

**Bulgarian Orthodox Church
Veliko Tarnovo Diocese
Mission Department**

**I.
Concept on the mission
of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church**

**II.
Supplement:
First Steps to practical implementation of mission**

The Concept and the First steps' supplement have been placed in the Holy Synod's Archives' Commission in June 2010, and in the Synod's Educational commission in November 2010 for consideration.

In December 2010 one of the two Orthodox Christian websites of Bulgaria placed the documents for reading and discussions to help Christians and hierarchs of the church in their consideration the role and importance of Christian mission, as exposed in the Concept, while the documents are being discussed on much larger scale, rather than only in the Synod. Here are the links:

<http://www.dveri.bg/content/view/12409/> - the text of the documents

http://www.dveri.bg/component/option,com_remository/Itemid,28/func,fileinfo/id,90 – the texts in Word file to be downloaded (for registered users only)

<http://www.dveri.bg/content/view/12418/29> – the discussion page.

All of them are in Bulgarian language.

**Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria
27 December 2010**

I. Conceptual Principles of the Mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church *

Introduction

The Conceptual principles (the Concept) of the mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church include three important subject matters in its content: ecclesiastical-theological foundations of Christian mission, methodology of missionary activity and practical aspects of mission. The theoretical description leads to revealing the means (the methodology) of doing mission which is then further developed to show how it is used in the practical activity of Christians in society.

The Concept, on the other hand, consists of two main parts of consideration: the first part gives the general view on the three main subject matters where church's mission has been described without referring to details, interpretations, citations or other references, and the second part reveals these generalized mission principles in more detail where mission ministry finds its grounds in the Holy Scriptures and the holistic teaching of the church.

The main content of the Concept is the following:

I. Main characteristics of Orthodox mission

1. The mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church as mission of the Christ's Church in the world
2. Theological foundations of Orthodox mission
3. Bounds of Orthodox mission

II. Theoretical-methodological aspects of Orthodox mission

1. Goal of Orthodox mission
2. Tasks and activities in Orthodox mission
3. Forms and methods of Orthodox mission
4. Means of Orthodox mission

III. Practical aspects of Orthodox mission

1. Orthodox witnessing
2. Liturgical aspects of Orthodox mission
3. Hierarchical and personal aspects of Orthodox mission
4. Ecclesiastical-educational aspects of Orthodox mission
5. International aspects of Orthodox mission

Conclusion

Preliminary Notes

This Concept is a programmatic document of the Bulgarian Orthodox church exposing the main postulates of missionary service of the church. It is a service which is called to confirm the necessary place and role of Orthodoxy in Bulgarian society, to revive the ancient apostolic purity of Christian faith and church practice, and to reveal the fruitful tradition of Orthodox mission ministry as it has been done over the centuries. It is a missionary service which could greatly contribute to elevating the Christian spiritual and moral foundations of life of the nation.

The Concept offers a unified vision on the mission of the church as presented in its two parts: the first one showing only the general characteristics of mission and the second one describing the various ways of application of mission in the missionary activity of the Bulgarian Orthodox church. It is the second part of the Concept that presents the practical guide to doing Orthodox mission where both theoretical and practical aspects of mission in the contemporary conditions of development of society have been shown.

The second part of the Concept – the application of the general issues of mission – considers the main characteristics of Orthodox mission, as described in the first part, by focusing on the following: exposition of the various aspects of mission, pointing the foundational importance of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition in doing mission, and providing practical guidance for successful and efficient missionary service of the Bulgarian Orthodox church on its territory of pastoral responsibility.

Being divided in two main parts and in numerous articles, paragraphs, lines and points, the Concept has been structurally designed in such a way that it takes the form of a Statute of mission of the Church where a number of statements and principles find their foundation in the Statute of the Bulgarian Orthodox church.

The Concept describes main characteristics of Orthodox mission in their holistic and definite forms and content: it is the mission which has been carried out by the Bulgarian and by other local Orthodox churches over the centuries up to present day. At the same time, certain aspects and definitions of mission can be supplemented and further specified in the course of missionary ministry of the church where theoretical suppositions are interpreted in the practical application of mission over the next years and decades. In this way, the Concept preserves its character of a programmatic document of the church as regards her mission – a document which can be further developed according to the requirements of time and in order to provide true Orthodox mission ministry of both clergy and lay people for the salvation of souls and for the life to come.

Part One

General issues of mission

I. Main characteristics of Orthodox mission

1. The mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church as mission of the Christ's Church in the world

(1) The Bulgarian Orthodox church (BOC)[1], being an inseparable member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, having the Lord Jesus Christ as her Head, has always been in faithful and canonical unity and in prayerful and Eucharistic communion with the other local Orthodox churches. The statute and the management of this church have been founded her on Holy Scriptures, Holy Tradition, the Holy Apostles' Rules, the canons of the ecumenical councils and other important church councils, the teachings of the church Fathers, and on the BOC's Statute as well. Based on this, the mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church preserves her all-Orthodox character and draws missionary experience from the age-old missionary tradition of the Orthodox church and from the contemporary mission practice of the other local Orthodox churches. In this way, the Concept of the missionary activity of the Bulgarian Orthodox church develops all-Orthodox Christian missionary goals and activities as well as specific for BOC forms, methods, means and practical application of mission ministry. At the same time, the Concept reveals all-Christian goals and aims of the mission of the Church of Christ in the world in which the Bulgarian church co-participates through her missionary service. This is how the mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church reflects the mission of the Christian church in the world, the mission ministry of Orthodoxy today and the Orthodox witnessing of the Bulgarian church on her own territory of pastoral responsibility.

(2) The all-Christian character of mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church does not disagree with her pan-Orthodox character and the type of Orthodox witness of our church as inherited from former centuries and as evidenced in her contemporary development. The all-Christian constituents of missionary service of the Church of Christ in the world that do not conform with the Orthodox understanding of evangelical witnessing, of the essence, the place and the role of the Christian church in the world, are not part of the Orthodox Christian mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church.

2. Theological foundations of Orthodox mission

(1) Orthodox mission is founded on Holy Scriptures, Holy Tradition, the Orthodox tradition as apostolic succession, the dogmatic and canonical grounds of Christian faith as bequeathed by the holy ecumenical councils, by the heritage of the church Fathers and by the holistic teaching of the Orthodox church which has been developed and supplemented over the centuries and which has found practical realisation in the contemporary life of Orthodox Christians. In this way, the theological roots of Orthodox mission are based on its Trinitarian understanding where the source of mission is the Holy Trinity. The Orthodox understanding of mission finds its clearest and most perceptive expression in the sending of Jesus Christ by the Father and in the descending of the Holy Spirit on the apostles.

(2) Mission is witnessing of the Holy Trinity, of the Son of God and His redemptive work, it is witnessing of the Church and her role in salvation of people. Mission is witnessing of the Truth: those who are confirmed in the Word of God have the possibility to know the truth which shall make them free.

(3) Mission is preaching which aims to arouse faith in people and to confirm them in it and in the deeds of faith. Mission is announcement of the Good News to the whole world so that whoever be-

lieves, and is baptized and does the works of faith, will be saved. Mission, in this way, is apostolic witness in the world.

(4) Mission is proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom in the whole world for a witness to all the nations.

(5) Missionary witnessing and missionary proclamation aim at sanctification of man, and sanctification of life and the whole of creation, as well. Christian mission, in this way, may lead to renewal of man and creation and to transformation of their nature in order to gain original purity and perfection through man's walking the path of closest union of believers with God (theosis).

(6) Mission is fulfillment of Christ's great commission, it is keeping His teaching in fullness and wholeness for salvation of people and of the world.

(7) Orthodox mission is passing on the experience of communion with God through deliberate and active participation of Christians in the sacramental life of the church. Through the holy sacraments and the liturgical life in the church, Christians bear witness of Christ, of the resurrected Lord, of His Kingdom, the new heaven and the new earth, all of these being foretasted by believers in the holy sacrament of Eucharist. Thus mission confirms the crucial place and importance of Eucharistic communion in the lives of Christians in their path to perfection in the work of communion with God and salvation of soul.

3. Bounds of Orthodox mission

(1) Orthodox witnessing keeps in purity and in fullness the teaching of the Gospel and the teaching of the church. The mission of Orthodoxy aims at confirming this teaching in the lives of the peoples throughout the world so that the Gospel be proclaimed *to the ends of the world* and that it becomes path-leading truth for every nation.

(2) Mission is mostly directed to people's mind and heart. Mission witnesses the Truth which is to become part of every human being's heart. From this perspective, the bounds of mission embrace the peoples of the world, including our own people.

(3) At the same time, mission is an eschatological event where the Gospel will be proclaimed *to the end of the world* and where every nation in the world will have the possibility to receive the adoption as sons and earn the right to be called children of God. In this way, mission is accomplished within the bounds of space and time in its worldly cooperation of man with God and out of any bounds of space and time in its eschatological perspective.

(4) Mission is directed to any community of people (family, tribe, people, nation, international associations) and at any human culture, local customs and social order. When properly done, Christian mission may transform people and the world and may bring sanctification and renewal of man by imparting new content in the lives of people and through accepting local cultures and ways of cultural expressions while adapting their customary forms of existence to the requirements of the commands of the Gospel.

(5) Orthodox witnessing means preaching the Gospels *to every creature*, and it is also considerate church activity aiming to keep purity and perfection not only in people but also in the created by God world. Christian missionaries preach, teach and by personal example show the ways of renewal of man's hearth in his relations to God and their neighbor and also to the environment where *the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time* and where, through the spiritual renewal of Christians and of the world, *the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay*. In this way, the boundaries of mission embrace not only the places of human societies but also the created by God earth with its nature and its riches.

(6) More specifically, the mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church has its bounds within her own territory of pastoral responsibility: this is the boundaries of the Republic of Bulgaria and the

lands and places where Bulgarians live and have preserved their national self-awareness and feelings of love towards their own country. Bulgarians live on all continents, and in this the territory of pastoral responsibility embraces every corner of the world where Bulgarian community exists, no matter how small it may be. The notion of “territory of pastoral responsibility” does not contradict the catholic (the universal) character of Orthodox mission and the preaching of the Gospel *to the ends of the world*: the boundaries of a local Orthodox church are always relative, as far as Orthodox witnessing in the world and its eschatological dimension are concerned. The bishop in the Orthodox church is imparted spiritual power, and he keeps holistically “the measure of faith” while being responsible for the ecumenical (the universal) communion between the churches.

