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**Children’s pastoral care and their integration
into the liturgical life of the church**

-PhD thesis -

Abstact

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Key words: Pastoral theology, Christian pedagogy, pastoral care, children, Christian family, liturgical life of the Church, parish, Church, secularism, catechetical projects, current pastoral solutions.

Introduction

The importance, the timeliness and the motivation of the choice of the theme. The basis of this research was an evangelical thought about the attention given by Christ the Savior to the Apostle Peter immediately after His Resurrection from the dead. The three fold question: "Simon, the son of Jonah, do you love Me?" (John 21:15) is explained not only by the will of forgiveness and restitution of the Apostle Peter among the other apostles but also by His will as the Apostle Peter, apostles and their descendants, bishops and priests, to constantly care for the salvation of all those who believe in Him by their word, giving them the spiritual food they need, since Christ, after the affirmative answer, tells Peter: "My sheep pass away!" (John 21:17).

The doctoral project we propose, entitled **The children's pastoral care and their integration into the liturgical life of the Church**, it is not only a theological concern but also a social, psychological, medical and philosophical concern. Thus, the priest is called to be: a parent (for the spiritual sons, and here we include the sons of the sons), a psychologist (for those who come to him as a psychologist and tell about various events, his role being to redirect to the real wound – the sin –, to penetrate repentance, and the wounds of family crises are not to be ignored), a doctor (to bandage the wounds of the spiritual son and to prescribe the most appropriate treatment) and a philosopher (in the sense of mastering the art of words as St. Paul did in the Areopag to win the man of today's world, to do all things, at the urge of the paulin, especially today when the "new" world of the "new man" is connected and encompassed of a "crazy thirst" to be seduced by the mirage of the virtual world).

Things get a more delicate and finer nuance, from a pastoral point of view, when we talk about children's pastoral care. Thus, both as a PhD researcher and as a parent or spiritual shepherd of the families entrusted at ordination, we feel on our shoulders the responsibility to attract attention, "again and again" - after a beautiful and profound liturgical expression, on the negative consequences of the gadgets (tablet, smartphone, computer, TV, and so on) on children, which are reflected in the way of thinking and action. More research has highlighted the following issues: the inability of children to learn; general difficulties in listening, memory,

reading, eye and hand coordination, rapid understanding of situations, communication, concentration and attention; the inability to make connections between information and to draw conclusions; children do not get a vocabulary, they do not get the meaning of words and they cannot put them in correct grammatical phrases, and when it comes to reading, they get bored quickly in front of the book because they lack the pictures they were used to on TV, and so on.

As a servant of the Church, being surrounded by the children of the parish, and understanding the importance of paying attention to the little parishioners, I thought it would be better to deepen the theme of childhood pastoral care, both theoretically and practically. We felt obliged to take care of raising the children of the parish in the faith of our Church, organizing catechetical activities and involving faithful believers who are so competent both in their pedagogical training and in their love for children. My need to collaborate with empowered people corresponds to the reality of the community life of the Church, where believers need to find a sense of existence within the parish community. Here we share the same faith, the same prayers, the same mission, the same care for the common spiritual good.

The state of research. In the writing of this thesis I used, in addition to general works, papers or studies of specialists in the field of children's pastoral care and of Christian pedagogy, who were concerned with the exposure and the presentation of the topics that directly referred to our research.

From the bibliographic sources, various and rich, which contain principles of Christian pedagogy and which formed the starting point in the present doctoral project, we can distinguish: Sophie Koulomzin, " Church and Our Children" (Translated by Doina Rogoti, Sophia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010); Mother Magdalena, "Tips for an Orthodox Education of Today's Children" (edited by Ioan Ica jr., Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2000) and "How to Communicate the Orthodox Faith to Children. Conversations, Reflections and other Advice "(Translated by Cristian Pop and I. Ica jr., Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2002); Vasilios Gh. Skiadas, "Educating, teaching, recreating the child from a pedagogical-Christian point of view" (translated into Romanian by Staicu Ciprian-Ioan Traian, Egumenița Publishing House, Galați, 2014); Elizabeth White, "The Wonderland. How do we plant Orthodox Christian virtues in the souls of our children? "(translated into Romanian by Luminița-Irina Niculescu, Sophia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007) and" Steps on Holiness. How to raise children loving God "(translated into Romanian by Doina Rogoti, Sophia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015);

