

## PANCHRISTIAN IDENTITY OF MONASTICISM

### AND ITS ECUMENICAL VALENCES<sup>1</sup>

(S. Gregorio al Celio - Roma 18 Ottobre 1994 - D. Dossetti)

-I-

I believe that I must - and have the possibility to leave aside a preliminary statement already done by me elsewhere<sup>2</sup> and by many others in these most recent years, that is, on the subject of the inadequacy of the title De Vita Consecrata to express all the material that will be made the object of the next Synod of Bishops: it has been observed that 'vita consecrata' is already the consistent life of a baptized <person> and that with such an expression one does not indicate any specificity as regards to Baptism.<sup>3</sup>

Rather it is permitted to express a regret as regards the substance of the western codification in force: that is that a fundamental idea put forward in the early preparatory works and with such a large consensus, has been on the contrary abandoned. Initially it was proposed to make separate treatments of monastic life and of associated institutes: instead it was concluded by integrating the related discipline to the common discipline of the religious institutes and by expressly dedicating very few norms for monks, scattered here and there, occasionally differentiated (mostly for the discipline of nuns' enclosure).

A substantially diversified and organic solution concerning monasticism would have been more in conformity with history (because even in the West until the 12th cent. and in Eastern Orthodoxy until today, monastic institutes have been the only religious institutes). Moreover it would have corresponded better to the decree of the Ecumenical Vatican Council II, Perfectae Caritatis, on the renewal of religious life, no.7, and now would have furnished to Instrumentum laboris a more exact basis for a better identification of the specificity of monastic life and would have allowed a better consideration of its actual problems <as well as> suggestions to offer.

This is not meant to be only a regret relative to the past but is meant to express a first wish for the future with regard to an eventual beginning of a new discipline of all the material that the next Synod is on the verge of discussing.

Moreover the regret and the wish find good backing in the most recent Codex for the Oriental Churches of 1990 (that is, seven years after the Codex for the Latin Church) which instead follows a very different design: it deals in title XII with De monachis ceterisque religiosis et de sodalibus aliorumque institutum vitae consecratae and specifically devotes Chapter I to an explanation of a few general norms, and then devotes Chapter II completely to the very different discipline De Monasteriis and only in Chapter III goes on to treat De ordinibus et congregationibus.

Because of this missing independent identification of monastic life one understands how the same Instrumentum laboris, p.37 after first treating consecrated life today must ascertain that the greater part of the responses to the lineamenta uniquely concern institutes of apostolic life, whether feminine or masculine, and must make any effort to recall a universal vision of the Church so as not to forget a form of consecrated life 'be it even a minor one, but not for this less worthy of suitable attention than contemplative life' even though the document adds, however, that 'it often is not understood even by the same priests and faithful' (p.38).

With this reference to the 'rules and traditions of monastic life', one may understand first of all a reference to the historical rules, that is, to well individuated complexes of norms, both canonical and spiritual, given by the great figures of the holy monastic founders such as for the East, Pachomius, Cassian, and Basil to whom in the West in particular St. Benedict also refers citing: 'collationes patrum et instituta et vitae eorum, sed et Regula sancti patris nostri Basilii, quid aliud sunt nisi bene viventium et oboedientium monachorum instrumenta virtutum?' (ch.73).

Already it is evident that in spite of the diversity of the persons of the founders, and of the times and milieux, the monastic tradition is clearly fundamentally one, transpersonal and transtemporal.

Finally, in the two codices one must also keep in mind two particular dispositions, canon 603 c.j.c. and canon 570 C.C.E.O., both new norms that however re-introduce ancient juridical figures, that is hermits and

hermitesses, no longer provided for, at least in the West, by the general legislation.

- II -

From the actual canonical discipline and from its theological substratum one is able to deduce first of all that monastic life is:

- pneumatic life, that is, in the Holy Spirit
- Christic life
- ecclesial life
- eschatological life

It is pneumatic life because it is able to be assumed only by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and by its own specific charism (that is by the charism of chastity for the Kingdom, cf. Mt.19, 11-12 and I Cor. 7.26ss. 32.34), and is able to be lived coherently only with the continual help and incessant dynamism of the Spirit and consequently in <the Spirit's> perennial originality and freshness: otherwise monastic life, more than any other, becomes sclerotized, even deformed in a human way, and becomes irreparably obsolete.