II. Theoretical-methodological aspects of Orthodox mission

1. Goal of Orthodox mission

1.1. Ultimate goal of Orthodox mission

(1) The mission of the Church of Christ has as its ultimate goal only the primordial God’s plan for the world: renewal of man and the whole of creation, their return to the original purity and perfection in which they were created by God *so that God may be all in all*.

(2) Mission is spreading the Good News to the whole world. This goal – the Good News being spread and known to every nation up *to the ends of the earth* – is most directly related to the goal of renewal of man and of creation in the course of a properly carried out Orthodox Christian mission: it is the mission where witness and proclamation are based on the God-revealed truth and on the teaching of the church and where the practice of communion with God through the sacraments of the church and the holistic liturgical life of the church members is constantly reaffirmed.

(3) The goal of mission is preserving the God-revealed truth and the teaching of Christ intact as given in the source of faith and in the practice of the church and as further developed in Orthodoxy on the grounds of the theological and ecclesiastical heritage of the church Fathers and on the basis of the Orthodox dogmas and canons.

1.2 Immediate goal of Orthodox mission

(1) Christ Church’s mission has its immediate goal in confirming the peoples in the world in Christian faith through proclamation of the Good News and through personal example (mission practice of individuals) of inspiring and faithful life in Christ.

(2) The mission of the Orthodox church aims at establishing and strengthening the Eucharistic communities within Orthodoxy: communities which are capable of preserving and further confirming in Christians the experience of communion with God, and communities which pass this experience on to other people and to the generations to come.

(3) The mission of the church aims at churching people and building up active Christian communities capable of developing further and of passing on to others their church experience of life renewed in Christ.

2. Tasks and activities in Orthodox mission

(1) Proclamation of the Good News to every man and to all people in the closest and the widest environment of the Orthodox missionary: to all those who have not heard the Word of God and who have not believed in Christ yet.

(2) Preaching the Good News to those who have been baptized but have not properly learned the truths of the faith yet.

- (3) Churching the newly baptized and the Christians who have not been churching yet.
- (4) Further promoting and strengthening the practice of highly spiritual and saving for Christians divine services.
- (5) Establishing and confirming Eucharistic parishes and communities, as well as further spreading their experience.
- (6) Work on making the language of worshipping God more accessible and understandable by believers.
- (7) Engaging Christians in effective community and mission activities.
- (8) Attaching sanctity to non-Christian cultural expressions, customs and habitual manners through active mission work and active missionary presence in every type of life of society.
- (9) Work on developing educational-missionary activity and confirming its scientific and educational value.
- (10) Continuing Christian missionary dialogue with believers and religious organizations of other faiths and with Christians of non-Orthodox Christian traditions.

3. Forms and methods of Orthodox mission

- (1) Proclamation of the Word of God.
- (2) Orthodox Christian witnessing.
- (3) Liturgical organization of ecclesiastical life and of Orthodox mission.
- (4) Orthodox Christian education.
- (5) Liturgical guidance of clergy and non-clergy church ministers in matters of divine services.
- (6) Ecclesiastical guidance of Christian believers.
- (7) Spiritual guidance of Christian believers.
- (8) Ecclesiastical-theological organization of Christian mission.

4. Means of Orthodox mission

- (1) The most important means of Christian mission is the word: oral proclamation and oral (live) witnessing.
- (2) An important means of Orthodox mission is reading the Word of God and the rich sources of literature of the church Fathers and other Christian authors.
- (3) Following the example of Christian ascetics and “strugglers” in the world, both of the past and of the contemporary ecclesiastical life.
- (4) Use of modern (technical, as well) aids of ecclesiastical guidance, including spiritual guidance.
- (5) Mobility.

III. Practical aspects of Orthodox mission

Since it has been established, and as further developed in history and heritage, Orthodox mission has always been an expression of specific practical witness of the Christian faith without departing from practice through excessive theorizing or theological considerations. It is the ecclesiastical practice which is the measure of spiritual growth of Orthodoxy and of the historical and eschatological mission of the Orthodox church in the world.

The practice of Orthodox mission focuses mostly on the active Christian witnessing in the world, the liturgical foundations of the Orthodox Christians' way of life and life in Christ, and the highly elevated personal spiritual and pastoral experience of the thousands confessors and martyrs of the Christian faith, of the church Fathers and the ascetics of Orthodoxy, and of the ordinary Christians who devotionally and eagerly work out the salvation of their soul and the souls of their neighbor and of everyone. The practice of the Orthodox mission includes in its activities also the objectives of the church catechization and of the relations, the connections and the dialogue with other non-Orthodox Christians and with believers of other religions. In this way, the practical aspects of Orthodox mission include five main missionary activities.

1. Orthodox witnessing

Orthodox Christian witnessing and proclamation are the first and the most important tasks and practical activity of the church. The missionary ministry as Orthodox Christian witnessing is characterized by specific church activities. Witnessing the Christian faith finds its realization in a variety of circumstances and conditions of the contemporary societies in relation to territory, social and economic issues, and interconnectedness between ecclesiastical organization of life of the believers and the secular state. In this way, the missionary service includes five important aspects of practical application of mission.

- (1) Characteristics of Orthodox Christian mission ministry.
- (2) Spiritual-spatial aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.
- (3) Social aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.
- (4) Economic aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.
- (5) Orthodox Christian mission and the secular state.

2. Liturgical aspects of Orthodox mission

The holy liturgy and its highest mark of spiritual culmination and holiness in the church – the Eucharist – have always been the focal point of ecclesiastical life of Orthodox Christians. The Orthodox mission as liturgical task focuses on the mystical (sacramental) aspect of church life of Christians, the worshiping and the liturgical grounds of spiritual growth of the believers, and the task of directing their whole life towards Christian witnessing in their own parish, their diocese and other wider boundaries of the church. In this way, the liturgical aspects of Orthodox mission comprise the following five issues of church life of Christians.

- (1) Mystical (sacramental) grounds of Orthodox Christian mission.
- (2) God-serving foundations of Orthodox Christian mission.
- (3) Liturgical grounds of Orthodox Christian mission.
- (4) Eucharistic parish and Eucharistic Christian community.
- (5) Missionary parish and missionary Christian community.

3. Hierarchical and personal aspects of Orthodox mission

It is beyond all doubt that no mission is possible if there isn't a true spiritual and deeply involved in the life of the church personality. The activity of individuals in mission has often been crucial for the success of Orthodox witness and for confirming the Christian values and norms of life on our own territories and in other lands and among other peoples in the world. The importance of personality in Orthodoxy is not looked at in the way some Christian communities sometimes consider it while attaching either too much or too little significance to it in the mission of the Church of Christ in the world. The Orthodox church is an apostolic church and her hierarchical organization is in full accord with personality as agent of mission in the practice of declaring your faith and living a life according to it. This is why the aspects of personality in Orthodox mission include the hierarchical organization of the church and the missionary service of clergy and lay people; to this, we should also add the consideration of which qualities, characteristics and abilities the contemporary missionaries need to possess. In this way, Orthodox mission focuses on four main aspects while dealing with the issue of personality in mission.

- (1) Hierarchical aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.
- (2) Missionary service of church clergy and lay people.
- (3) Characteristics of contemporary missionaries.
- (4) Missionary commissioning.

4. Ecclesiastical-educational aspects of Orthodox mission

In fulfilling the goals of mission, Orthodox missionaries are able to successfully do mission ministry through the impulse of their elevated spirituality and deeply recognized ecclesiastical life. In general terms, missionaries today need special education and training in order to become successful missionaries. Countless are the Orthodox confessors of faith who have been doing mission in the world without the need of special theological and missionary education: it is the Holy Spirit, through their faith and works of the faith, Who makes their missionary efforts life-bringing. But the circumstances of the contemporary widespread secularism and extreme differentiation of knowledge pose the necessity of specific education of Orthodox missionaries so that the church is able to successfully carry out her mission in the challenging times of the modern societies. This is why the ecclesiastical-educational aspects of mission include such issues like tradition and missionary ministry, on the one hand, and contemporary challenges which Orthodox missionaries face today, on the other hand.

- (1) Tradition and contemporary issues of missionary service.
- (2) Teaching missiology in BOC and the theological schools.
- (3) Training of missionaries.
- (4) Missionary scholarly and ecclesiastical meetings and conventions.

5. International aspects of Orthodox mission

Orthodox Christian mission traditionally is a mission of relations between Orthodox witness of faith (the Orthodox preacher) and their non-Orthodox setting, predominantly outside their own country. This explains the fact that the ecclesiastical activity of the missionary is done, to a greater or lesser extent, through his relating to Christians of non-Orthodox Christian traditions, people of other religions and people belonging to the atheist layer of society: these relations between the missionary and other people find their realization either in the missionary's own country or in other foreign lands. In this way, the international aspects of Orthodox mission embrace both the internal and the external mission of the church where missionary service may take the form not only of ef-

fective witnessing the Truth but also of relations with other non-Orthodox Christians and with people belonging to various atheistic, religious or ideological layers of contemporary societies. Five are the internal and the international aspects of mission.

- (1) Orthodox Christian mission as effective witnessing of the Truth.
- (2) Orthodox Christian mission and interchurch dialogue.
- (3) Orthodox Christian mission and the other religions.
- (4) Orthodox Christian mission and globalization.
- (5) Challenges the Orthodox Christian mission faces today.

Conclusion

- (1) Orthodox Christian mission and responsibility.
- (2) Orthodox Christian mission in eschatological perspective.