Ioannis V. Kogoulis, "Churching the students - for a religious liturgical education "(Translated into Romanian by PS Mihail Filimon, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2012); David R. Smith, "Help! I get bored in the Church. How to participate with the whole our being at the Divine Liturgy "(translated into Romanian by Dragos Dâsca, Doxologia Publishing House, Iași, 2015); "The Orthodox Mother. The physical and the spiritual development of the child from birth to adolescence "(anthology made by Vladimir Zobren, translated by Marianas Cașu, Publishing House, Bucharest, 2017); Simeon Kraiopoulos, "Parents and Children. About the Children's Education. Theological, Spiritual and Psychological Approach "(Translated into Romanian by Prof. Dr. Constantin Coman and Garoafa Coman, Byzantine Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005 and 2011, for the second volume); pr. Nicolae Nicău "In the midst of the young people. Highlights for guiding youth groups in the Church "(Agaton Publishing House, Făgăras, 2015).

Also, from the field of pastoral theology, some works have been helpful to me whose authors approached the topic of the children's pastoral care tangential, in a few pages that make up parts of chapters or even subchapters that illustrate the ideas promoted in the chapter. Thus, the books: John Chryssavgis, "The Reunion of the Soul. The Art of Spiritual Guidance "(translated by Luminița-Irina Niculescu, Sophia Publishing House, Cartea Ortodoxa Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006); Archbishop Chrysostom of Etna, "Elements of Orthodox Pastoral Psychology" (Translated by Daniela Constantin, Biserica Ortodoxa Publishing House, Galati, 2003); Vladimir Vorobiev, "The Confessor and the Disciple. The eternity, the illnesses of the soul and the problems of today's Christians "(Translated by Gerorghita Ciocoi, Cartea ortodoxa Publishing House, Bucharest, 2009) have been of great help to us, given that works devoted exclusively to our research theme are very few limiting only to the presentation of the pastoral elements or references to the liturgical life of the children, without touching, however, the whole issue developed here. To this is added the work "Young people and the Church nowadays" elaborated by a group of people involved in the activities of the "the Archangels Michael and Gabriel" Counseling and Training Center of the Craiova Archdiocese, which is also an auxiliary of the priest in the parish.

From the foreign literature on Christian pedagogy and children's pastoral care, I read the following books: PhD Philip Mamalakis, "Parenting Toward the Kingdom: Orthodox Christian Principles of Child Rearing", Ancient Faith Publishing House, Chesterton, Indiana, 2016; Sister Magdalen, Alexander Schmemmann, "Children in the Church Today: An Orthodox

Perspective", St Vladimirs Seminary Pr, 1997; Saint John Chrysostom, "On Marriage and Family Life", St Vladimirs Seminary Pr, Reprint edition, 1986; Ann Marie Gidus-Mecera (author), Fr. Theodore Bobosh (Editor), Victoria Rentel Leath and Rita Fortier (Illustrator), "A Way of Life Introducing Your Child to Orthodox Faith", Orthodox Christian Publications Center, 1991; Robert Krantz, "Guide to the Divine Liturgy", Ellinas Multimedia, 2011.

The research questions/objectives. Below we will present some of the research objectives that we have been trying to follow, aware that they can be continually updated, being subject to time and new books discoveries:

- To identify the best methods of the children's pastoral care for their spiritual growth in the healthy environment of the Church;
- To prove that there is the possibility of familiarizing the children with the services of the Church so that they are no longer perceived as boring, but as spiritual desired events without affecting their liturgical integrity;
- To confirm the Church's contribution to the spiritual formation of the child.