It is Christic life because it is lived "in Christ", that is by those who 'Christo omnino nihil praeponant': in the evangelical sequela, coherent and total, that is, in the fullness of love for Him, who for love of us died on the cross.

It is ecclesial life, because not only must it be always lived in the Church, in its obedience, but must always remain open to the totality of ecclesial communion in its concentric circles: from the base community, and that is from the same monastic fraternity, to the more enlarged fraternity in the local Church, to the universal Church, to all of humanity, which should always be understood as potentially christified and ecclesiasticized.

Finally it is eschatological life because it must reveal with transparency the gifts of the future age, anticipating on earth the reality <of it>, and must incessantly tend to that pleroma which will not occur other than when Christ will have subjected to Himself the last enemy, that is death, and then will have consigned the Kingdom to the Father, and God will be all in all (I Cor 15, 25-28).

These premises show the necessary and common elements of every form of religious life (be it even in different degrees of fullness): but they do not yet show the peculiarity, the specificity of monastic life.

Now we will try to express it, arranging the elements able to be deduced from an abundant broad treatise done by a great author of Orthodoxy, rather him in whom for centuries Orthodoxy most recognizes itself: Gregory Palamas.

In a homily, the 40th, done on Mt.Athos for the feast of the Beheading of St.John the Baptist, he listed the following elements as specific to monastic life.<sup>4</sup>

First of all monastic life<sup>5</sup> is characterized by a true, physical separation from situations, habits and worldly actions.<sup>6</sup>

Such a separation can be either in the desert according to the example of John the Baptist or else in the holy cloisters where spiritual communities are gathered, the fraternal companies that go along together on the road from earth to heaven.<sup>7</sup>

Provided that in any case the separation not be only material, but also interior, deep down inside, in the mind.<sup>8</sup>

And so it requires that one unite one's own intellect to the Paschal Christ by means of prayer, that is with psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles (that is to sum up, praying especially with the Word of God itself).<sup>9</sup>

And therefore it implies an always progressive purification of the eye of the mind achieved by carrying in the body the death of the passions and possessing also the good of poverty<sup>10</sup> and turning oneself continually to God with works (as well as hard labour), words and thoughts all according to the obedience received.<sup>11</sup>

Finally such a life requires and gives a more stable and easier fruit of hesychia (stillness) and of peace which aims to make the soul a tent of the salvific Name.<sup>12</sup>

One can easily note that this conception of the monk makes him by definition a "separated from the world", but just as much a "united to God": a being united in himself (because no longer prey to the dispersion of the passions) and united to others by the fullness of charity, and at the same time habitually united to his God. Palamas expresses all of this in saying that the monk becomes a tent of the salvific Name: that is to say, the dwelling of the Name and of the divine glory is renewed in him as in the tabernacle in the desert (Ex 40. 34-35), as in the Temple of Jerusalem (2 Sam 7.13; I Kgs 8. 10-13), as in the Temple that is his body, the body of Christ (John 2.21).

It is also possible to note that according to the teaching of Palamas there is in monasticism a clear pre-eminence of prayer, that rather tends to become incessant, as in the Precursor, ἀδιάλειπτως. cf. I Thes.5.17; but prayer not as a conquest or merit, rather as a gratuitous gift of the Holy Spirit. The monk can only second <it> with all the means indicated by tradition in this regard, so as to be able to demonstrate that continual prayer is not only a dream or a utopia, but may become a reality which involves the whole life of a baptized person who is coherent.

Pre-eminence of prayer does not mean cultual monism, as it was understood in certain cases - for example in certain Cluniac deviations - but prayer united to the labour of the struggle against passions, in the spirit of fraternity and with suitable works, in such a way that the very mortification of the passions and the manual work itself become prayer and thanksgiving, perennial praise of God and incessant intercession for all the brethren.<sup>13</sup>

And so in the prayer and in the life of the monk as so many Fathers and masters have repeated, one tends to perfect unification between liturgy and Eucharistic sacrifice on one side, and interior sacrifice on the other: reciprocal interpenetration of these elements - subjective and objective, internal and external, personal and communitarian, ascetical and sacramental - to offer to the Father together with Christ the true spiritual sacrifice on the altar of one's own heart, in ara cordis.<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion the teaching of Palamas, so representative of all of Orthodoxy,

confirms a millennial tradition, eastern and western, univocal in the highest points: Egyptian monks, Palestinians, Syrians, Mesopotamians, Cappadocians, Persians, Armenians, Georgians, Italians, Romans - as far as with conspicuous singular characteristics - they are all conformed, substantially, to the same life that professes to speak of a panchristian identity of the monastic ideal.