Part Two

Application of the general principles of mission

I. Main characteristics of Orthodox mission

1. The mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church as mission of the Christ's Church in the world

(1) 1. The Bulgarian Orthodox church (BOC) [2] is “an inseparable member of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; this Church has as her eternal and intransient Head our Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Founder of the Church, and she is guided by the Holy Spirit, Who abides in the Church”. [3] BOC is at the same time “in faithful and canonical unity and in prayerful and Eucharistic communion with the other local Orthodox churches” [4], and she has founded her statute and management on Holy Scriptures, Holy Tradition, the Holy Apostles' Rules, the canons of the ecumenical councils and other important local Orthodox church councils, the teachings of the church Fathers, and on the BOC's Statute as well. [5]

2. These are fundamental principles which clearly point to the fact that the holistic BOC's ecclesiastical activity and her missionary service are all-Orthodox in character and are based on the missionary tradition of Orthodoxy over the centuries and on the missionary practice of the Orthodox churches in modern times.

3. The application of missionary activity of BOC, based on the Concept on mission of the church, discusses all-Orthodox missionary goals and activities and specific for the Bulgarian church forms, methods, means and practice of mission ministry.

4. The Concept on missionary activity of BOC points out the all-Orthodox character of mission of the Church of Christ in the world as a whole, where the Bulgarian Orthodox church actively co-participates through her mission ministry. The Application of missionary activity of BOC shows in a practical way how the mission of the Bulgarian church becomes part of the mission of the Church of Christ in the world and part of the mission ministry of Orthodoxy in modern times, and it also specifies the ways of Orthodox witnessing in Bulgaria on the territory of pastoral responsibility of the church.

(2) 1. Being member of the Church of Christ, the Bulgarian Orthodox church shares the same characteristic and features which are specific for the Christian church in general. At the same time, it should be clearly stated that the all-Christian character of the mission of BOC should not disagree with her all-Orthodox Christian character, as well as the Orthodox witnessing of BOC in her historical heritage and contemporary development.

2. The all-Christian content of mission of the Church of Christ in the world and any specific features of the non-Orthodox Christian mission, that do not conform to the Orthodox understanding of evangelical witnessing and to the essence, the place and the role of the Church of Christ in the world, are not and cannot be part of the Orthodox Christian mission of BOC.

3. The mission ministry of BOC forms an inseparable part of the all-Orthodox mission in the world, and it is grounded on the catholic (conciliar) principles in defining the all-Orthodox and specifically the BOC's missionary goals, tasks and activities in the modern times of development of the nation and of humanity in general.

2. Theological foundations of Orthodox mission

(1) 1. Both Orthodox teaching and church practice and the Orthodox mission have their grounds in Holy Scriptures, Holy Tradition, the Orthodox Christian tradition as apostolic succession, the dogmatic and canonical foundations of the faith as inherited by the holy ecumenical councils, the church Fathers and the holistic Orthodox Christian teaching of the church: a teaching which has been developed and supplemented over the centuries and has found its practical realisation in the contemporary life of Orthodox Christians.

2. The theological understanding of Orthodox mission is in fact the theological understanding of the Church of Christ as a whole: it is based on the Trinitarian understanding where the source of mission is the Most Holy Trinity and where mission is most accessibly expressed for people in the sending of Jesus Christ from the Father and the descending of the Holy Spirit on the apostles: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16); *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”* (John 20:21); *“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:4).

3. From this perspective, the understanding of Christian mission as sending of missionaries among other people, nations and cultures becomes the main characteristic of mission ministry. Christians see this characteristic most of all in the relations between the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity where God the Father sends His only begotten Son in order to seek and save those who have departed from God and do harm to their soul: *“The Son of Man has come to find and save that which was lost”* (Mat. 18:11). It is the sending of Christ in the world that gives those who believe in Him to have life eternal through Him: *“This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him”* (1John 4:9).

(2) 1. Orthodox mission is a witness of the Most Holy Trinity, the Son of God and His deed of redemption of man, the church and its role in saving people. Mission is witnessing of the Truth: whosoever is confirmed in the Word of Christ, they have the possibility to know truth and truth will make them free: *“If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:31-32).

2. Orthodox mission is witnessing of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and the Redeemer of mankind. It is the right understanding about the second Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity that Orthodox missionaries in their Christian work need to pass on to people, and this is their most important task of Christian mission. Knowing the truth and the freedom which it can bring to people may be only accomplished through the Son of God, not by human wishes: *“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”* (John 8:36). The only freedom is the one that we have in Jesus Christ, and in their church activity Orthodox missionaries work for the confirmation of those who are to be enlightened in this very freedom which the Son of God gives us as a gift: *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery”* (Gal. 5:1).

3. Orthodox mission is a witness of the life-giving Holy Spirit and His all-embracing operation in the world: to the Holy Spirit as One of the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity (*“For there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these Three are One”*, 1John 5:7), to the Spirit’s co-operation in the preaching mission ministry of the Orthodox missionaries (*“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us; this is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit”*, 1Cor. 2:12-13), and to the Spirit’s own true witness (*“It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth”*, 1John 5:6).

(3) 1. Mission is preaching which aims at arousing the faith and confirming people in it and in the works of faith. Mission is proclamation of the Good News to the whole world so that whoever believes and is baptized, and who performs the works of the faith, will be saved: *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16).

“Faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected” (James 2:22). In other words, mission as preaching means living out the words of the Gospel, not a mere proclamation of its truth: it is the faith and the works of faith in missionary proclamation that are witness of the Church of Christ as a gathering of believers in Jesus that fulfils His will.

2. Orthodox mission is apostolic witness in the world. The apostolic succession is an important characteristic of Orthodox mission: it is this characteristic which agrees mission with the hierarchical organization of the church and uses all the means of mystical (sacramental) acquisition of the blessed gifts which are abundantly offered those who truly believe in Jesus Christ and perform the works of faith according to His commands and His teaching.

(4) 1. Mission is proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom in the whole world for a witness to all nations: *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations”* (Mat. 24:14).

2. Missionary service can be done both within our own people (internal mission) and among other peoples and cultures (external mission).

3. Mission is proclamation that is directed to both people and the whole of creation: *“Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15).

(5) 1. Missionary witnessing and missionary preaching aim at sanctification of man and sanctification of the life itself and the whole of creation: *“Be holy, because I am holy”* (1Pet. 1:16, cf. Lev. 19:2); *“The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”* (Rom. 8:21).

2. Christian mission aims at renewal (transformation) of man and of creation and at their returning to the original purity and perfection of their nature on the path of most intimate communion between man and God (theosis, divinization).

(6) 1. Mission is about fulfillment of the great Christ’s commissioning and preserving His teaching in fullness and perfection: *“Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”* (Mat. 28:19-20).

2. The fulfillment of the commissioning of Christ in mission ministry lays the foundation on which those who have believed and kept the commands of the Gospel live a life of salvation of all people and of the world.

(7) 1. Orthodox Christian mission is about passing on the experience of communion with God through deliberate and active participation of Christians in the mystical (sacramental) life of the church. Through the holy sacraments and the liturgical life in the church, Christians bear witness of Christ and of the Resurrected Lord, of His Kingdom, of the new heaven and new earth (*“I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away”*, Rev. 21:1) – all these are foretasted by the believers in the sacrament of holy Eucharist.

2. Seen from this perspective, Orthodox Christian mission confirms the central place and importance of Eucharistic communion in the lives of Christians for their perfection in the works of communion with God and salvation of soul.

3. Bounds of Orthodox mission

(1) 1. Orthodox witnessing is about keeping the teaching of the Gospel and the teaching of the church in fullness and purity. The mission of the Orthodox church aims to confirm this teaching in the lives of the peoples in all the world so that the Gospel is proclaimed even “to the ends of the earth” and becomes path-leading truth for every nation. In their mission ministry, Orthodox missionaries as true Christ’s witnesses testify the truth, no matter where they are, even if they are at the

“ends of the earth”: *“You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

2. God’s love and the light with which He enlightens believers knows no bounds, in the same way there are no bounds for Orthodox Christian mission in its eschatological perspective and in the work of salvation where Orthodox missionaries, through their example, are paragons of Christ’s witnesses among unbelievers and are bearers of the true light of Christ: *“I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 13:47, cf. Is. 42:6).

(2) 1. Mission embraces people’s hearts and minds, in the first place. It is a witness of the Truth which must occupy every human being’s heart. From this perspective, the bounds of mission are the peoples of the world, including the missionaries’ own people.

2. Mission is about turning people’s hearts to the Truth so that God gives them the gift to see with their eyes, to hear with their ears and to understand in their hearts His promise about their salvation: *“The heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I should heal them”* (Mat. 13:15; cf. Is. 6:10). The contemporary world makes people’s hearts more and more secluded while not allowing them to see the Truth; this world does not allow people to profess the Truth with their mouth so that they are saved: *“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved”*, Rom. 10:10), and this is why Christian mission is about every human being with whom missionaries get into contact.

(3) 1. Christian mission has always been seen as eschatological event where the Gospel is proclaimed *“to the ends of the earth”* and where every people and nation have got the possibility to receive adoption and to be called children of God: *“You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”; The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”* (Rom. 8:15-16). In this way, mission knows bounds in space and time as human-God’s work here on earth and at the same time knows no bounds of space and time in its eschatological perspective.

2. The eschatological perspective of Christian mission is grasped through the mission of the Son of God Whom God sent among people, thus giving them the possibility to receive adoption: *“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Gal. 4:4-5).

(4) 1. Christian mission is directed at every human community (family, tribe, people, nation, international associations) and every culture, people’s customs and societal structures. When rightly understood and properly done, mission can transform people and the world, can sanctify and renew them through imparting new content in the lives of people and through accepting local cultures and the ways they have been expressed by submitting their customary forms of existence to the requirements of the Gospel’s commands.

2. Accepting local cultures in the process of doing church’s mission is not an automated act, neither is it a process of adapting the church life to the specific expressions of these cultures. In the mission ministry, Orthodox missionaries accept those aspects and characteristics of the local culture which do not contradict Christian teaching and practice and the Orthodox understanding of the church and her place and role in the world.

3. The understanding of universality of mission done among every nation and culture finds its roots in the missionary activity of the “apostle of the gentiles” who became all things to all men so that he might save those who would receive the word of Truth: *“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law; To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so*

that by all possible means I might save some" (1Cor. 9:20-22). In the same way, Orthodox missionaries must follow the example of the great apostle-missionary and in their mission ministry they should transform local cultures and customs into means of salvation.