The basis of any research is the hypothesis, understood as a prediction, plausible, credible, testable statement, and advancing an appropriate response to the problem investigated. This is how a set of assumptions emerged as landmarks in conducting the investigation:

- The family's lack of interest in the religious formation of children and the personal example of non-practicing the faith lead to an indifferent behavior of the children towards the Church's services and the devaluation of the faith;
- Children will assume the beliefs of the faith more easily if the religious education at home and at school is continued and sustained by the Church through parish activities with children;
- Engaging children in creative, educational and philanthropic actions and assuming responsibilities within the parish community contributes significantly to the shaping of long-lasting religious behavior in all spheres of activity and of presence of children, these becoming not only good citizens of the homeland but also citizens of Heaven;
- By love and kindness, by conviction and free choice the child becomes more receptive and interested in faith and in the practice of virtues;

Specification of the method (s) and of the research strategy. Regarding the methods and research strategy used, we can say that the analysis was an interdisciplinary one, which is

why we used several methods of research. Here are some of them: the historical method, the comparative, the analytical and the synthetic method.

The historical method has helped us to identify the best methods of the children's pastoral care for their spiritual growth in the healthy environment of the Church, and the analytical method will help us to respond to the pastoral and to the Christian pedagogy challenges. The comparative method has also contributed to a better understanding of what the religious education at home and at school means, education that is continued and sustained by the Church through parish activities with children.

The synthetic method was used when we tried to formulate some answers to the mentioned challenges and to prove, on the one hand, that there is the possibility of familiarizing the children with the services of the Church so that they are no longer perceived as boring, but as the expected spiritual events and desired, but without affecting their liturgical integrity, but also to confirm the contribution of the Church to the spiritual formation of the child.

The structure of the paper. The present paper is structured in four chapters with subchapters that develop the ideas presented in the chapters, and some subchapters are also branching out into other clarifying points of those previously asserted in such a way that the structure is a unitary one.

The first chapter, entitled **Concerns of Romanian Pastoral Theology**, has an introductory role and presents the stage of researches in the field of children's pastoral care as well as the pastoral concerns of the Romanian priests and hierarchs from the oldest times to the present day. It is structured in three subchapters and presents the concerns for the pastoral and spiritual growth of children by referring to the writings of some Romanian authors such as Archimandrite Melhisedec Ștefănescu, Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, Metropolitan Primat Atanasie, Prof. Ioan Gotcu, Father Archimandrite Iuliu Scriban, reverend Professor Petre Vintilescu and so on.

The second chapter, **Biblical, Dogmatic, Patristic and Psycho-pedagogical references for the Children's Pastoral Care**, developed in four subchapters quite large in length, bases the Church's care of children on the Holy Scripture, on the Holy Tradition, and on the scientific research in pedagogy and child psychology. First we searched for places in the Holy Scripture where children are spoken and where reference is made to how they are treated by adults.

The following pages are dedicated to the discussions and to the approaches to a theology of education, which always starts from anthropological premises, from truths of faith concerning the origin and the destiny of man, the dichotomic structure of man, the value and the importance of the human person, conscious and free, the synergy of salvation. This incursion into the space of the Orthodox dogmatics (the second subchapter of the second chapter, *Dogmatic Grounds for the Children's Education*, even this analyzes) justifies the steps for a Christian education and for the pastoral work of the priest in the parish, because we know man as an imperfect being, with the possibility of attainment perfection, with the inclination and the freedom to attain perfection or likeness to God through education, personal effort and divine help.

This was one of the reasons that determined us to appeal to the patristic writings in which we are concerned with the preoccupations of the Holy Fathers for the education of all ages. Based on faith and on the Orthodox doctrine, on love and brotherhood, the patristic education includes pedagogical principles and norms valid even today and which have become normative for the whole Church, since the writings of the Holy Fathers are the foundation of the whole Orthodox Theology. Patristic landmarks for the children's pastoral care are found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom. Among them, St. John Chrysostom stands out as a pioneer in the Christian pedagogy, as his theological reflections on the education of children are valid until today.