-III-

At this point it might be necessary to extract, from what is said above, some considerations on charity and therefore on the utility of monastic life.

It is always possible, rather probable and desirable, that in the Church there be many prayerful souls in a dispersed and diffuse state. But in cenobitical, monastic life and in its eventual eremitical affiliations, there ought to be a particular concentration of such souls, that unite themselves as community, that is as an organic group of Christians who intend to help one another precisely to better attend to prayer, for the Church and for the world and for the pure praise of the Triune God. Therefore assiduous prayer which exists in the Church in a widespread state, finds in these communities or monastic fraternities places of special concentration and of dense actualization (let us say systolic) to then expand and spread (let us say diastolic) in the whole ecclesial body.

Such concentration and expansion, in the case of prayer, is to be considered in a special way, and in itself must be considered prevailing with respect to what can be verified through other Christian or evangelical acts: for example through works of mercy or through acts of evangelization and of the apostolate. Because in the other acts there is an immediate goal which is always particular (that poor one, those poor, these sick, those hearers) and that then suffer the limitations of time and space: at least in the first intention, even if always with the last intention turned, in any case, to the service of God.

In prayer the immediate object for which one is concerned is always God and his direct rapport with the one who prays and with everyone else in Him: and therefore it can always reach a value and a universal efficacy, not subject to spatial-temporal limits. In prayer the object-subject aimed at is the Sovereign Creator and Redeemer of everyone and everything. The prayer inclines to Him immediately (Ps 64.3) and from Him by intrinsic nature and objective efficacy, falls (down) on all and flows over all, even with gradual forms proportioned to the intensity and the height of the charity that inspires <the prayer>.

This is the reason for which the Vatican Council (always in the background of the universal objectivity of the Christian vocation to sanctity, Lumen Gentium n.40) wished to insist that the presence of nuclei of monastic life is necessary for the completeness of every local Church. Especially speaking of the missionary activity of the Church <the Council> affirmed that:

'the various initiatives to establish contemplative life merit special considerations. In some cases one tends to maintain essential elements of the monastic institution, while implanting the very rich tradition of one's own order. Others seek to return to the simplicity of the forms of early monasticism. All however must strive to find a real adaptation to the local conditions. Since contemplative life concerns the presence of the Church in its fullest form, it is necessary that it be established everywhere in the newer Churches' (Ad Gentes, n.18).

And again:

'The institutes of contemplative life, with their prayers, works of penance and tribulations, have a very important role in the conversion of souls. For it is God who, when He is beseeched: sends workers into his harvest; opens the spirit of non-Christians that they might hear the Gospel; and renders fruitful the word of salvation in their hearts. Indeed the institutes of this type are urged to found houses in mission lands as moreover not a few have already done. Thus living in a way suitable to the authentically religious traditions of the peoples, renders among non-Christians a magnificent witness of the majesty and of the charity of God, as well as of union in Christ' (Ad Gentes, n.40).

So that the decree Perfectae Caritatis, on the renewal of religious life, is able

to conclude that even in the actual times of the Church and of human society, which are secularized and very little attentive to the values of faith:

'Members of institutes devoted entirely to contemplation, are occupied with God alone in solitude and in silence, in continual prayer and in joyful penitence. No matter how pressing the needs of the active apostolate, these preserve an eminent position in the mystical body of Christ, in which 'all the members do not have the same function' (Ro 12.4). In fact they offer to God an excellent sacrifice of praise and producing most abundant fruits of sanctity, they are an honour and an example to the people of God, whom they promote with a mysterious apostolic fruitfulness. So these constitute a glory for the Church and a fountain of celestial graces' (Perfectae caritatis, n.7).

- IV -

The characteristic of the monk thus established and the basis drawn of his most specific function in the universal and local Church, we are able to deduce from this a few consequences and a few orientations most opportune in the present historical circumstances.