(5). 1. Christian witnessing means preaching the Gospel to every creature and deliberate church activity aiming to preserve purity and perfection not only in people but also in the created by God world. Renewal of man's nature and salvation of man means also renewal of the created by God world into which God sent His only begotten Son for salvation of the world through Him: "*For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him*" (John 3:17).

2. Christian missionaries proclaim, teach and by own examples show the ways of renewal of people's heart in relation to God and their neighbor and also to the environment where every creature groans and suffers and where through spiritual renewal of Christians and of the world creation is set free from slavery to corruption: "*The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons*" (Rom. 8:21-23). The boundaries of mission, from this perspective, embrace not only human societies but also the created by God earth: the environment and the earth's natural resources.

(6) 1. As far as the mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church is concerned, her boundaries are the territory of pastoral responsibility of the church: the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and the places and lands where Bulgarians live – those who have preserved their national identity and feelings of patriotism and love towards their motherland. The national aspect in the faith and the practice of the believers does not contradict the notion of eschatological boundaries of the church but supplements it and attaches specific characteristic to it through the life of a specific people in Christ in their belief and in the works of faith.

2. The local Orthodox church plays big role and is very important in the lives of the people belonging to a specific nation, no matter where they live. There are Bulgarians living on all continents, and this confirms the fact that the territory of pastoral responsibility embraces every place in the world where there is a Bulgarian community, no matter how small it may be.

3. The notion of "territory of pastoral responsibility" does not contradict the ecumenical (the universal) character of Orthodox mission and the task of proclamation of the Gospel "to the ends of the earth": the boundaries of a local Orthodox church have always been relative, as far as Orthodox witnessing in the world and its eschatological dimension are concerned.

4. It may seem that the existence of specific boundaries of a local Orthodox church does not agree with the ecumenical character of Christian mission but in actual fact it is the head of the ecclesiastical community, the bishop, who resolves this seemingly contradiction: he is not only the bearer of spiritual power and "the rule of faith" but he is also responsible for the ecumenical (universal) communion between the churches in the world.

II. Theoretical-methodological aspects of Orthodox mission

1. Goal of Orthodox mission

The Church of Christ in her functioning on the earth, as the God-given community of relations between God and people in their search for the Truth and renewal of life in Jesus, has her main goal in bringing the creation to its original purity and perfection as it was made by the Creator in "the beginning of time": it is bringing man to his originally-meant purpose and turning the creation back to God.

Spiritual renewal is not purely man's work but God-man's initiative. This is why the church as God-man's institution has her goals of Christian mission in their absolute and their immediate (practical) forms: the first concern God's providence about man and the world, and the latter concern the human element in the work of salvation. The absolute goals submit to themselves the immediate ones, and the latter lead to fulfillment of the absolute goals. It is neither the God's element nor the human one in the work of salvation that specify the goals of mission in Christ in the world: both elements together make up God-man's unity and concordance in the move of both man and the world towards the eschatological purpose of creation.

1.1. Ultimate goal of Orthodox Christian mission

(1) 1. The mission of the Church of Christ has its ultimate goal solely in the original God's plan for the world: renewal of man and of all the creation, bringing the created world to its original purity and perfection as it was created by God, so that "*God may be all in all*" (1Cor. 15:28).

2. This renewal is the process of a move of man and the world towards the Creator, which is the theosis (divinization) of the church Fathers. The process of most intimate communion of man with God and of filling man's whole being with the grace of God inevitably leads to restoration of human spirit and of human nature: the process of restoration is the theosis of not only the believers but also the whole of creation which, through God's grace and through man, is able to attain original purity and perfection.

(2) 1. Christian mission is about spreading the Good News all over the world "to the ends of the earth": "*Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world*" (Rom. 10:18; cf. Ps. 19:4).

2. This goal – the Good News has been announced to every nation "to the ends of the earth" – in a most immediate way corresponds to the goal of renewal of man and of creation in the work of doing proper Orthodox Christian mission where witnessing and preaching are founded on the God-revealed truth and on the teaching of the church; it is the mission which confirms communion with God through the sacraments of the church and through the holistic liturgical life of her members.

(3) 1. Mission aims at keeping the God-revealed truth and the teaching of Christ intact as given in the source of faith and the church practice and as further developed in the Orthodox church on the foundation of the theological and ecclesiastical heritage of the church Fathers and of the dogmas and the canons of Orthodoxy.

2. The Savior has given us the command to keep and to do everything which He has commanded: this is the mission of the church in its eschatological perspective – the missionary proclaims the Gospel in full accordance with the command of Christ: "*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*" (Mat. 28:20).

1.2. Immediate goal of Orthodox Christian mission

(1) 1. The mission of the Church of Christ has its immediate goal in proclamation of the Good News to every nation so that it becomes known to every human being living on earth.

2. Proclaiming the Gospel aims not only at "listening" to the Good News but also at "fulfilling" it, that is, preaching the Gospel must lead to confirming the peoples of the world in the Christian faith through evangelization and inspiring examples (inspiring church practice) of effective devoted lives of Christians in Jesus.

(2) 1. Holy Eucharist is the most important focal point of the Orthodox ecclesiastical life where the Christians are confirmed in the Eucharistic life of the church.

2. Orthodox mission aims at confirming Eucharistic communities within the Orthodox churches (parishes) which are capable of preserving and further developing the experience of communion with God, as well as passing on this experience to others around them and to the generations to come.

(3) 1. The mission of the church has the goal of churching people and establishing active Christian communities capable of developing further and passing on to others the ecclesiastical experience of the believers in their renewed life in Christ.

2. Churching takes place among the Christians who have not properly learned the truths of faith and have remained only nominal Christians, and also among those people who wish and are ready to accept Christian faith and need to acquire knowledge on the basic truths of Christianity (catechism).

(4) 1. The ecumenical character of Orthodox mission presupposes ecclesiastical activity of the missionary aiming at union of the divided church communities by the example of the Gospel pointing out the relations between the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity and those people who believe in Christ, so *“that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me”* (John 17:21).

2. The union of the divided ecclesiastical communities is neither an artificial nor an automated event carried out on the basis of misunderstood theology and practice of church life: it is a unanimity in faith for the glory of God (*“You may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”*, Rom. 15:6), it is not done for the glory of men or world’s institutions.

2. Tasks and activities in Orthodox mission

Christian mission’s goals in their general form may be achieved through fulfilling specific missionary tasks. The missionaries of the Church of Christ have various activities to carry out that would satisfy the fulfillment of the immediate goals mission; the fulfillment of these goals would inevitably lead to fulfillment of the absolute and ultimate goals of the church and of any missionary activity.

Orthodox mission’s tasks and activities are defined in accordance with the requirements of the Gospel and the teaching of the Orthodox church. In this, they describe the proclamation of the Word of God, the specific ecclesiastical activities in churching the peoples of the world and confirming the liturgical church life of the believers, along with building up Eucharistic Christian communities, as well as the missionary activities in seeking dialogue and union of the divided church communities in the world.

All tasks and activities reflect the spirit of Christian mission as a whole and the goals of mission, and at the same time they reflect the specific requirements Christian missionaries need to meet.

(1) 1. Proclamation of the Good News to every human being and to all people living close to or far away from the Orthodox missionary’s place of life; these are the people who have not heard the Word of God and have not believed in Christ yet.

2. The activity of missionary’s preaching is inseparable from his personal spiritual and missionary experience in Orthodox witnessing.

(2) 1. Proclamation of the Good News to those Christians who have been baptized but have not learned the truths of the faith yet.

2. The activity of missionary’s preaching is done in closest connection with the goals and the tasks of teaching ministry within the church as one of the most specific functions of the Christian community.

(3) 1. Churching the newly baptized and those Christians who have not been churching yet.

2. This missionary’s activity is done in closest connection with the goals and tasks of church’s catechization.

(4) 1. Work on further confirming the practice of highly spiritual and saving for Christians divine services.

2. The missionary's activity is done in closest connection with the already established practice of life in the worshipping ministry of the local church.

(5) 1. Establishing and confirming Eucharistic parishes and communities, as well as further spreading their experience.

2. The missionary's activity is based on his personal spiritual experience in the Eucharistic life of the church, as well as on the teaching and the practice of the Orthodox church in the liturgical and the Eucharistic life of the believers.

(6) 1. Work on making the language of worshipping God more accessible and understandable by believers.

2. The missionary's activity is done through coordination between Christian and secular specialists and organizations in the field of old church Slavonic language and the Orthodox tradition in church chanting.

(7) 1. Engaging Christians in effective community and mission activities.

2. By their personal example of mission ministry, the missionaries encourage the Christians in their own parish and in their own social circumstances to undertake missionary activity.

(8) 1. Attaching sanctity to non-Christian cultural expressions, customs and habitual manners through active mission work and active missionary presence in every type of life of society.

2. The missionary's activity is the result of his experience in the field of intercultural communication while fulfilling the goals and the tasks of Christian engagement in the life of the society within the local Orthodox church.

(9) 1. Work on developing educational-missionary activity and confirming its scientific and educational value.

2. The missionary's activity is done in closest connection with the spiritual educational institutions of the church and with the theological departments within universities in the country where missionaries constantly increase their ecclesiastical-educational qualification.

(10) 1. Continuing Christian missionary dialogue with believers and religious organizations of other faiths, with Christians of non-Orthodox Christian traditions, and with atheists.

2. The missionary's activity in this field is done on the basis of the decisions of the church's hierarchy on these issues, as well as on the local church's Statute and the missionary's personal experience in inter-Christian and interreligious communication.

3. Forms and methods of Orthodox mission

There are many and various forms and methods of doing mission, and they all may be defined by specifying a number of important requirements as to the organization and the way of carrying out mission ministry in the various social circumstances of a local Orthodox church and on other territories and lands where missionaries work and live. The forms and the methods is in fact the practical guide for preaching and witnessing: it is this guide which ensures the most appropriate means of successfully doing mission, both within your own community of believers and among other people. The practicality of the forms and methods of mission is mostly evidenced by the live communication of the missionary with the believers and unbelievers where his personal example and his exemplary mission ministry serve as an important model to be followed.