The last subchapter of the second chapter, entitled *Psycho-Pedagogical Directions for the Education of Children*, proposes an incursion in the area of psycho-pedagogy with the role of familiarizing the reader with concepts such as personality, temperament, skills and character, showing that there is the possibility of the pedagogical intervention for the correction of the errors, occurred inadvertently or imprudently. The Pedagogical intervention through educational methods is effective only when considering the stages of the child's psychological development as well as their specific characteristics.

Through all the developed subchapters I have sought, to the extent that sources of literature and my own research have allowed me, to show that, according to the Christian doctrine, the perfection of the human being means the valorization of the personal gifts received from God upon coming into the world, and especially at the entrance into the kingdom of God

through the Sacrament of the Holy Baptism. Valorification consists in updating the spiritual and the moral powers and in their cultivation in an orderly, methodical and harmonious manner.

Going along this line, we have shown what are *the Educational Implications for the formation of the religious and of the moral character of the child* (to see more broadly in the paper, where they are presented more extensively) and I have emphasized the interest of the Christian pedagogy in the formation of religious-moral character, through engaging the intellect to perceive the truth forever, without being prejudiced or influenced by the invariations of the moment, by directing the affectivity to embrace the selfless feelings and by the disciplining of the will to work continually to promote all that is good and elevating in man and for man. Of course, during these discussions, we did not overlook the themes related to what we call the *Psychological Development of the Child* (the title of one of the subchapters of this chapter, where three distinct periods of the child's life are deepened: *the first childhood, from birth to 3 years, pre-school, from 3 to 6 years, low school age, 6 to 10 years, middle school age, 10 to 13 years old*). Thus, in order to accomplish the work of forming the religious-moral character, the Christian pedagogy uses the results of the researches in the field of religious psychology. It is interested in knowing the means to realize the religious-moral character, but even more interested in knowing the subject with which it works to model it according to the principles of the Christian teaching.

The third chapter, entitled **The indirect pastoral care of the children: responsible and in charge with the religious growth of the children and their integration into the liturgical life of the church**, develops through its three subchapters to illustrate that the Church is continuously accountable by the special priesthood on the religious rise of the children, but at the same time it trains and involves all its members in this work, capitalizing on the universal priesthood. From this point of view, we are discussing the concept of the indirect pastoral care of children, through which we understand the work of the Church for the growth of children in the faith made through all its members, but especially through the child's fleshly parents, the God parents and the teacher of religion in school.

Far from being exhausted (the objectives of this chapter), we wanted to go deeper into the heart of the doctoral dissertation, pursuing a central idea, that the Church wishes to support the parents and the children in order to offer them the possibility of confrontation the temptations, by the conscious assumption of the Christian life, and the personal effort to maintain

on this saving life line. The solutions the Church offers can be summed up in one way: Jesus Christ. The Church teaches the parents and the children to live a new life united with the life of Christ. For this, it always invites the parents and the children to unite with Christ through the sacramental works of the Church, which are ordained to Christians to supplement the physical presence of the Savior after His ascension to heaven.

Integrated into the liturgical life of the Church through the religious education received in the family, at school, and in the parish, the children have the opportunity to experience a spiritual relationship with God to keep them "in the courts of the Lord" and to keep them from falling into the temptations and the evil of the contemporary world.

The Christian family becomes the basis of the ecclesial community, the mysterious connection between the family and the life of the Church being highlighted by St. Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians, when he says about the union of man and woman in a body that is a great mystery "in Christ and in the Church "(Ephesians 5:32).

