

# The role of the Koinonikon in the Orthodox Liturgy

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## Abstract

This study attempts to reaffirm the fundamental liturgical role of the Koinonikon in the Holy Liturgy. The introduction points to the importance of the Eucharistic communion that potentiates the state of prayer of the man mystically united with Christ and immerses him in an atmosphere of meditation or introversion, which assigns specificity to the psalmody. In the context of this liturgical moment, in a very special way, the organic relation between the Eucharist and psalmody is highlighted. Then, the actual analysis takes into debate a series of ideas and topics, such as the function, development and compositional genre of Koinonikon, its place in the Eucharistic ritual, its inadequate replacement with the sermon or other chants, etc. The main conclusion of this research is that, in liturgical practice, despite the trends of the time, the use of Koinonikon should not be abandoned by replacing or substituting it with various incorrect practices introduced relatively recently, which are not in accordance with the Orthodox tradition and which must be eradicated.

## Keywords:

Holy Liturgy, Eucharist, Koinonikon, psalmody

## Introduction

The Holy Liturgy is the central moment of the community liturgical life and the highest spiritual hypostasis of the divine-human encounter. Within it there is an accumulation of spiritual states, personified in prayers of thanksgiving, request and praise. They are fingerprinted by the mystical element of the transformation of bread or wine in the Body and Blood of the Savior and of union with Him through the Eucharist. Practically the entire daily liturgical service converges to the highest

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moment, that is, that of union with Christ through the Eucharist, while the Sunday Liturgy, Resurrection Liturgy represents the culmination of the entire weekly cycle. Thus, the Liturgy becomes communion or koinonia and that is why most of the liturgical scales should be provided by all the faithful present at the service and that is why most of the liturgical chants should be provided by all the faithful present at the office.

In the orthodox spirituality the ritual of the Holy Communion takes place exclusively within the Holy Liturgy and takes place in an organic relationship with the psalm and prayer. This moment of mystical encounter and unity of man with Christ enhances the state of prayer, which plunges into an atmosphere of meditation or introvert that attributes specificity to the psalmody. This is provided by wide, slow chants, with many vocalizations, called koinonia chants and which have a special ethos. Its represent, par excellence, aesthetic melodic archetypes and therefore we will try to reaffirm the fundamental liturgical role of the koinonia chants within the Holy Liturgy. Therefore, this study will argue that the hymns associated with Holy Communion should conform to traditional patterns of hymnography and musical practice, to the extent that the current structure of the use of the Koinonikon chants is we believe inappropriate.

### **The liturgical function of the Koinonikon**

The main liturgical moments of jubilation, musical virtuosity, melodic<sup>1</sup> climax by which the internalized<sup>2</sup> states of the believers are transformed into moments of exaltation are the Trisagion Hymn, the Heruvic Hymn and the Koinonikon Hymn. In all these important liturgical moments, we witness the emergence of the chants of the calophonic idiom of Heruvic, Koinonikon or hyphenated type, in which the word receiving many sounds is delayed until it almost loses its meaning. These culminate in the hyphen, a composition that contains meaningless words, but which again symbolically expresses theology about man's encounter with God. However, these are pieces dedicated to excellence of the psalter, the specialist, who requires skill and vocal virtuosity.

The Koinonikon (from Gr. Κοινωνικόν = what is common) is the hymn that is sung during of Koinonia (Holy Communion). Its main function is to direct the attention of the faithful towards the Eucharistic celebration and its role is to provide a textual and musical accompaniment appropriate to the sacred ritual of

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Lingas, „The Genesis of this Project” in *The Divine Liturgy in English. Byzantine Chant recorded at Holy Rosary Church*, (CD booklet by Cappella Romana), Cappella Romana, Portland, OR, 2008, p. 7

<sup>2</sup>Iacob Yameos, *Principalele aspecte ale istoriei muzicii bisericești*, trad. Luca Mirea, Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2010, p. 41

the Eucharist. It also has the role of reminding and individualizing each every Holly Liturgy<sup>3</sup>. During the Eucharist, the Koinonikon preserves the intelligibility of the hymnographic text, and through its melodic phrases and prolonged musical vocals, he leads the prayer, beyond the search for the senses, in the heart and to that spiritual feeling<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, the whole office is edified and culminates in the moment of the Eucharistic communion. Thus, its liturgical context involves the preparation of the hearts and souls of people to receive the Holy Gifts. Here, the mind descends into the heart the soul sits, rests, internalizes, stays in the state imprinted by the sound ethos and resonates with the psalters. It is the time of preparation for the great meeting of the Eucharist. Everything is suspended, the mind gathers, the prayer climbs above the words and only the echoes of the sounds of a hyphen are heard as if in a continuous spiral. A state of settlement and exaltation is created, which the old psalms knew to use for the strictly spiritual purpose of prayer, to express or articulate feelings of gratitude to God.

