutes, in fact, one of the manifestations of the divine philanthropy from the beginning, that goes through the biblical history similar to a red thread from creation to Apocalypse, as well as through the entire human history. Although it has been prefigured in the time of the Old Testament, anticipated and instituted in the time of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eucharist has not lost its dynamism, which had a constitutive role in the foundation, consolidation and affirmation of the communities in the Early Church and in the era of persecutions.

The relation between the holy Eucharist and philanthropy initiated and developed within the Church has a certain missionary dimension. Addressed especially to the Saint Apostles, the missionary urges of the Lord include also the Christians who are aware of their name and vocation. The disciples are the salt and the light that give meaning and orientation (Matthew 10:7-28; 19-20), but their mission is accomplished not only in word, but in the acts of the daily existence. Through these acts they will prove to everyone that they have changed, that they have different priorities, that before them there is something of a priceless value.

I consider that through the revelation or rediscovery of certain aspects related to the Holy Eucharist that are less researched and through the insistence upon the missionary valences of the relation between the Eucharist and philanthropy, between the liturgical altar and that of the sacrifice and acts of mercifulness, my thesis can be of real spiritual help both to the theologians that study and experience these mysterious aspects of the faith and to the priests that struggle to draw the parishioners closer to the Holy Chalice and to the Kingdom of heaven.

## **SYNTHETIC PRESENTATION**

Due to the fact that it approaches two major themes, the Eucharist and philanthropy, respectively the profound relation that forms between the two, the thesis is divided into two parts. In the first part I approach the main aspects related to the Holy Mysteries of the Church, with an emphasis on the Holy Eucharist, as mystery, sacrifice and communion, so that in the end I emphasize the dynamism of the liturgy and especially the dynamism of the Eucharist as a coronation of the entire liturgical life and premise of philanthropy.

In the second part I present Christian philanthropy as a reflection of the divine love and Eucharistic communion, referring to the biblical arguments, patristic sources, theological



reflection on the main valences of the relation between the Eucharist and philanthropy, and subsequently a historical retrospective of the social-philanthropic mission in our country.

## MAIN IDEAS

The communion with the Body and Blood of the Savior contributes essentially to the creation and enhancement of the communion between man and God, but also to the manifestation within the Church and society of the *koinonia* and fraternity between human beings. The divine Eucharist feeds not only the faithful considered individually as distinctive individuals that form the *Eklesia*, but also nourishes and supports the Church considered as plenitude of the life of the people in the Holy Spirit. Through a worthy communion as members of the Church we contribute to its strengthening but also to its affirmation within the world, within society (Matthew 5:16).

According to the divine plan existing from eternity, *the Church and the Eucharist* represent two distinctive but inseparable entities, in a relation of reciprocal harmony and dependence. “The new chosen people of God” – presented and confirmed biblically in the New Testament comprises the members of the Church that is those who from Holy Baptism acquire the vocation of communion with Christ and with their neighbors. This communion is emphasized and intensified on a sacramental level by the divine Eucharist. *Koinonia* is sealed through the worthy receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:31). However, for the Orthodox Christianity, the Holy Eucharist is not reduced to its sacramental dimension and significance, and it is not just a cultic act, but represents the nucleus of the entire church life.

Faithful to the Holy Scripture, to the patristic exegesis and to the whole sacramental tradition of the Eastern Church, we, the Orthodox, state firmly that the divine Eucharist is both reactualized sacrifice and divine and life-giving presence, coronation of the saving activity of Christ and of the mysterious work, but with visible effects of the Holy Spirit, a defining and unifying factor of our Holy Church and anticipation of the eternal; Kingdom, preached through word and act by our Lord Jesus Christ and by His Holy Church. The Eucharist means an unbloody reactualization of the sacrifice on the Cross, a reminding of the sufferance assumed by Christ the Unattained by sin “for us and for our salvation”, fundamental element of the Church and origin of its unity, foundation of the communion between man and God and among Christians, food and anticipation of the eternal life and Kingdom.