A sensitive subject for today's world and to which we tried, as far as we could, to get closer to understand the phenomenon in its whole was *the Modern Technology and Child Education* through a complex analysis of four points: *The television and the mind of the children; The computer affects the child's natural development; Electronic games worse than television and computer and A big danger to children: the internet.*

Although we know the effects of television on the brain, for our time it has become an object that is almost present in any home, where it brings to the family fun, good time, banishes boredom, provides various health information, the weather, but, at the same time, in our homes enter through the television channels everything that is evil and dirty in our society: murder, violence, fornication, drugs, etc., as the Metropolitan Laurentiu underlines in one of his pastoral words. Moreover, parents tired of working or dealing with household chores, interested in business, well-being and comfort, prefer to leave children for hours in front of the TV, cartoons or various documentaries, ignoring the negative influences of the commercials, but also the unhealthy effects on the children's minds.

Changing the behavior of the children who become addicted to electronic means is a consequence of their negative influences on the child's nervous system. Children's psychiatrists in this case speak of intense optical excitement, correlated with great nervousness, continuous tension, and a delay in the development of the left brain of the brain. This explains why children

dependent on electronic means speak less, write and read less, and when they are forced, they become moody, misunderstanding what they read and they are unable to translate their thoughts into paper

Speaking of the people in charge with the children's Christian character formation, we have turned our attention from their fleshly parents to the spiritual fathers who have received this quality and spiritual responsibility since the baptism of their godsons. Elected for emotional or social reasons, pursuing more the material benefit, to the detriment of the spiritual one, today's godparents fulfill a formal role without knowing what work they are engaging in. Considering a lack of respect to refuse to be godparents, some accept to be godparents even if they are not Christian practitioners and even if they are alien to the faith of the Church. This is due to the lack of catechism of both the parents of the child and those who want to become the spiritual fathers at the Wedding and at the Baptism. From this point of view, the responsibility of the godparents and of the fleshly fathers for worthy and spiritual responsibility, not only at Baptism, but also further, is absolutely necessary.

In the face of these present challenges, of the attempt to empower either the parents or the godparents, the religious education in the school conducted through the Missionary of the Religion Teacher (the title of the third chapter) completes the one received in the family, from parents and grandparents and it clarifies the practicing of the faith in church and in society so that the children become teachers for younger children and even for their parents who have not had the chance of any spiritual cultivation through the class of Religion. For them, the religious knowledge is not entirely new, because the access to the church services was not obstructed unless the families in which they came were afraid of the fear and of the terror of the communist regime. The real and the sustained collaboration between the three main educational factors: the family, the School and the Church, contributes significantly to the spiritual growth of the child and to the perception of faith as a good of eternal value cultivated in the Church.

Chapter IV, The direct pastoral care of the children: the communication of the priest with the children of the parish, through its subchapters, is meant to be an itinerary about what the direct pastoral care of the children is, and also some possible pastoral-missionary solutions for the efficiency of the pastoral-missionary means of the Orthodox Church today.

A careful look at our parish churches, either from the city or from the village at the time of the church service, but especially the most important of these, the Holy Mass, puts us in a

position to confirm what Eugen Jurca, one of the theologians of our Church, said only a few years ago, namely that the child's involvement in the liturgical and in the Eucharistic life is quite precarious, except for the eventual Easter or Christmas celebrations.

Even today, almost three decades after the cessation of the prohibitions of practicing the faith, we find almost the same situation as the one presented earlier, although for 28 years, our children have religion teachers in schools. The religious knowledge acquired in school seems insufficient to churching the children.

A living parish, spiritually active, not only administrative, takes this responsibility seriously, finding bridges for communication with the parents of children in the parish territory, with older children and with those who became adolescents, involving them in the life of the parish, and always calling them to communicate with the Word of God at the Divine Liturgy.

One of the effective, safe and healthy means of raising children remains the sharing of the Body and of the Blood of Jesus Christ, but the way they relate to His Sacrament depends on us. Thus, even today, we can meet and even meet both parents and teachers and even priests by speaking to children of Holy Communion with great care that they do not cause any negative reaction to the Holy Communion. As children's imagination is rich enough, the use of this expression could lead to children's refusal to communion.