### **Historical development of the Koinonikon**

The first hypostases of the Koinonikon are found in the Primary Church<sup>5</sup>, where the hymn of the communion of priests and believers<sup>6</sup> consisted, it seems, of the integral intonation of a psalm in a responsible manner<sup>7</sup>. For example, in the ordination of the Liturgy of the Holy Evangelist Mark the Koinonikon was composed of Psalm 150<sup>8</sup>. According to the liturgical tradition, recorded in writing as early as the fourth century, the researchers were able to easily discover evidence, which clearly indicated what was sung during the Eucharist in different periods. Based on these they were able to argue, which were the liturgical texts

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<sup>3</sup>Dimitri E. Conomos, *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D. C., 1985, p. 15-16

<sup>4</sup>Nicholas Madden, „Aisthesis noera (Diadochus-Maximus)”, in *Studia Patristica: Late Greek Fathers, Latin Fathers after Nicea, Nachleben of the Fathers*, vol. XXIII, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Peeters, Louvain, 1989, p. 53

<sup>5</sup>Christian Troelsgård, „Koinōnikon”, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, second edition, XIII*, ed. Stanley Sadie & John Tyrrell, McMilian, London, 2001, p. 744

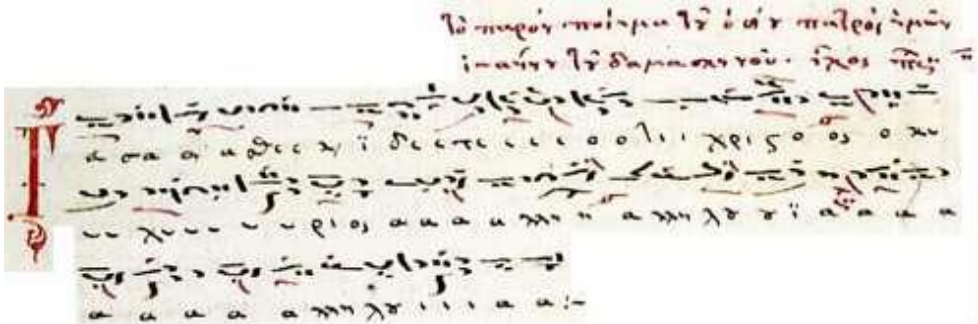
<sup>6</sup>Ioannis Foundoulis, *Dialoguri liturgice*, III, trad. Sabin Preda, Editura Bizantină, București, 2009, p. 88

<sup>7</sup>Andrew Louth. *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 20

<sup>8</sup>Charles Edward Hammond, Frank Edward Brightman, *Liturgies, eastern and western, being the texts, original or translated, of the principal liturgies of the church: Eastern liturgies*, vol. I, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1896, p. 97-99

that accompanied the Holy Communion ceremony and were sung at all the liturgical services, regardless of the celebration<sup>9</sup>.

Among the oldest hymns, used from the fourth to the ninth century, is Psalm 33, 9 *Taste and see that the Lord is good, Alleluia*, attributed to Saint John of Damascus<sup>10</sup>, who is known today as a hymn of the *Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts*<sup>11</sup>.



The Koinonikon Hymn, *Taste and see*, the plagal second mode, attributed according to tradition, to Saint John of Damascus (late Middle Byzantine notation), in Mrs. BAR 27820, f. 256r.

This it was chanted in the responsorial singing style (call and response) or antiphonal form (verse and refrain). In other words, a psalter chanted every verse or half verse and the community responded with verse 9 as a refrain. It had a simple melody, easy-to-learn by the community, which was run by psalter.