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the act in which we celebrate in the most intense manner the sacrificial love and God's mercifulness for people or the divine philanthropy. Communing with the Eucharistic Christ we become of the same blood with Him. To resemble Him with respect to the love of our neighbors, it is essential that, through the Eucharist, prayer and good deeds, we live together with Christ. The loving presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the faithful that commune eucharistically with Him, establishes the relation between the divine philanthropy of the Holy Trinity and the ecclesial and social philanthropy of Christians. The liturgical dimension of the meeting between man and the merciful God transforms the Christian into the origin of a merciful love for his neighbor. Christ shows us that through the Holy Eucharist we partake of His humble and sacrificial love which accomplishes the communion. The merciful love for the neighbor, as reconciliation with him and help, precede and follow the office of the divine Eucharist.

The divine love is the primordial fundament, the origin of every act of agape love, of the mutual support between people, of appreciation and harmony (Ephesians 5:2; 1 John 4:11-19). In the context of the New Testament, love and service of the neighbor constitute one of the main criteria of the rightful Judgment (Matthew 10:40; 23:3).

Theologians show that Christian philanthropy has a Christocentric character for it considers Christ as pattern of serving the man in need and sufferance (2 Corinthians 8:9). Love becomes service, it is ennobled by grace, framed within the work and mission of the Church. Emphasizing the relations between the humble service of the Savior (John 13:1-20) and giving the fundamental commandment to the Church, considered as a great community (John 13:34-35), Saint Evangelist John shows us that Christ Himself established deacony or the service of the neighbor. This institution is placed by many orthodox exegetes in parallel with the institution of the Holy Eucharist, performed by Christ during the Last Supper and entrusted to the Church to be officiated for perpetual reactualization.

Nowadays, when we observe that, under the attack of secularization and exaggerated movement against clergy, philanthropy is understood mostly without its ecclesial character, it becomes more and more clear for each of the Christians that we are moving away from Christ the Archetype.

The history of Christianity shows us that in the time of the Early Church, philanthropy had an essential role in the life of the faithful and of the ecclesial communities. In an apparently

paradoxical manner, the history of the Church proves that the worst times were marked by the impressive growth of solidarity among Christians. The systematic persecutions, the acerbic pauperization, the military conflicts, the natural disasters and the bad weather were times of rich spiritual fruits, eras during which the number and the range of the charitable acts increased significantly.

In hard times long the universal and church history, Christians took care both of the work of Martha, helping the others and serving in a devout manner to all those who were in social need and difficulties, and of the work of Mary, that was going to transform the social with the power of prayer and Gospel. Philanthropy, perceived through the eyes of Martha, is directed towards its practical, visible, efficient aspect, and through the eyes of Mary it is spiritualized, especially significant from a spiritual point of view.

Orthodoxy does not separate the Holy Eucharist from the charitable work. It perceives the deacony of love as *a Liturgy after the Liturgy*, meaning that it considers the charitable work to be a continuation of the Eucharistic experience of the Church extended within society, as an extension of the Holy Table into the world. “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

In Orthodoxy, one may speak indeed of the philanthropy of the Church because it represents a significant and even defining part of this theandric organism. The Church is a theandric institution and its activity in the world cannot be separated, under any circumstance, from the work of grace and from the beneficial influence of the Holy Spirit. The *excessive* institutionalization and laicization of the Christian philanthropic activities can increase their efficiency on the short-term, but from a wider time perspective it will lead to the separation between philanthropy and the liturgical and graceful work of the Church, it will certainly have negative effects. The divine philanthropy represents the origin and the driving force of the Church philanthropy. To this respect, the Church, both as a sacred space and as an institution established by God is a space of the service, of communion, of the encounter with God and with our neighbor.

To avoid the possible errors or negative mutations of the Christian philanthropic act, the Church must state its identity in the contemporary society as well, transforming the “social” and not allowing the secularizing and secularized elements to transform it. By initiating and practicing an authentic philanthropy, in the spirit of the Holy Scripture and of the patristic and

philocalic experience, the Church must re-Christianize the city, the world and the society in which it exists.

The relationship between the Holy Eucharist and philanthropy initiated and developed within the Church has a certain missionary dimension. Addressed directly to the Saint Apostles, the missionary urges of our Lord include indirectly the Christians who are aware of their name and vocation. The disciples are the salt and light that give meaning and direction (Matthew 10:7-28; 19-20), but their mission is not accomplished only in word but also in the deeds of the daily existence. Through these deeds they will prove to everyone that they changed, that they have other priorities, that before them there is something of priceless value.