(1) 1. One of the main forms of Christian mission is the proclamation of the Word of God.

2. The proclamation of the Good News is done first of all in oral form.

3. The proclamation of the Good News may be done by using other means too, for example, reading, personal experience to be followed, technical means (including electronic technology and internet), etc. None of them however can and should replace oral preaching: the other means of doing mission can only supplement human words.

(2) 1. Another important form of mission is Orthodox Christian witnessing which includes all the various aspects of the missionary's life in faith and in doing the works of faith.

2. Orthodox witnessing is done mainly through the personal example of the missionary and through all the sources of Orthodox teaching and Orthodox church practice: Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, Orthodox spiritual heritage (dogmas and canons of Orthodoxy, the holy ecumenical councils, the works and the life of the church Fathers, the local councils of the Orthodox church, the heritage left by ancient and modern Orthodox witnesses, theologians and hierarchs of the church), the contemporary pastoral activity of the church and the Statutes and other ecclesiastical-pastoral documents and decisions of the church.

3. Orthodox witnessing can only be true and effective if it is done on the sound foundations of the church and if the result of mission is spreading the Church of Christ on a specific territory and in the whole world.

(3) 1. Along with prayer, purity of heart and fulfillment of all ecclesiastical recommendations for living spiritual life, Orthodox worship is an important form of Orthodox mission and of the whole life of the Christians.

2. The holy liturgy and the holistic liturgical organization of spiritual life of Orthodox Christians is a crucial constituent in the worshipping life of Christians. Their life in "the liturgy after the liturgy" is expressed in applying in their daily routine of all the main elements of the holy liturgy where Christ's Word should make holy every step of Christians at any time of the day and throughout the years of their life.

3. The liturgical foundations in the lives of Orthodox Christians find their focal point in the holy Eucharist. Orthodox missionaries direct the hearts and the thoughts of those among whom they witness to the state of constant abiding in and closest communion with Christ and His Church, which is further strengthened through regular and worthy receiving of the Holy Communion to help them abide in closest union with God and keep this union in their entire life.

(4) 1. Orthodox teaching work is one of the most effective forms of Christian mission. It is another name for Orthodox preaching and Orthodox witnessing.

2. Teaching is the educational form of preaching and witnessing where Orthodox teachers, along with applying other forms and methods of proclamation of the Good News, use their pedagogical knowledge, skills and experience with the aim of most fruitful influence on the minds and hearts of those among whom they carry out their teaching ministry.

3. In the course of their mission ministry as Orthodox teaching work, missionaries use all the modern means and tools of education and upbringing by submitting them to the goals and the tasks of Orthodox catechization.

4. Orthodox teaching activities are not directed at only Orthodox Christians but also at the believers and those who prepare themselves to receive the holy baptism; these activities are also done among unbelievers and atheists and among people belonging to other religions. In every specific circumstance and case, the Orthodox teacher uses the most appropriate forms, means and methods of influence on people.

(5) 1. One of the most important tasks of Orthodox clergy is to properly and rightly perform the divine services of the Orthodox church. This requires that clergy constantly keep their God-serving ministry on efficient and highly elevated spiritual and practical level. In this, the liturgical guidance

of clergy and non-clergy church ministers in matters of divine services is an important form of mission in modern times.

2. The Orthodox missionary priest constantly keeps his skills in performing the divine services on high level, and he also encourages other priests and clergy to do the same. Under the blessing of the diocesan bishop, missionary priests may organize the parish and the diocesan priesthood to take part in clergy's conventions devoted to the God-serving ministry of the church with the aim of improving this important ecclesiastical task and of exposing the beauty of the church services.

3. Orthodox missionaries make sure that the non-clergy church ministers are helped and strengthened in their participation in the church services and rituals at their best. Under-deacons, church readers, chanters, candle-bearers and candle-sellers – they all should fulfill their specific tasks in the same proper and beautiful way as clergy do.

4. Orthodox missionaries constantly offer education and guidance of the non-clergy church ministers in their life and work in the church by using various forms of catechization and practical ecclesiastical leadership.

(6) 1. Orthodox missionaries take care of the ecclesiastical guidance of Christian believers through regular catechization courses and pastoral direction of the lay Christians with the aim of improving or keeping right the church life of the Christian community as a whole and of themselves more specifically.

2. Lay people need to know well their church in all its beauty: the main parts of the church building, the iconostasis, the icons and the wall paintings, chanting tradition, the order of the Orthodox divine services and the various Orthodox rituals, and also the importance all these attach to Christian life. The knowledge and the skills of lay people are maintained in them by the vicar and the missionary, and also by other devoted Christians whom the vicar may appoint to help him.

3. Ecclesiastical guidance of lay people is also about giving enough information about the history and the present activities of the temple and the parish, about its importance in the lives of the local people and its significance as a spiritual center for Christians. Acquiring such knowledge and skills is not an end in itself but gives the believers, when necessary, the opportunity to enlighten everyone coming to the church about the specific features of church life of the temple and the parish.

4. Ecclesiastical guidance is about recognizing, on the part of the lay people, the unity of the church, her ecumenical character and her saving mission in the lives of the local people, of the country and of the world. The missionary constantly juxtaposes the life of the church, of the priesthood and non-clergy church ministers, and his own life, with that of the believers by urging them to live a life in full correspondence of thoughts and deeds with the ecclesiastical organization of life of Orthodox Christians.

(7) 1. Spiritual guidance of Christian believers may be done by the clergy who, by the blessing of the bishop, have received the right to be spiritual guides of believers.

2. Spiritual guidance is a specific church activity that requires from the Christian guides high spiritual and moral qualities. The Orthodox missionary priest may provide spiritual guidance of believers under the blessing of the bishop and in accordance with the missionary tasks with which he has been entrusted.

3. Missionary priests provide spiritual guidance of believers according to the set goals and tasks of mission by founding their guiding ministry on the requirements of the Orthodox witnessing and Orthodox proclamation; they also encourage their spiritual children to make more efforts and to prepare themselves for true Christian witnessing and preaching the Gospel.

4. The properly organized spiritual guidance is a sure warrant of the further true mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church and of the Church of Christ in the world as a whole.

(8) The ecclesiastical-theological organization of Christian mission concerns the foundations of mission as theory and practice and their correspondence with the teaching of the church when various church activities are organized, such as theological and educational meetings dedicated to specific goals, tasks, activities, etc. of mission ministry.

2. The ecclesiastical-theological organization of Christian mission is about such activities as: “supplying” Orthodox mission with highly educated and skilled missionaries of the church, gathering and spreading of ecclesiastical and theological resources on mission, organization of missionary courses and other educational events, organization of seminars, conferences, conventions and other type of meetings with the aim of sharing experience in missionary work and elaborating further recommendations for effective mission of the church, constant renewal of the content of the theoretical-practical teaching aids on mission and of missiology as taught at the spiritual schools of BOC and at the universities’ theological departments. Other activities may also fall into the category of ecclesiastical-theological organization of mission.

3. The above type of organization of mission is carried out under the pastoral guidance of the Holy Synod, of specific bishops of dioceses and in close cooperation with the Bulgarian theological departments of universities, as well as with those departments and educational institutions which relate in one or another way to the social activity of the church in the country.

4. Means of Orthodox mission

The means of mission are the tools used by the missionary in order to achieve the goals and the tasks of mission through using specific forms and methods of church mission ministry. The means of mission are seen as personal efforts and as external supplementary tools: the first includes human words (and reading, too) and personal example, and the second – the various tools used for illustration or for mobility in the course of doing specific missionary activities.

(1) 1. The most important means of Christian mission is the word: oral proclamation and oral (live) witnessing.

2. Human speech and the live communication are the exceptional means of mission, and they are used in all forms and ways of mission in the various ecclesiastical activity of the missionary.

(2) 1. An important means of Orthodox mission is reading the Word of God and the abundant sources of literature of the church Fathers and other Christian authors.

2. Reading, as a means, supplements oral preaching and oral witnessing. Reading may help believers reach certain levels of spiritual development but a blessed and successful ecclesiastical growth of Christians can only occur through supplementing reading with live oral communication with the missionary, the church hierarchy, the other believers and the wider social milieu.

(3) 1. Following the example of Christian ascetics and “strugglers” in the world, both of the past and of the contemporary ecclesiastical life.

2. In following examples of high spirituality of ascetics and faithful Christians of the Church of Christ, it is again necessary that these efforts are supplemented with oral communication and oral witnessing on the part of the Orthodox missionary and the other confirmed in their faith and church practice Christians.

(4) 1. The use of modern (technical, as well) aids of ecclesiastical guidance, including spiritual guidance, is often crucial in the work of mission and teaching activity of the church.

2. The modern teaching aids in ecclesiastical education and in spiritual guidance cannot replace but only supplement the main means of teaching and directing – the live human speech.

3. In addition to the word, the reading and following examples, also other means of mission ministry may be used if they can help in perceiving the truths of faith and if they encourage people in searching for higher levels of spiritual growth.

(5) 1. Mobility, or moving from one place to another, is an important means used by the missionary in their work on spreading the Good News in a specific region, continent or in the world as a whole.

2. Depending on the goals and the tasks of every specific mission ministry in one or another region of witnessing, the missionary uses various means and ways of moving around in their preaching and other missionary activity.

3. Contemporary means of transportation may greatly contribute to the more successful spreading the Word of God and confirming the Truth in people living on distant territories, lands and continents. They do not replace the missionary's natural way of moving in their closest environment but help them in achieving higher effectiveness of doing mission in distant regions where they need to go.

III. Practical aspects of Orthodox mission

Since it has been established, and as further developed in history and heritage, Orthodox mission has always been an expression of specific practical witness of the Christian faith without departing from practice through excessive theorizing or theological considerations. It is the ecclesiastical practice which is the measure of spiritual growth of Orthodoxy and of the historical and eschatological mission of the Orthodox church in the world.