Another very old hymn that served as a Koinonikon in the primary Church<sup>12</sup> is Psalm 115, 4 *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the*

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<sup>9</sup>Helen Breslich-Erickson, „The communion Hymn of the Byzantine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts”, in *Studies in Eastern Chant*, ed. Miloš Velimirović, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, p. 64-65

<sup>10</sup>Sophronios Eustratiades, „Ho Hagios Ioannes ho Damaskenos kai ta poietika autou erga”, *Nea Sion*, 26, 1931, p. 385-401

<sup>11</sup>Such a Holy Liturgy without anaphora is attested for the first time in Egypt, by the historian Socrates in his *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 22. It is also mentioned at the Copts from Egypt, where she survived until the X-XI centuries. Cf. Robert Taft, „La fréquence de l'eucharistie à travers l'histoire”, *Concilium*, 172, 1982, p. 34; Séverien Salaville, *Liturgies orientales. La Messe*, vol. 1, Librairie Bloud et Gay, Paris, 1942, p. 53-54; Sebastia Vincenc Janeras, „La partie vespérale de la Liturgie Byzantine des Présanctifiés”, in *OCF*, 30, 1964, p. 193-222

<sup>12</sup>Dimitri E. Conomos, *op. cit.*, p. 15-16

*Lord*. Also, a second verse of psalm quite frequently<sup>13</sup> used in the Eucharist ritual, along with the other ones mentioned, is the text of Psalm 148, 1 *Praise the Lord from Heavens, Alleluia*, also called the Sunday Koinonikon of Eucharist. Moreover, the tipiconal rules subsequent to the centuries IX-X will indicate a major change, which will be contoured by the liturgical tradition, after which Psalm 33, 9 (*Taste and see ...*) will be replaced by Psalm 148, 1 (*Praise the Lord ...*). Thus, this Koinonikon will become representative of one of the most important composition classes of the papadic idioms. It will also become the creation with the highest degree of representativeness registered by the manuscript<sup>14</sup> tradition of this category of chants. Regarding the repertoire of the Eucharist, Dimitri E. Conomos even talks about the existence of a pre-octoechal<sup>15</sup> musical model, meant to ensure a formal and melodic unitary structure. Later, in the period between the XII-XIII<sup>16</sup> centuries, it will be borrowed from an important segment of this class of compositions. Thus, although they are simple in their origin, it seems that these hymns will become chants with archetypal value, whose basic characteristics will be found in the late and post-Byzantine Byzantine repertoires, dispersed in a modal diversity.

The development of Christian hymnography in the second half of the first millennium will naturally lead to the enrichment of this poetical-musical genre. This fact will be reflected concretely in the diversification that this compositional class will know. Thus, by the 9th century we will find several Koinonikon hymns mentioned, which will already form a complete repertoire, which will individualize the great celebrations of the liturgical year. Also, until the first decades of the fifteenth century, the tipiconal tradition will record the presence of 22 texts, which will be the basis of the evolution and final sedimentation of this genre. During this time, to the hymns originating from psalms or other scriptural texts, others will be added whose poetic form will depend on the mentioned sources<sup>17</sup>. For example, in this situation are the Koinonia texts of the Great

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<sup>13</sup>Thomas H. Schattauer, „The Koinonikon of the Byzantine liturgy: An Historical Study”, in *OCP*, 49, 1983, p. 98-100

<sup>14</sup>Dimitri E. Conomos, „Comunion Chants in Magna Graecia and Byzantium”, in *JAMS*, 33, 1980, p. 98-99

<sup>15</sup>Idem, *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music...*, p. 64

<sup>16</sup>Idem, „Psalmody and the Comunion Cycle”, in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 25, 1981, p. 47-48. The musicologist demonstrates that this archetypal melodic structure was indeed the Sunday Koinonikon Αἰνεῖτε τὸν Κύριον ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλληλοῦσα (Psalm 148, 1 *Praise the Lord from Heavens, Alleluia*).

<sup>17</sup>An inventory of the psalms converted into Koinonikon hymns was made by the Byzantinologist Nicolae Gheorghîță in his book dedicated to the genre. List of Koinonikon

Thursday – *Your supper* – and that of Holy Easter – *The Body of Christ you receive*.

As I mentioned, the texts will gradually diversify and will have themes directly related to the symbolism and content of the celebrations. Through this textual diversification, after the 9th century, the Koinonikon hymns will acquire the role of highlighting the theme of each holiday. Therefore, after their use, they will become hymns for Sunday, weekly hymns, feasts hymns or other occasions of the liturgical year and will cover the entire time interval related to the Eucharist of priests and believers<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, a psalmodic verse will often be chosen for a celebration, because its content was linked to the significance and symbolism of that feast. For example, verse 26 of Psalm 117 was matched with the Sunday of the Flowers, thanks to the words *Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord* (εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου).