Monastic life and monasteries are able and will be able so much the better to realize their function in the Church and also in the world, the more monastic life keeps itself clear of all hybridization, that is of any mixture (for which at certain times and in certain places one might have indulgence) with other elements borrowed from other forms of religious life (instruction of youth, direct action of evangelization, organized assistance to the sick or to the poor, etc.) and instead as much as it follows unswervingly its life of separation from the world and of full and permanent union with God.

As much as it does this with rigour and authenticity, all the more so it will find itself in conditions of marginality and uselessness in the eyes of the world. But increasingly it will be able in a spirit of faith to prove to itself the utility of



its uselessness, solidly established on the death of Jesus!<sup>15</sup>

The monk who does not bother nor presume to add another end to the unique essential end - that is, that of living the Gospel simply and integrally and to unite oneself to the philanthropic God, true lover of man, who loves everyone and each one singularly - such a monk having arrived at his maturity, by excess is able to bear the fruit of a work of evangelization of individuals or of peoples: as St. Anselm of Canterbury, St. Boniface, Nonna and Cyril and Methodius demonstrated.

It is not even opportune - as on the contrary Instrumentum laboris, p.39 seems to suggest - that monasteries worry about becoming 'true laboratories of thought and of culture for today's world'. Certainly they must, in the essentials, show a thinking not backward and not weighed down by minor outdated traditions: but more than an authoritative doctrine and knowledge they must tend to breathe the strongly oxygenated air of the wisdom that comes from on high which is pure, peaceful, meek, docile, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy (James 3.17).

This can effect that the monks could be recognized, by those less attentive as well as by men of sincere pursuit, as Christians coherent with their Baptism. Not so much accredited by the weight of their personal qualities, or for doctrinal authoritativeness, and not even for a ministerial investiture, but simply for the genuineness and freshness of their specific Baptismal coherence. Precisely their lack of differentiation - made only of hesychia, of humility, of reserve, of compunction, of meekness, of renunciation, of attending closely to the Word, of compassion for all - will contribute paradoxically to render them well known among Christians (and non-Christians), to put their lamp on the candelabrum, to provide them with a particular capacity, not sought after and perhaps not even known, of attraction, of exemplariness, of mission.

For these radical and profound motives, the great initiators of Egyptian cenobitic life, Pachomius and his first successors, Petronius, Horsiesi, Theodore refused the very priesthood insistently offered to them.

When Serapion, bishop of Thumis, implored the archbishop of Alexandria, the great Athanasius, to ordain Pachomius who until then had refused his offers, <Pachomius> immediately took flight, and then Athanasius proclaimed to him:

'Greet your Father and tell him: Because you hid yourself from us, fleeing that from which come jealousies, quarrels, envy, and you have chosen what is superior and will always remain! Well, our Lord will satisfy your desires. Because you have fled vain and temporal greatness, not only do I wish for you that it might never happen, but to this end I will stretch my arms to the Most High so that you never happen to hold a position'.<sup>16</sup>

And in fact Pachomius said, with regard to priests necessary for the cenobites:

'It is preferable that we submit to the Church of God. The one who was given us by our father bishops is enough for our necessities'.

And analogously Horsiesi responded to Archbishop Theophilus who wanted to ordain him:

'We are laymen without importance. We have what we need thanks to those who come to us'.

In the same way the patriarch of the anchorites of the desert of Jerusalem, St.Saba, after having lived twelve years in a cenobium and even more than thirty years in the desert, always as a layman, he was unexpectedly ordained a priest by the Archbishop Sallustius, in his 53rd year and much later after he had already founded the 'great laura'.<sup>17</sup>

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In the same way the patriarch of the anchorites of the desert of Jerusalem, St.Saba, after having lived twelve years in a cenobium and even more than thirty years in the desert, always as a layman, he was unexpectedly ordained a priest by the Archbishop Sallustius, in his 53rd year and much later after he had already founded the 'great laura'.<sup>17</sup>

And the Syrian monks aspired no less to remain simple laymen.<sup>18</sup>

And the Rule of St. Benedict ch. 60 & 62 shows an inspiration substantially in conformity.

Certainly there have been intermediate centuries of considerable clericalization of monastic life, but today there is in progress a critique of the risks and imbalances that may come to monasticism from it and instead an important re-evaluation of lay monasticism.