The practice of Orthodox mission focuses mainly on the active Christian witnessing in the world, the liturgical foundations of the Orthodox Christians' way of life and life in Christ, and the highly elevated personal spiritual and pastoral experience of the thousands confessors and martyrs of the Christian faith, of the church Fathers and the ascetics of Orthodoxy, and of the ordinary Christians who devotionally and eagerly work out the salvation of their soul and the souls of their neighbor and of everyone.

At the same time, the practice of the Orthodox mission includes in its activities also the objectives of the church catechization and of the relations, the connections and the dialogue with other non-Orthodox Christians and with believers of other faiths.

From this perspective, the practical aspects of Orthodox mission include five main missionary activities which reveal the variety of ecclesiastical life of a local Orthodox church.

1. Orthodox witnessing

Orthodox Christian witnessing and proclamation are the first and the most important tasks and practical activity of the church. Missionary ministry as Orthodox Christian witnessing is characterized by specific church activities. Witnessing the Christian faith finds its realization in a variety of circumstances and conditions of the contemporary societies in relation to territory, social and economic issues, and interconnectedness between ecclesiastical organization of life of the believers and the secular state.

In this way, missionary service includes five important aspects of practical application of mission.

(1) Characteristics of Orthodox Christian mission ministry.

1. Orthodox Christian mission is a witness of the Good News that must become known to every nation (cf. Mat. 24:14).

2. Mission is a witness of the Holy Trinity (cf. 1John 5:7).

3. Mission is a witness of Jesus Christ “*to the ends of the earth*” (cf. Acts 1:8) and of Holy Scripture which witnesses of the Savior (cf. John 5:39).

4. Mission is a witness of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (cf. 1John 5:6).

5. Mission is preaching about the Son of God and about professing the faith: “*I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God*” (John 1:34).

(2) Spiritual-spatial aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.

1. Orthodox mission’s main goal is salvation of human soul: the souls of those who have believed in Christ, of those who have heard of Him but have not believed yet, and of those who are to hear and to believe in Him. From this perspective, Christian mission is characterized by two main aspects of witnessing Christ: spiritual and spatial.

2. The spiritual aspect of Orthodox mission reflects the riches of the Christian teaching and practice, the heritage of the church Fathers and the ascetics and martyrs of faith, the life in the church since the times of her foundation until modern times, and the believers’ urge to theosis (divinization) and perfect union with Christ in the life to come. From this perspective, the spiritual aspect of mission finds its realization both within the boundaries of time and out of any temporal bounds if we consider the eschatological dimension of the church as a community of believers in Jesus Christ.

3. The spatial aspect of Orthodox mission refers to the hearts and minds of all those people who are reached by the Christian proclamation. Mission is done on local, national, international and world’s level by starting from the local community of believers in Christ (the parish, for instance) further spreading to the whole nation, to other nations and finally to “*the ends of the earth*”.

4. The spiritual-spatial aspect of Orthodox mission includes the hierarchical organization of the church: the bishop as the bearer of spiritual power in the church, the priesthood as the apostles of Christ and the preachers of the faith, and the non-clergy church ministers and the lay people as the flock of Christ following the Shepherd in their passionate desire for salvation of soul.

(3) Social aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.

1. Christian missionaries do mission in society and through society which consists of believers and unbelievers, of atheists, agnostics, philosophers and adherents to various teachings and practices. From this perspective, Christian mission is a social mission.

2. Missionaries’ activities aim to embrace all the people in a society without exception as Christ expects every human soul to repent, to believe and to come to salvation.

3. Missionaries’ activities are especially influential within social groups that experience big need in compassion, help, care, advice, sympathy, etc. to much greater extent than any other layer of society: “*I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me*” (Mat. 25:35-36). In this, it is the mission ministry in special social institutions, such as prisons, old people’s homes, hospitals, orphanages, etc., which most vividly reflects Christ’s call to Christians to feed the hungry, to give drink to thirsty, to offer shelter the homeless, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and the prisoner, to turn our heart to the orphan and the widow.

4. Missionaries’ activities among the above social groups include both witnessing the Good News and helping the needed materially. Depending on the specific conditions of life and needs of the social group, the missionary by experience should know if he needs to first start his preaching the Gospel among those people or to first feed them, clothe them, help them become healthy again, etc., and only then continuing his social ministry as witnessing the Truth.

5. In their activities, Orthodox missionaries respect the current legislation and the normative regulations of the country's authorities. Missionaries' social activity supplements the state's social help, mostly in spiritual aspect, but also in material aspect. In the cases where governmental regulations and legislation in the area of social work in some of their statements contradict the Christian understanding of life of society, the missionary needs to get the blessing of his bishop or the Holy Synod on whether to continue his work or not; he may do further his mission after the supreme spiritual power of the church has issued their resolution on the case.

(4) Economic aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.

1. Since the times of the apostles and over the centuries of existence of the Christ's Church up to now, Christian witnessing and proclamation has been done through the spiritual gifts preachers possess and also through material help which they get from those among whom they do mission. The great apostle-missionary St Paul is the best example of supplementing spiritual endeavors with offered material help by others to further enable his mission among the gentiles.

2. "*The laborer is worthy of his wages*" (Lk. 10:7), and in the same way the work missionaries do is rewarded: first by God, then by people. Missionary activities can be successfully performed only if they are "economically" ensured, in addition to the "spiritual insurance" on the part of the preacher-missionary.

3. The economic grounds of Orthodox mission is an important element in missionaries' ministry where financial and other support is created and maintained in the local Orthodox churches while adapting to the local circumstances and conditions. Good is the example of those Orthodox churches where special mission funds have been initiated and maintained: these funds are only used for the purposes of mission ministry of the church.

4. The economic provision for mission is directly dependant on the economic conditions of the country. From this perspective, missionary activities can be carried out only relying on own funds and support or they can get support from the state, providing the state is concerned about the spiritual condition of the nation.

5. Another important element of the economic aspect of mission is the issue of giving back of property to the church: this property was taken from the church during the decades of God-rebelling atheism in the country. In the process of giving back property, the church increases her material power, thus being able to efficiently use it for reaching the goals of the Good News' proclamation. It is the church's missionary activity which plays crucial role in this.

6. Depending on the local circumstances of the Christian missionary, there may be instances where the local authorities and local businesses could support mission, mostly by allowing wider access of the church to social institutions in the region and by financial or other help. This type of help must be gratuitous and unconditional while not seeking benefits, favors or other expectations on the part of those who give help.

(5) Orthodox Christian mission and the secular state.

1. Christian missionaries' activities are most often done in the boundaries of a country: their own or foreign. Consequently, these activities are done in accordance with laws and other legal regulations of the state.

2. In carrying out mission ministry, characterized by both spiritual and spatial constituents, missionaries must take into consideration the spiritual authorities (the bishop, the Holy Synod, the council of bishops, etc.) and the local state's authorities. In this, the missionary bears responsibility to both the ecclesiastical law-courts (including the church hierarchy) and the state law-courts and the state regulative bodies.

3. Christian missionaries do various missionary activities in parallel to the activities done by missionaries of other Christian traditions and of other religions, as well as representatives of philosophical or ideological societies and institutions functioning in the country. The activities Ortho-

dox Christian missionaries carry out must not contradict the laws and the legal regulations of the state, and in the same way they must not contradict and fight the activities done by representatives of other religions or of the atheists. The state requires equal relations to every citizen in the country, no matter which religious or other views they may hold, and in the same way missionaries must respect and recognize the activities of the various social groups within the country.

4. Recognizing and respecting the rights of others does not contradict the call to Christians to spread the Gospel. On the contrary: human relations within the state's organization of life of people in actual fact presuppose active missionary activity among people, while not breaking laws and regulations of the state, because the contemporary constitutional definitions in the democratic countries provide every right of their citizens to confess their faith; confessing one's faith is in fact a practical activity of confirmation of the faith not only in the believers but also in other people. Issues of faith and issues of relations between people being citizens of the same country are dealt with on different levels of relations: the first concern people's heart and soul and their free choice to either believe or not, and the second concern the organization of life as regulated within the state's legal-normative foundations.

5. In today's lives of societies, respecting the rights of people belonging to various faiths and religions or to atheism falls under the general term "tolerance, tolerate", the meaning of which is "bear with, be patient with". The missionary needs to bear with other people in the same way they bear with him, as far as the moral principles stated in the constitutions and the laws of a country are concerned. On the other hand, the missionary cannot bear with those who deliberately and actively work to "fill" the spiritual space of the state with various ideological, religious and atheistic teachings and practices which undermine the spiritual-cultural and the moral foundations of the nation: the missionary has the right not to bear the foreign to Christianity spiritual invasion, provided he does not break civil laws and legal regulations in the course of his activity.

6. In the same way, the Orthodox missionary has the right not to bear with the newly introduced practices of the secular state when foreign to the Christian tradition and standards of life and behavior regulations and practices are imposed on its citizens or the citizens of other states. In the cases when missionaries' activities come into conflict with such new practices, they need to get blessing and advice by the bishop or the Holy Synod as to what further they can do in their mission ministry.

2. Liturgical aspects of Orthodox mission

The holy liturgy and its highest mark of spiritual culmination and holiness in the church – the Eucharist – have always been the focal point of ecclesiastical life of Orthodox Christians. Orthodox mission as liturgical task focuses on the mystical (sacramental) aspect of church life of Christians, the worshipping and the liturgical grounds of spiritual growth of the believers, and the task of directing their whole life towards Christian witnessing in their own parish, their diocese and the wider boundaries of the church. In this way, the liturgical aspects of Orthodox mission comprise the following five issues of church life of Christians.

(1) Mystical (sacramental) grounds of Orthodox Christian mission.

1. Unlike other non-Orthodox Christian denominations, that do not recognize the holy sacraments of the church, the Orthodox missionary in his activity finds his witnessing and preaching entirely on the sacramental aspect of the Orthodox church. The mystical (sacramental) life of the church is practically the main force and impulse for work and activities of the missionary: the apostle prays "*that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel*" (Eph. 6:19), and in the same way the Orthodox missionary must proclaim the mystery by personal example and in his ministry as soldier of Christ while drawing from the abundant source of the mysterious (sacramental) life of the Orthodox church.