The textual diversification will naturally lead to a modal enrichment of this musical genre, which will develop in the XIII-XIV centuries in original creations characterized by a very floral melos. This melismatic style will monopolize the creation of the Koinonikon music, will constitute a reviriment in the field and will influence the musical creation of the protoplasts from the Romanian countries. Their creation will fit into the parameters of the Byzantine ecclesiastical style of the time<sup>19</sup> and will be characterized by a continuous monody, freely unfolded in a richly ornamented melismatic calophonic style. We remind here that the oldest Koinonikon hymns written by the Romanians psalts are those kept in the manuscripts belonging to the Musical School of the Putna monastery<sup>20</sup>. On the tabs of the 12 codices made in the Musical School from Putna monastery we find one of the first musical creations belonging to a Romanian psalt the 38 Koinonikon hymns composed by Evstatie Protopsaltu<sup>21</sup>, characterized by the

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hymns see at Nicolae Gheorghită, *Chinonicul duminical în perioada post-bizantină (1453 – 1821). Liturgică și muzică*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2007, p. 12-24

<sup>18</sup>Arhid. Prof. Dr. Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, *Lexicon pentru cursurile de Paleografie muzicală bizantină, muzică psaltică, tipic, liturgică, immografie*, Academia de Muzică, București, 1992, p. 16

<sup>19</sup>Gheorghe Ciobanu, „Introducere”, în *Izvoare ale muzicii românești, vol. IV – Documenta. Școala muzicală de la Putna. Manuscrisul nr. 1-26/Iași. Antologhion*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1981, p. 5-6

<sup>20</sup>Dimitri E. Conomos, „The Monaster of Putna end the Musical Tradition of Moldavia in the Sixteenth Century” in Anne E. Pennington, *Music in Medieval Moldavia – 16th century*, ediție bilingvă îngrijită de Titus Moisesescu, Editura Muzicală, București, 1985, p. 237

<sup>21</sup>Titus Moisesescu, *Muzica bizantină în spațiul cultural românesc*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1996, p. 128 și 150

Slavist Anne E. Pennington from Oxford as “one of the most remarkable figures from the cultural life of Moldova of its time”<sup>22</sup>.

### **Current problems**

Unfortunately, the current trends testify to a deterioration of the liturgical practice of this essential moment of the Liturgy, especially since the original meaning and symbolism of the Eucharistic communion is largely, we could say, undermined. Thus, the question is justified “Why is Koinonikon called the hymn of communion if it is not sung during the Eucharist”? But, this question comes from a misunderstanding of this moment of the Liturgy. For an ordinary believer who attends the Holy Liturgy, it may seem very good that Holy Communion begins when the priest comes out of the altar and invites people to the Eucharist. It should be mentioned here that, in current practice, this occurs at the end of the chanting of the Koinonikon. However, the communion with the Body and Blood of Christ begins during of the Koinonikon and not after the invitation phrase “*With the fear of God ...*”. In other words, believers are simply invited to come and take part in an act that has already begun. It is true that the liturgical terminology distinguishes between “the communion of the clergy” and “the communion of the believers”. But, there are no two communions, but only one. The clergy are not separated from the believers when we refer to the Eucharist, but it is only a logical order of the ritual swinging. Therefore, the essence of the Eucharist has to do with unity and communion, and the hymnological context should reflect this.

However, the current practice is fragmenting the unity of the Eucharistic act through different wrong practices. These are, of course, recent introductions. First, the closing of the Holy Gates during the Eucharist of the clergy prevents believers from not noticing that Holy Eucharist is in full swinging. This causes the believers to sit down and consider this moment unimportant. Second, it is inappropriate, we believe, to gather donations at this culminating moment of the Liturgy, which causes noise and distracts attention. Third, preaching the sermon, whose place and context are after the Bible readings. And, fourthly, which is undoubtedly a consequence of the previous ones, the discontinuation of the Koinonikon by the introduction of other hymns. Thus, we have to do with one hymn for the Eucharist of the clergy and another for the one of the believers. Therefore, these practices, we think are inappropriate for the liturgical moment, clearly break the continuity and unity of the Eucharistic communion. Going back to tradition, we believe that the original integrity of the Eucharist could be