Mother Magdalene of Essex points out that sometimes our explanations can make children imagine flesh and bones, which means a great pastoral failure. It is enough for the children to hear the words of the Sacrament of the Eucharist proclaimed by the priest at the Holy Liturgy as those of the reception of the Holy Communion, the occasion of which the priest remembers the "Body and the Blood of the Lord". But when we talk to children about the Holy Communion, it is more appropriate and useful for them to talk about Christ, the Son of God, who loves us so much that he wants to spend more time with us. All these are widely discussed in a separate subchapter (*The Children's Communion, which is called: The Mystery of the Eucharist, food and strengthening for the little Christians*, and b) *the preparation of the children for communion*) and developed in the following, there is a linking between them fulfilling the image about Communion and the Confession of Children.

As far as the confession of the children is concerned, we would like to make a brief review of some details, and for those interested we recommend the subchapter of the *Children's Confession* with its subchapters. Thus, from the age of seven, the children have the opportunity

to experiment the sacred work of the Holy Sacrament of the Confession, since from this age they have the capacity to understand the difference between the good and the bad deeds, have the ability to feel the soul's pressing of sin and they can manifest their desire for spiritual relief by confessing their sins. Regarding the appropriate age for the commencement of children's confession, there have been several and different opinions that I have mentioned in the paper. Finally, the age of 7 was fixed, this being in accordance with the observations of psychologists and pedagogues regarding the emergence of the moral conscience in children.

Subchapter III of Chapter IV, titled "*Public Divine Worship, a mean of children's pastoral care*", is the background on which we have set the framework for answering the questions raised by the so-called "Innovative" "Proposals: services for children and young people such as the "liturgy of children", in the sense of the well-known "aggiornamento" existing in the Roman Catholic Church, which resorted to several reforms of the church life at the Second Council in Vatican (1961-1963). The involvement of the children in concrete liturgical activities creates a strong connection with God, on one hand and with the place of worship and the parish community on the other. The benevolent attitude of the priest and of the parish community strengthens this connection so that the children become an active presence from now on, as a living, concrete part of the Church. Ensuring the active participation of children at the public divine worship eliminates the need to shorten the services in accordance with children's ability to concentrate and the need to create services for them. We believe, and we have wanted to show this in the present work, that an incursion into the history of the Liturgy and a minimal effort to understand the mystical-symbolic significance of the Divine Liturgy lead us to the conviction that nothing can be removed from the Divine Liturgy. All parts of the Liturgy are connected to each other, all the moments of the Liturgy relate to the life and the activity of the Savior, so that whatever you remove from the Divine Liturgy it would mean to eliminate Christ.

Another means of children's pastoral care are the catechetical activities. Through these, the priest strives to help the children feel and enjoy the beauty of the new life in Christ that has begun since the Sacrament of the Holy Baptism. The spiritual content of the missionary-pastoral activities, maintained by Christocentric orientation, gives them value and assures reaching their purpose, because "there is no catechism in Christ without life in Christ, as we have received it by surrender from our forefathers", as one of the theologians of our Church points out (Rev. Dr. Constantin Valer Necula). Over time, with all its trials and difficulties, the Romanian Orthodox

Church did not lack the catechetical projects for children such as the National Project "Christ Shared to Children" and the National Project "Choose School", where children are helped to achieve spiritual, moral and civic maturity.

The last part of Chapter IV aims to demonstrate eloquently the efficacy of the parish center for children and young people, a place and a space free from daily agitation, from the stress of the society and destined for several types of activities such as artistic and cultural activities, the circle of painting, the circle of poetry and literature, the circle of crafts, the circle of music and of church music); social-philanthropic activities; relaxation and entertainment activities (sports activities, pilgrimages, excursions, hiking, Christian camps). This is when most young people see in the parish church, a place of elderly people, where they read and sing something they do not understand. But because the parish's activities are not limited to the service, the parish priest may organize activities in the parish center for children and youth to make young people change their perception of the Church and the parish. It all depends on how the priest addresses the call to children and to young people, how he prepares for the meeting / meetings with them, the atmosphere created by engaging discussions and to the subject so that the Parish Center becomes an environment that will offer them what it is in agreement with their expectations and searches.