2. The Orthodox missionary has clear understanding of the eschatological nature of the mystery of God and of the wisdom of God, and he subjects all his activities to the mystical (sacramental) life of the church as given to her by God's providence for the glory of the believers in Christ. As the apostle affirms, this is "*God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory*" (1Cor. 2:7). The mysteries (sacraments) have been revealed to people by God's grace ("*He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him*", Eph. 1:9), not through human endeavor.

3. As a rule, the Orthodox missionary is a priest where in his mission ministry, where necessary, he can perform the church sacraments. Depending on the character and the scope of his missionary activity, he can baptize, receive confessions, give the Holy Communion, perform weddings, unction services and other Orthodox rituals. Where the missionary is a lay Christian, they need to do mission in cooperation and with the participation of a clergy so that mission is done in fullness and is blessed through the sacraments of the church.

(2) God-serving foundations of Orthodox Christian mission.

1. Orthodox mission is most closely connected with the divine services as a continuation of the God-worshipping ministry of the ancient church and of Orthodoxy over the centuries. In their mission ministry, Orthodox missionaries use the rich divine-servicing tradition of Orthodoxy, both in their preaching activity and practical performance of holy services and church worshipping orders.

2. Orthodox divine services are one of the most distinctive characteristic of the Orthodox church: Orthodoxy is in the divine services and the divine services are in Orthodoxy as teaching and church practice. In the same way, it is the God-serving ministry that makes distinctive the witness of the Orthodox missionary, as compared with the witness of missionaries of other non-Orthodox Christian traditions.

3. The Statute of a local Orthodox church defines the God-serving ministry of the priest as his most important duty where he has "to regularly and devotionally perform, according to the established ecclesiastical order, the holy liturgy and the daily divine services and to perform the sacraments and the church orders as instituted by the Orthodox church" (Statute of BOC, art. 135, para 1), and at the same time God-servicing is the biggest spiritual reward for the priest who, through the services, abides in closest union with God and with Christ, first of all in his regular taking the Holy Gifts as he does it at every holy liturgy. Priest-missionaries use every opportunity in their missionary activity to serve the various services in temples, chapels and other proper places where he in most practical way proclaims the Good News and the God-given truths of church and private life of the believers.

4. The divine services performed by the Orthodox missionary are most directly missionary-oriented: they are not services in themselves but witnessing and proclamation which touch people's minds and hearts. This comes also to confirm such activities the missionary does, as delivering special missionary sermons during services (or at the end of the services), reading and interpreting various texts in accessible and understandable for the believers language, helping those who take part in the services to grasp and to accept in their lives the truths as evidenced in the texts or in the chants of the services, especially if they have been said or sung only in old church Slavonic language.

5. In this way, the missionary service of the Orthodox missionary takes on the character of a true serving God, that is God-serving, where in his mission ministry he compliments the beauty with the deep spiritual foundations of the Orthodox divine services.

(3) Liturgical grounds of Orthodox Christian mission.

1. The liturgical grounds of mission means directing the lives of the believers to the liturgical significance of Christianity: it is about Christians serving God in their private, ecclesiastical and

spiritual life as evidenced by the service of the holy liturgy. These are the grounds of the whole Christian life of the believers through the blessed operational significance of the church's holy sacraments.

2. It is the acquirement of the mystical (sacramental) life of the church, of the “*profound mystery*” (cf. Eph. 5:32), “*the mystery of the Gospel*” (cf. Eph. 6:19), that defines the significance of the liturgical life of the Orthodox believers. This acquirement is not an end in itself, neither is it only a human deed: it makes people come closer to God and confirms them in their most direct communion with Him, as a communion with God “in boldness and confident access”: “*To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him*” (Eph. 3:8-12).

3. Orthodox mission as liturgical ministry is specifically important to the newly baptized and to those who prepare themselves to accept the Christian faith. The liturgical life of the church, when rightly and properly explained, would inevitably draw the newcomers to a blessed acquaintance with the Christ's mystery, and through successful churching – to an active liturgical practice in their ecclesiastical, private and spiritual life.

(4) Eucharistic parish and Eucharistic Christian community.

1. Establishing and confirming Eucharistic parishes is a very special objective of Orthodox mission ministry. In this process, the parish is seen as a combination of every aspect of life of people (including the ecclesiastical life of the believers) living around the Orthodox temple, no matter whether they have been baptized or not.

2. Through the missionary activity of the parish, the small cell of believers, who live a life of true Orthodox Christian's struggle and who regularly and worthily take the Holy Gifts, a larger cell of believers living around the temple is formed where the whole parish is embraced within the Eucharistic life of the church, thus becoming Eucharistic parish.

3. Eucharistic parish is not the words but mostly the faith and the works of faith of the believers who live in their eagerness and their thoughts in Christ through the regular taking of His Holy Gifts.

4. Eucharistic parish is the community of believers who live in the unity of love and who are able to spread this love to other people. They remember that God's love enlightens equally both believers and unbelievers: the latter only need direction so that in their mind and heart they come to know this love. Abundant are “the riches of the glory” for the gentiles who get to know Christ and are baptized and who take the path to Christian perfection while recognizing God's mysteries and Christ's presence in those mysteries (sacraments), because it is them whom “*God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:27).

5. A Eucharistic parish may be called Eucharistic community provided the believers of a region (territory, community), while living a life according to the commands of the Gospel and doing everything possible so that they fully participate in the sacramental life of the church, are recognized not only as a parish community but as a community united within the ecumenical (universal) bounds of the church under the guidance of the Orthodox bishop. From this perspective, Eucharistic community can be a rural deanery, a diocese or even the whole church.

(5) Missionary parish and missionary Christian community.

1. There is no significant difference between an ordinary Orthodox Christian parish and a missionary parish: in both of them the Christians try to live a life of struggle towards Christian perfec-

tion and salvation of their souls. The small distinction is in the direction of thoughts and deeds of the believers in realizing their role and place in the church.

2. Many are the Christians who live active ecclesiastical life in their parishes and whose individual life of struggle towards acquiring the blessed gifts of the church fully satisfy the needs of their faith. There are also Christians who know that apart from their individual Christian struggle they have to share their experience with others while proclaiming the blessed truths to the people around them and to everybody with whom they come into contact: these Christians are the missionaries of the parish.

3. To be missionaries of their parishes, they need to go and carry out mission ministry outside the “church’s fence” under the guidance and the spiritual supervision of experienced missionaries and of the bishop so that their ministry is proper, right and effective.

4. The small cell of believers-missionaries in the parish may transform into a bigger cell of missionary-oriented Christians and further into even larger community of missionaries who, under the guidance of the diocesan missionary or the diocesan bishop himself, will form the missionary parish. One more condition is needed for this to be effective: the church’s priest must be a missionary himself where his performing the divine services and his wider pastoral ministry are mission-grounded. This means that his ministry needs to conform to the goals, tasks, forms, methods and means of Orthodox mission, as described in this Concept.

5. A missionary parish may be called missionary Christian community provided the believers of a region (territory, community), while living a life according to the commands of the Gospel and doing everything possible so that they proclaim the Word of God “*to the ends of the earth*”, are recognized not only as a parish community but as a community united within the ecumenical (universal) bounds of the church under the guidance of the Orthodox bishop. From this perspective, missionary Orthodox community can be a rural deanery, a diocese or even the whole church.

3. Hierarchical and personal aspects of Orthodox mission

It is beyond all doubt that no mission is possible if there isn’t a true spiritual and deeply involved in the life of the church personality. The activity of individuals in mission has often been crucial for the success of Orthodox witness and for confirming the Christian values and norms of life on our own territories and in other lands and among other peoples in the world. The importance of personality in Orthodoxy is not looked at in the way some Christian communities sometimes consider it while attaching either too much or too little significance to it in the mission of the Church of Christ in the world. The Orthodox church is an apostolic church and her hierarchical organization is in full accord with personality as agent of mission in the practice of professing one’s faith and living a life according to it. This is why the aspects of personality in Orthodox mission include the hierarchical organization of the church and the missionary service of clergy and lay people; to this, we should also add the consideration of what qualities, characteristics and abilities the contemporary missionaries need to possess. In this way, Orthodox mission focuses on four main aspects while dealing with the issue of personality in mission.

(1) Hierarchical aspects of Orthodox Christian mission.

1. Mission has its beginnings and its greatest example in the mission of the Son of God and His being sent from the Father. The apostles then laid out the beginnings of the hierarchical grounds of the church to which the mission of the church is submitted.

2. Since the time of the apostles and up to modern times, church hierarchy has been the bearer of spiritual power in the church. In this, mission has always been done in accordance with the hierarchical organization of the Christian communities.

3. From this perspective, the missionary activity of the church can be considered as mission ministry of the diocesan missionary and the parish missionary. The first takes an official position in

the diocesan office and is responsible for the missionary and the educational activity within the diocese, and the latter is an active member of their parish to whom missionary responsibilities have been assigned by the church's chief priest after proper blessing of the diocesan bishop has been received. The parish missionary may receive additional financial support for their mission ministry.

4. The diocesan missionary fulfils missionary tasks and activities in accordance with the Concept on mission and the recommendations of the Head of the Holy Synod's mission department; the missionary also works under the direct supervision of the diocesan bishop and in cooperation with the other staff of the diocesan office. The parish missionary fulfils missionary tasks and activities in accordance with the Concept, the recommendations of the diocesan missionary and the church's chief priest after proper blessing of the diocesan bishop has been received.

5. The diocesan and the parish missionary carry out missionary activities with the help of other missionaries of the church in their diocese and their parish. The missionary tasks and activities to be performed and fulfilled are planned in advance and approved by the bishop according to the diocesan plans for mission work for certain periods of time (most often – for one calendar year).

6. Depending on the needs of the diocese, and if there are possibilities for this, a deanery missionary may be appointed in the deanery offices where the missionary helps the parish missionaries in coordination with the diocesan missionary's plans and recommendations. The missionary at the deanery offices may receive additional financial support for their mission ministry.

(2) Missionary service of church clergy and lay people.