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<sup>22</sup>Anne E. Pennington, *Music in Medieval Moldavia – 16th century - Muzica în Moldova medievală (secolele XV-XVI)*, ediție bilingvă îngrijită de Titus Moisesescu, Editura Muzicală, București, 1985, p. 100

restored. In other words, according to the liturgical order mentioned, the Koinonikon should cover the whole act of the Eucharist without any interruption, but only for a moment by the invitation of the priest “*With the fear of God ...*”<sup>23</sup>.

The disappearance of the general communion of the believers left a void, which sought to be completed by introducing the sermon in place of the Koinonikon. In other words, Eucharist with the Body and Blood of the Lord was replaced by sharing with God the Word through sermon<sup>24</sup>. Even when the believers are shared with the Holy Sacraments, the preaching at Koinonikon<sup>25</sup> cannot be motivated as an immediate preparation for the Eucharist. This moment must be one of increased inner concentration in order to prepare for Holy Communion, which will follow in a few minutes<sup>26</sup>. However, this current practice is wrong and contradicts the logic of the liturgical act, in which the sharing of the word of God is the center of the Liturgy of the Word. The text of the Liturgy shows us that immediately before the believers share, the Koinonikon is sung and special prayers are spoken, acts meant to help the believers prepare for the meeting with Christ. The sermons, as preparation for Eucharisty, are reserved for another context, within the Liturgy of the Word<sup>27</sup> and not before the Eucharist. From a spiritual point of view, this is inappropriate both in terms of the nature of the sermon, which has as its origin the role of explication the biblical readings as well as its place that is, it must be logically said immediately after reading the biblical

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<sup>23</sup>Robert F. Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom; Volume V: The PreCommunion Rites*; Chapter VI The Communion Psalmody or „Koinonikon”, *OCA*, 261, Rome 2000, p. 296

<sup>24</sup>Thomas Hopko, „The Liturgical Sermon”, in *St. Vladimir Theological Quaternary*, 41, 1997, p. 182

<sup>25</sup>In favor of this tendency, the following argument was made. The priest, who has just shared himself, bears the fullness of Christ's life. That is, he is a Christophor, a bearer of the Eucharistic Christ. This argument is not correct, because the priest is a Christopher and before he shared himself into the respective Liturgy because he shared himself so many times before. This statement is not correct. The priest is a Christophor and before sharing himself in the respective Liturgy, because he shared himself so many times before. Then, at that Liturgy through biblical readings he shared himself of the word of God, which he must immediately impart to the believers. Therefore, we notice a parallelism of the two parts of the Holy Liturgy. The priest, after he shared himself in the Liturgy of the Word from the word of God, exposes it by sermon to the believers, and at the Eucharistic Liturgy, after he shared himself with the Body and Blood of the Lord, he shares the believers with the Holy Sacraments.

<sup>26</sup>Juan Mateos, „La Célébration de la parole dans la Liturgie byzantine: Etude historique”, in *OCA*, 191, 1971, p. 180-181

<sup>27</sup>Pr. Prof. Dr. Petre Vintilescu, *Liturghierul explicat*, IBMBOR, București, 1998, p. 197



texts. Therefore, the two ways of sharing with Christ, by word, respectively by His Body and His Blood, are not excluded or not substituted for each other, but are mutually assumed, the sharing by word being a preparation for sharing with the Holy Sacraments<sup>28</sup>.

Another problem was determined by the penetration of choral music in the Orthodox liturgical cult in our country. This favored the birth of a new genre, somewhat equivalent to the Koinonikon, named after the Slavic tradition *pricestina*<sup>29</sup>, namely the choral concert<sup>30</sup>, which took the place of the traditional genre, this practicing in both liturgical and concertistic environments. Under the influence of the choral liturgical concert will be born what we could call the concert in psaltic notation. If we were to judge him by his specific elements, that is, destination, melos, literary or musical content and its extension in the musical area of some psalms, this could be an equivalent of the Koinonikon. Of course, there is confusion between the Koinonikon, church creation par excellence and *pricestina*, the fruit of godliness or popular religious creation. The Koinonikon, unlike this, has a verse from the psalms, with a specific content for Sunday, the feast or the respective day and is part of the papadic tact of a well-established byzantine Ecclesiastical mod. The *pricestina* does not have the specific melody of a byzantine mod and is an extra-modos creation, outside the byzantine mod, a creation that belongs to the people<sup>31</sup>. At the same time, the songs of the Holy Liturgy involve communion, that is, they are meant to maintain a balance between *nepsis* (watchfulness) and *introvert*<sup>32</sup>. The primary church used monodic chants, which evolved during the Byzantine period into music of the people. This ethos is well illustrated by St. Ignatius of Antioch, who describes the liturgical communion as a harmonious lyric: "Make a choir of you, that in one voice and in one mind, taking the main note (chroma) of God, sing in unison with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, who will hear and hear you and recognizes you in your good