That which one might lose by renouncing a priestly ministry, might be amply regained by a fraternity of lay monks who in the fullness of humility live all the obligations and all the gifts that they may receive from the Spirit. A similar monasticism might be simpler and more agile, more endowed with a deep interior dynamism and with adaptation to new times and the new situations of the young Churches: therefore more capable of showing with limpidity its fully pneumatic character, and therefore giving a collective witness, more unitary and more prolific as regards the whole ecclesial communion to which it lies connected. And in conclusion this lay monasticism, precisely because it is not swollen with too many ordained ministers and therefore less linked to hierarchical institutions and more homogeneous to all the people of God, is able to have a stronger and clearer competency.

Dimitri Staniloae has placed particular attention on the theme of the transparency of the Church to Christ, linking it as a basic reason to emphasize the unique and shared Baptism, foundation for all of the incorporation in Christ and of reciprocal unity. And in this way he succeeded in enunciating the principle that

'the Church is such only to the degree to which, so to speak, it forgets itself and resolutely commits itself with regards to Christ. It exists paradoxically as an objective reality through its subjective negation'.<sup>19</sup>

So a fraternity of chaste persons wholly committed to Christ and to increasingly putting into action adhesion to Him - without any ministerial heaviness or thickness - may arrive at a particularly elevated level of pure Christic transparency, may become a self-revelation of Him.

Corollary to this theorem might be the propositions that some advance against the organic reunion of monasteries and of local portions of the Church, that is the so-called Abbey nullius and also against the assumption on the part of individual monks of particular pastoral responsibility (such as a parish).

For that which might be my brief experience, I am inclined to say that today I would be much more cautious than what I was about ten years ago, in accepting, for my fraternity, the responsibility of pastoral care, even if it be the smallest communities and in very special circumstances (such as in a sphere of strong Moslem majority).

Becoming thus more agile and more refined and therefore more penetrating, monasticism, while remaining always itself, may exercise a leavening and unifying force as regards all the levels and conditions of the people of God, in which <monasticism> be situated: ecclesiastics and laymen, religious and families.

Thus so much more and so much better, monasteries may practise that welcome and that hospitality, especially for troubled souls or for those searching, which has been said to be the true monastic ministry, and which is the characteristic of monks and nuns who have arrived at a true maturity and therefore a true unity and interior freedom in full adhesion to God.

As years ago Mother Euphrasia of the monastery of Dealu in Romania affirmed:

'The Orthodox Church does not oppose Christian life lived in a family to Christian monastic life. The Orthodox people has always loved and respected monasteries: between monastic communities and parishes there are very close bonds, while the spiritual radiation of the monasteries, as places of spiritual enrichment, pledges Christians to spiritual, missionary <and> pastoral service in the parishes (.....). For this symbiosis, the ecclesial conscience of the Orthodox people recognizes that the same life in Christ and in the Holy Spirit may be lived according to different vocations'.<sup>20</sup>

An emblematic example of this monastic radiation might be that of the famous monastery of Optina, in 19th century Russia: it stretched from the working-classes and the poorest to those cultured, noble and intellectual persons

at that time. They felt the influence of the startsi of Optina: Gogol, Kireevskij, Leont'ev, Solov'ev, Dostoevskij and Tolstoy himself. Although he had written in his diaries (22 April 1889), against monastic life, accusing it of being a flight from the world and a presumption of being purified on one's own, yet in the last years of his life Tolstoy was at the monastery of Optina many times, and died in fact at the train station of Astapovo where, according to a certain witness, he had someone call to Optina for the monk friend, staretz Josif.<sup>21</sup>

-VI-

Monasticism being such a radiant and unifying force within one's own Church, one might hope that more and more it could correspond to an equal capacity to serve in a privileged way as a bridge between Churches and Christian confessions.<sup>22</sup>

Above all because, as in early times, so also now, the Bible has been and is pre-eminently the Book of the monk: not only because it is the chief source of Revelation, not only because it is the authentic sign of Christ but also for its soteriological value in as much as it is the most adequate source of the elevation and transformation of the intellectual nature of man, and therefore stronger and more efficacious to nourish faith, hope and charity. So monks of all times and of all places have made of the Bible and of its meditation their rule of life and of salvation, and their daily spiritual nourishment.