The present thesis ends with some conclusive thoughts, which are the answers to some of our own and pastoral questions, both for those engaged in the mysteries of Christian pedagogy and of the pastoral care of children and for those who want to start from the conclusions of a thorough research on a bibliography updated and presented in the part entitled *Conclusions*, part that outlines the stages stated at the beginning of the doctoral research. Here are some of the conclusions we reached at the end of the first stage of our research work on the theme of children's pastoral care:

- Children's pastoral care and their integration into the liturgical life of the Church is a missionary priority of the priest in the parish, since the children of today are the Christians of tomorrow;
- Children become the Church's preference, in that the Church takes the love of children from Christ and fulfills it in the care of their spiritual growth with age;
- The Church, through its servants, ensures the spiritual growth of the children in the family through Christian parents. The Christian education in family is continued at school through the

Religion teachers and updated in the parish through the catechesis of the Church, by the parish priest and the entire parish community;

- According to the patristic writings, the religious education begins in childhood, but it does not stop here, it continues to be realized, in another frame and with other methods throughout life, the person having the capacity to acquire knowledge until deep old age, in order to gain perfection, that is, the likeness of man with God;
- In forming the child's personality, the educator takes into account the temperamental characteristics of each child and, using them, aims at educating the skills and the character;
- The success of the religious education of the child also depends on the knowledge of the mental structure of the subject to be educated. With the data provided by psychology, especially the psychology of children, the educator or the priest in our case will have much easier access to the children's heart. Thus, the child's mental development stages indicate to the educator the suitable pedagogical methods and means for education;

The Christian family is the cradle of faith and the school of life and of Christian formation. The religion of the child and its involvement in the liturgical life of the Church are the natural consequences of the family's attitude towards religion and faith;

- The responsibility for the formation of the Christian character of children belongs to both the physical and spiritual fathers from the Holy Baptism. The godfather's connection with his spiritual son continues after Baptism, both in terms of deepening the truths of faith, as well as in his conduct and spiritual growth within the Christian community, in this case, of the Church.
- The apostolate of the physical and of the spiritual fathers intertwines with the one of the Religion professor, called to make a mission among the Christian children in the public education. The mission of the religion teacher is medium, long and everlasting investment;
- the priest's connection with the child reflects the love of God directed toward it through the Church on the one hand, and the child's connection with the parish priest reflects the child's willingness to be made available to God through the Church, on the other hand;
- The communion of the child and of his companions is the most beautiful and lasting lesson of practicing the faith we can offer to the child. Sharing the child obligatorily, without the necessary training, with superstitious routings and without its example of sharing, they are erroneous approaches of parents by which no Eucharistic education of children is done at all;

- Special children's services do not exist in the Orthodox Church, except for the sacraments related to the Sacrament of the Holy Baptism, because the Church's services are done for all its members, since Christ sacrificed to all men;
- Children and young people feel more tied to the Church through their involvement in the concrete liturgical activities and in various parochial projects of a cultural, social or sport nature;
- The priest's proximity to the child, the love and the affection with which the community members come to church, to services, to the creative circles, or parochial catechesis are decisive to strengthening the spiritual bond between the child and the Church and the rehabilitators, if any child lost contact with the Church and his priest.

One of the general conclusions, given that the subject is extremely extensive, is that this analysis is not definitive, but only incorporates the results of its own research, based on the bibliographic sources, with the related conclusions aimed at illustrating eloquently the theme of the children's pastoral care with all the challenges of our time. We are convinced that attention directed at these "young exaltations" of the Church can play an important role in solving the complex problems of modern society, and can further form a Christian-Orthodox community on the "stone" of Christ.