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<sup>28</sup>Pr. Alexandre Schmemmann, *Euharistia. Taina Împărăției*, trad. Boris Răduleanu, Anastasia, București, 1993, p. 82

<sup>29</sup>In the Romanian language, from a terminological point of view, the term comes from the Slavic word "прѣчѣстїна", ("prĕčĕstina") and designates a chant dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

<sup>30</sup>Vasile Vasile, *Profiluri de muzicieni români. Sec. XIX-XX*, vol. I, Editura Muzicală, București, 1986, p. 182

<sup>31</sup>Lucia Vetrici, *Dicționarul tânărului muzician*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică R.A., București, 2007, p. 80

<sup>32</sup>Athanasios Vourlis, *Δογματοθηκικά όψεις της ορθοδόξου ψαλμωδίας (Doctrinal aspects of Orthodox psalmody)*, Kouloura, Atena, 1994, p. 95-96

deeds, as brothers of His Son. It is good for you, therefore, to be in perfect unity so that you can be partakers of God at all times”<sup>33</sup>.

The great weight of the ecteniens in the ecfonetic, recitative style, to which are added the Great Responses and many other liturgical answers, is an element that gives the liturgy a dynamic and at the same time mystical appearance. Therefore, the Koinonikon converges with the highest moment of the Holy Liturgy, the one of union, of the koinonia with Christ in the Eucharistic way. The Koinonikon, unlike by pricestina, does not have the roll of encouraging spectacle or sentimental sonorities. Therefore, these substitute chants are inappropriate and irrelevant to the cycle of the Eucharistic communion and the Koinonikon cannot be replaced by them, for the simple purpose of animating or not boring the people.

A current problem in our Church is caused by the lack of preparation of the psalts, in which, often, it is not invested enough, not only in financial aspect, but also as an image or of the psalt “institution”. An incorrect, modest performance of the psalt should provoke a reaction of the clergy to invest all the forces available to remedy a negligent, false and simplistic chanting. Moreover, if the psalt has insufficient knowledge or skills in byzantine musical tradition (as often happens), the innographic text becomes blurred, the chanting becomes monotonous and the community loses any sense of the hymn's words. In such cases, the only person in the Church who understands the meaning of the Koinonikon is the psalt.

However, in the churches where there are professionally prepared psalts, the Koinonikon is sung in the Papadic style, whose ample vocals and sophisticated<sup>34</sup> musical embroideries give the impression of melodic self-sufficiency and a detachment of words, which through the memory of its prototypes, keeps in touch with the sacred text and their dogmatic content. This style of asthmatic<sup>35</sup> chanting is characterized by the application of long and extended musical phrases to relatively short texts<sup>36</sup>. To them are added those seemingly meaningless chain-

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<sup>33</sup>St. Ignatios of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, ch. 4. Series: The Fathers of the Church, vol. I, CUAP, Washington D.C., 1962, p. 89

<sup>34</sup>Victor Giuleanu, *Melodica bizantină*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1981, p. 115

<sup>35</sup>Maria Dora Spadaro, „Sulla liturgia dell’Inno «Akathistos»: «quaestiones chronologicae»”, in *La mariologia nella catechesi dei Padri (età postnicena)*, ed. S. Felici, LAS, Roma, 1991, p. 247-264

<sup>36</sup>Andrija Jakovljević, „Koukouzeles’ part in the funeral service of mediaeval Serbia and Byzantium”, in: *Cyrrillomethodianum*, vol. I, Association hellénique d’études slaves, Thessaloniki, 1971, p. 130; Edward V. Williams, „A Byzantine Ars Nova: the 14 th-century reforms of John Koukouzeles in the chanting of Great Vespers”, in: *Aspects of the Balkans. Continuity and change*, ed. by H. Birnbaum and S. Vryonis jr., Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, Haga-Paris, 1972, p. 212

linkages of syllables te-re-re, ne-ne-na, to-ro-ro, ti-ti-ti, etc., titled Kratima<sup>37</sup> (hyphens) and passages intended to repeat the hymnographic message in another musical form, introduced by words such as λέγε (say) and πάλιν (again). However, the length of the chants is not a wish in itself.