On this basis monks can be particularly qualified interlocutors in the dialogue with the Churches born of the Reform, as natively capable of speaking fundamentally the same language.

The same could be said for that which concerns the dialogue with Orthodoxy, with whom monks not only have the Book in common, but also the great tradition of the Fathers and the same spiritual matrices, all going back before the division: penthos, asceticism, work, humility, interior prayer, incessant

intercession, liturgy, invocation for the return of Christ, praise of the glory of God.

Above all there is an aspect of the monastic experience itself that renders it particularly qualified to serve the cause of Christian unity: and that is the importance in monastic life and in every monk that the Holy Spirit must have and has. We said above that the life of the monk, more than any other Christian life either is life in the Spirit or is nothing, that is, it declines and becomes sclerotic, even humanly so. It can only be lived in the constant openness and in the incessant dynamism of the Spirit that allows <one> to surpass the rigours of beginnings and the risks of deviation, and to live it finally dilatato corde, inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine (Benedictine Rule, Prologue, no.49).

Well, if the Son became incarnate and became history in the Economy, what is the contribution of the Spirit?

'Well then, precisely the opposite: the liberation of the Son and of the Economy from the bond of history. If the Son dies on the cross, succumbing thus to the bondage of historical existence, it is the Spirit that makes Him to rise from the dead. The Spirit is beyond history and when it works in history it does so to bring into history the last days, the eschaton'.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore the monk, if he truly is such, can be particularly suited to go, and to conduct others, beyond the historical wounds which have brought about division. As one who not only in historical marginality is drawn toward the eschaton, but rather hastens and lives the return of the Lord with all his life and his offering.

(18 October 1994)  
Roma, San Gregorio al Celio.



1. Essay of Don Giuseppe Dossetti written at the request of Cardinal Achille Silvestrini for the Synod of Bishops - Oliveto, 30 September 1994.

2. G. Dossetti, Testimonianza di un monaco, delivered to the LVI course of updating at Catholic University, Sorrento, 21-24 Sept. 1986, especially nos. 9-10.

3. Marco l'Asceta, Discorsi sulla vita cristiana, (Torino: Eribaudi, 1986), pp. 68-71.

Cfr. E. Bianchi, "Siamo laici senza importanza," in Il Regno, XXXIX, 499ss. And authors cited there, especially T. Ciprini, "La vita consacrata come figura ecclesiale," in Via, verita e vita, CXLVIII (1994), 53ss.

4. Gregory of Palamas, Homily XL, (P.K. Chrestou), in Tutte le opere (Thessalonica, 1985), v.10, pp. 511-551.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit. p. 538: ὁ βίος μονήρης.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit. p. 538-540: ἡ πολιτεία (ἡμῶν) τῶν κοσμικῶν ἐθῶν τε καὶ πραγμάτων διώρισταί.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. p. 542-544: οἱ μὲν τὴν ἔρημον ᾤκησαν (...) οἱ δὲ περιτειχίσμασιν ἱεροῖς ἐνασκήσαντες καὶ συνοδίας πνευματικὰς ἐν αὐτοῖς συνεστήσαντο.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. p. 546: Ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ καλῶς τοῦ κόσμου ἀναχωρήσαντες, ἀναχωρῶμεν αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς διανοίας.

<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.: ψαλμοῖς καὶ ᾠδαῖς καὶ προσευχαῖς πνευματικαῖς, τῷ Χριστῷ συνδήσαντες τὸν νοῦν τὸν ἡμέτερον: cfr. Ef 5,19-20.

<sup>10</sup> Loc. cit.: τὴν νέκρωσιν τῶν παθῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέρον, ὁμοῦ δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀκτημοσύνης ἀγαθὸν αὐτός τε ἔχων.

<sup>11</sup> Loc. cit.: καθαίρωμεν οὖν τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα ἔργοις καὶ λόγοις καὶ λογισμοῖς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἀνατείνοντες.

<sup>12</sup> Loc. cit.: σκήνωμα ποιήσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς τοῦ σωτηρίου ὀνόματος.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. p. 548: εἰς δόξαν αὐτοῦ ταῦτα προσφερώμεθα, δι' ἔργων τὴν εὐχαριστίαν ἀποδίδόντες αὐτῷ.

Cfr. also Basil of Caesarea, Opere ascetiche, ed. U. Neri (Torino, 1980), letter II, p. 628: "C'è poi l'esercizio della pietà, che nutre l'anima con i pensieri divini. Che cosa vi è dunque di più beato che imitare in terra il coro degli angeli? E subito, al principiare del giorno, accingersi alla preghiera e onorare il Creatore con inni e cantici? E poi, quando già il sole risplende puro, volgersi al lavoro,

comunque accompagnati dalla preghiera, e condire con inni, come con il sale, le nostre opere? Poiché i comfort che vengono dagli inni donano all'anima disposizioni di letizia e immunità da tristezza'.

Cfr. also the Benedictine 'Ora et labora', and ch. XLVIII of the Rule, De opera manuum cotidianam: 'quia tunc vere monachi sunt, si labore manuum suarum vivunt, sicut patres nostri et Apostoli'.

14. For all of this, see G. Penco, Spiritualità monastica, (Praglia, 1988), p. 252ss. The author gives an ample survey of monastic writings, ancient, medieval and also recent opinions concerning unity of prayer as sacrifice of praise in all its forms. Then he points to the dissociation, from the end of the Middle Ages, between the two elements object-sacramental and subjective-spiritual, at times with the predominance of the first (only liturgical and ritual) and other times with the predominance of the other (exclusively interior and lacking a sacramental base).

For the unity and harmony of the two components from the Orthodox point of view, cfr. especially D. Staniloae, "La liturgie de la communauté et la liturgie intérieure dans la vision philocalique," in Gestes et Paroles dans les diverses familles liturgiques (Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 1978), pp. 259-273. Staniloae underlines how even the Philokalia, that by its nature draws attention primarily to the interior states of the one who prays, does not forget to attribute an adequate importance also to Eucharistic Communion as a means of spiritual growth of the Christian.

15. C. Serna Gonzales, "Appunti per un manifesto," in Il Regno, 39 (1994), 518.

16. J. Gribomont, ed., Vita copta di Pacomio, (Padova: Ed. Messaggero, 1980), p. 76.

17. L. Mortari, ed., Cirillo di Scitopoli, Storie monastiche del deserto di Gerusalemme, (Praglia, 1990), pp. 218-219.

18. Theodoret of Cyrrus, Historia religiosa 13, recounts as emblematic the case of the monk Macedonius who was ordained during the Mass without becoming aware of it and then when he realized it became furious against the Bishop and the other monks, even threatening them with a stick.

19. D. Staniloae, "La Trasparenza della Chiesa rispetto a Cristo sul fondamento del battesimo," in Sussidi biblici, n. 19 (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni San Lorenzo, 1988), 29.

20. Madre Eufrasia, "Intervento alla VI assemblea

generale del Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese, Vancouver, 1983," Mondo e Missione, 24 (1983), 655ss.

21. Il santo starec Amvrosij, edited by the Nuns of the Russian Monastery of Rome, (Praglia, 1993), pp.68-70.

22. And also, although in a different way, monasticism is able to be a bridge between Christianity and other world religions, if it pays delicate and profound attention to the ascetical and contemplative values of the great non-Christian cultures. But it is necessary, in these cases, not to indulge in easy transpositions and superficial comparisons, as perhaps has happened in many attempts made so far in comparison with Hinduism and Buddhism. Analogies that can easily be made and even the very values of the three fundamental vows (charity, poverty, obedience) can lead into error, if one does not sufficiently consider that the general frame of reference is profoundly different in metaphysical, anthropological and ethical points (for Hinduism dominated by karma, by reincarnation and by a hierarchy according to caste, and for Buddhism by its irreducible atheism).

23. J. Zizioulas, "Cristologia, pneumatologia, e istituzioni ecclesiastiche," in Cristianesimo nella storia, 1981, pp.111ss.

According to this Orthodox theologian, now Metropolitan of Pergamo, 'it is not enough to speak of eschatology and communion as necessary aspects of pneumatology and of ecclesiology; it is necessary to make these two aspects constitutive of ecclesiology. By constitutive I mean that they must qualify the very ontology of the Church. The Spirit is not something which animates a Church that in some way already exists. The Spirit makes that the Church is. Pneumatology does not refer to well being but to the very being of the Church. It is not a question of a dynamism that comes on top of the essence of the Church. It is precisely the very essence of the Church'.

A3 (in founts)