Unfortunately, most people feel an aversion to the endless vocals, extended and murmured by a single psalt (as opposed to a choir)<sup>38</sup>. However, church music should not mirror the taste of the time or the cultural concerns and aptitudes of musicians or believers, but is called to make Christians partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven through the transfigured world of God's presence. The fundamental criterion of composition, interpretation, listening, copying and studying of old hymns was that being of bearers of grace. Every feature of the revealed Orthodox spirituality reflects Heaven on earth, and Christian art is an effect of the transcendent reality discovered to the saints. That is why the ancient melurgical creations targeted the Heaven and the transfiguration of man<sup>39</sup>.

Our words are incapable of expressing what happens in man's encounter with God and also powerless in praising God compared to the way He exists or communicates with us. The chanting comes to explain such a moment through this wordless melody, called a kratemata or teretismata, as an expression of man's inability to praise God through human words. The teretismata is the liturgical correspondent of hesychast theology and as hesychasm it is an invitation to man to rise above his thoughts or his reasoning for to attain union with God. Therefore,

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<sup>37</sup>The Teretismatas and nenanismatas or kratematas are essentially musical compositions written since the fourteenth century and especially in the post-Byzantine period. Also, there are musical compositions that do not use words, but rather syllables, such as te-ri-rem or ne-na-no. The Kratematas are often attached at the end of a chant, either to occupy time, or to serve as a musical digression or tangency. Its corresponded to Western translations tra-la-la and were the means by which composers could produce musical creations that flowed at a regular rate without the constraint of words.

<sup>38</sup>They consider that the whole procedure is in exacerbating mod exaggerated by the introduction by the salt of the meaningless syllables in the psalm lyrics. Saint Nicodemus himself was unequivocally against them as is very clear from his Commentary on canon 75 of the Sixth Ecumenical Synod in Constantinople. To be seen St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, Agapius the Monk, „*The Rudder (Pedalion) of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Orthodox Christians*”, trans. D. Cummings, The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, Chicago, 1957, p. 286

<sup>39</sup>We find this idea in St. Maximus the Confessor in his Mystagogy and it is explained by René Bornert, „La Mystagogie de Saint Maxime le Confesseur: Les Commentaires byzantins de la divine Liturgie du VII au XV siècle”, in *Archives de l'Orient chrétien*, vol. 9, Institut français d'études byzantines, Paris, 1966, p. 83-124

the kratemata or the teretismata expresses the apophatical theology musically, in the sense of the impossibility of man to glorify God through by words.

### **Conclusions**

The principal role of the Byzantine liturgical repertoire, characterized by certain dynamicity, is that it for giving value to the sung texts. However, hymns such as the Koinonikon or Heruvic are true sonic archetypes, which express musically the apophatical theology. These are pieces composed of classical melodic formulas, which aim to suspend our mind in an ecstatic state above the liturgical words. In other words, these hymns have the role of empowering the prayerful community for meditation, introvert and preparation for the sacramental moment of the Eucharist.

The Koinonikon is specific to the compositional genre of the calophonic idiom in Byzantine music, which demands a high level of musical knowledge and vocal virtuosity. By composition he belongs to a particular melodic style, integrable of course in a Byzantine canon, characterized by melismatic generosity, variety of rhythmic structures, improvisational fantasy in his melodic proliferation and architectural rigor. Due to the overwhelming respect of his conventional character, the Koinonikon manages to surprise and to engage the listeners in a state of meditation, spiritual settlement or nepsis (watchfulness) of the mind and heart. Therefore, in liturgical practice, despite the tastes of the time, the Koinonikon should not be abandoned or replaced it with various incorrect “ordinances” (practices) introduced recently, which are not in accordance with Orthodox tradition and must be eradicated.