1. The Head of the mission department in the Holy Synod organizes the coordination and management of the mission of the church in full compliance with its Statute, this Concept, the decisions and the regulations of the church, and in cooperation with the heads of other Holy Synod's departments. The Synod's missionary defines the main goals and tasks of mission for one calendar year and sends them to the diocesan bishops for consideration and adaptation to the specific needs and conditions of their dioceses. The Head of mission department helps the diocesan missionaries in the organization of missionary courses in the dioceses and in the work of coordination of curricula and syllabuses on missiology. The Synod's missionary receives from the diocesan missionaries the reports on mission for the year and plans further missionary activities for the next periods.

2. The diocesan missionary organizes and supervises missionary activity in the diocese after the plans on mission have been approved by the bishop and after they have complied with the general principles of mission ministry of the whole church as sent down for consideration by the Head of the Holy Synod's mission department. The diocesan missionary develops missionary plans and programmes and organizes missionary courses in the diocese. Where possible, he carries out courses separately for the diocesan clergy and for the lay Christians. The diocesan missionary deals with the missionary commissioning letters and, where necessary, gives recommendations as to how the tasks described in them can be most efficiently fulfilled. He also entitles the deanery missionary (where there is one) to prepare the commissioning letters for those parishes where the chief priests of the churches cannot prepare them by themselves, as well as in the cases where a priest takes pastoral responsibility for several parishes. The diocesan missionary prepares reports on the missionary activity in the diocese to be sent to the Holy Synod.

3. The parish missionary organizes the missionary activity in the parish under the supervision and guidance of the chief priest of the parish church and in accordance with the recommendations of the diocesan missionary on the mission plan for the current year. The missionary makes every effort to punctually and timely fulfill his missionary commissioning tasks as prepared and approved by the church's priest and agreed with the diocesan missionary's plans on mission. If the parish missionary is a priest, together with the church's priest he organizes the life of the parish in such a way that its various activities are mission-grounded and its divine services, educational work, social ministry and other ecclesiastical endeavors are mission-oriented. If the parish missionary is a lay Christian, they make every effort to encourage the believers to actively profess their faith and to

become missionaries who would help the priest and the non-clergy church ministers in their ministry in the parish church.

4. Where there is a deanery missionary in the deanery office, they help the parish churches in the region under the supervision of the deanery head and according to the diocesan office's plan on mission. The deanery missionary may issue missionary commissioning letters for parish missionaries of those churches where the priests of the churches cannot do this and where a priest takes pastoral responsibility for several parishes.

(3) Characteristics of contemporary missionaries.

1. Orthodox missionaries are preachers of the Word of God. To proclaim the Good News, they need to be specially trained in mission so that their ministry is effective and attracting people to Christ. In this, missionaries are able to preach and to show by their example the richness of church life which they already possess in their own ecclesiastical life as Christians. This means that the missionary must be the best example of a Christian to be followed by those among whom he preaches and among any other people.

2. Orthodox missionaries need to be priests. In their missionary activity, where necessary, missionary-priests can perform divine services, the holy sacraments, the various Orthodox rituals, prayers, etc. His role is very important in serving the holy liturgy and preaching the Word of God during the divine services and at any other appropriate time.

3. In the cases where the missionary is a lay Christian, they need to always ensure there is a priest along with them while doing their mission ministry. If this is not possible, lay missionaries continue their mission ministry and when needs arise in performing divine services, administering the holy sacraments or serving any other church's orders, they seek every opportunity to include a priest in their ministry and together with him to carry out the services.

4. The missionaries of the Orthodox church, both clergy and non-clergy, need to be "*harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit*" (1Pet. 3:8), meek and longsuffering (cf. Col. 3:12) and most of all – to put on love, the bond of perfectness (cf. Col. 3:14). Only if they possess these qualities, they can be poor with the poor, hungry with the hungry, infirm with the infirm, prisoners with the prisoners, sick with the sick, etc.

5. Missionaries are not only experienced in ecclesiastical matters and are spiritually elevated but are also theologically well educated so that they can meet the high requirements modernity sets: in their mission ministry, they may come into discussion with non-Orthodox Christians, they may need to explain in simple terms to everyone the truths of the faith where with the children they use their child's language, with the adults they communicate on their level of understanding, with the people of other religions they adapt to their way of seeing the world, and with the atheists they use their system of notions and level of thinking.

(4) Missionary commissioning letters

1. Mission ministry can be theoretically found in the missionary documentation of the Holy Synod and the diocesan offices but in its most practical and specific form it can be seen in the missionary commissioning letters. They are letters of the entire church written to the missionary, though they may contain only a few missionary tasks to be fulfilled. At the same time, commissioning letters mean responsibility which missionaries take in their activities to fulfill the missionary tasks described in the letters.

2. The content of the commissioning letters depends on the missionary plans of the diocese and on the specific needs for mission to be done in a parish or region. The letters are approved by the diocesan missionary, the chief priest of the parish church, where mission activities are to be carried out, and by the parish missionary if the commissioning letters are given to another missionary of the same parish.

3. As a rule, commissioning letters are prepared in written form and they contain one or several missionary tasks as described in the letters according to the type of missionary activity, means of implementation of the tasks, necessary resources and time schedule. In the cases where circumstances arise and the missionary needs to do a missionary task not included in the mission plans of the diocesan or the parish mission programme, the missionary does mission and after it has been completed commissioning letters are written where the missionary activity which has been carried out is described.

4. The parish church's priest and the parish missionary may assign missionary tasks to non-clergy church ministers or to church active lay Christians possessing missionary spirit; after they have completed the mission, commissioning letters are written and the results of mission are described. Where there are active lay believers eager to do mission, the priest and the missionary of the parish try to make missionaries out of them and to include them in the plans and the programmes of the parish and the diocese for the next periods of mission.

4. Ecclesiastical-educational aspects of Orthodox mission

In fulfilling the goals of mission, Orthodox missionaries are able to successfully do mission ministry through the impulse of their elevated spirituality and deeply recognized ecclesiastical life. Generally speaking, missionaries today need special education and training in order to become successful missionaries. Countless are the Orthodox confessors of faith who have been doing mission in the world without the need of special theological and missionary education: it is the Holy Spirit, through their faith and works of the faith, Who makes their missionary efforts life-bringing. But the circumstances of the contemporary widespread secularism and extreme differentiation of knowledge pose the necessity of special education of Orthodox missionaries so that the church is able to successfully carry out her mission in the challenging times of the modern societies. This is why the ecclesiastical-educational aspects of mission include such issues like tradition and missionary ministry, on the one hand, and contemporary challenges which Orthodox missionaries face today, on the other hand.

(1) Tradition and contemporary issues of missionary service.

1. Christian mission has had its traditional roots since the time of the apostles, especially that of St apostle Paul. The goals of mission ministry have remained the same over the two thousand years of Christianity: what changes is only the forms and the methods of mission as used in accordance with the defined missionary tasks which are specific for the different lands and the different periods of time over the centuries.

2. Orthodox missionaries prepare themselves to be missionaries of the church mainly through personal preparation and their individual spiritual struggle in praying to the Holy Spirit to help and to bless their desire to serve the Lord in their missionary work which they intend to undertake. No mission is possible without spiritual and educational preparation of the missionary. In rare occasions, an Orthodox missionary may be led by the Holy Spirit Who would put his spiritual gifts into use, thus allowing him to proclaim the Good News among other people through the inner impulse of his heart.

3. As Christians have departed from the original purity of ecclesiastical life, as love between them and between people as a whole has diminished, and as contemporary conditions of societies became extremely complex and human knowledge extremely differentiated, Christian preachers today need to be specially trained so that they are able to successfully carry out mission. It is almost obligatory today that missionaries are trained before they go out on mission service.

(2) Teaching missiology in BOC and the theological schools.

1. Missiology is a relatively new teaching discipline within Orthodoxy which needs to be properly grounded on the teaching of the church and needs to be further developed.

2. Mission studies (missiology) is taught both at the spiritual seminaries of BOC and the Orthodox theological departments of universities.

3. The teaching discipline of mission studies (missiology) finds its place among the ecclesiastical-practical teaching disciplines at the spiritual and the theological schools, not among the disciplines of systematic theology: missiology does not study theoretical issues of theology but is in itself a very practical guide to actions in the ecclesiastical life of Christians. Its role may be paralleled to the role of pedagogy and teaching practice of theology students at secular schools.

4. Missiology as a teaching discipline presupposes carrying out missionary practice of students in a parish. Such practice is carried out under the supervision of the chief priest of the parish church after he has agreed this activity with the diocesan and the parish missionaries and has received the blessing of the diocesan bishop.

(3) Training of missionaries.

1. The most important preparation of the missionary is his constant aspiration for more elevated spiritual church life. A missionary may be only the Christian who is deeply confirmed in their faith and who in their mind and heart constantly abides in the truths of Orthodoxy.

2. Orthodox missionaries need to get appropriate educational qualification: they need to be graduates from a spiritual seminary and/or a theological department of university. In case a believer without necessary educational qualification has been appointed missionary in a parish, in the course of their mission service they need to graduate from a theological faculty, while obtaining BA or MA diploma.

3. An important element in training missionaries is the yearly mission courses organized by the dioceses at least once a year. These courses are organized separately for missionary-priests and missionary-lay people.

4. In practice, the training of missionaries takes place continually in the course of their mission ministry where they often need to take non-standard decisions and to use all their fund of theological of knowledge and ecclesiastical skills in order to fulfill the specific mission tasks in their ministry.

(4) Missionary scholarly and ecclesiastical meetings and conventions.

1. Mission practice has shown that over time, issues and questions to be resolved arise in the church in her relations with the world. These issues and questions need to be discussed by the missionaries of a diocese or parish at regular meetings where they try to seek solutions and to propose new visions. The meetings may be organized in various forms: a mission conference, missionary seminar, missionary camp, etc.

2. Such mission meetings are usually organized for all the missionaries of a diocese. Where necessary, an all-church mission conference may be organized in one of the dioceses or in the capital diocese.

3. Missionary meetings are mostly gatherings of practical importance: exchange of views and experience in mission ministry and proposing new initiatives in resolving different missionary tasks over certain periods of time. The meetings however are gatherings also of scholarly-practical importance where research papers, lectures, mission researches on specific mission practice may be presented while showing the practice of both Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christian missionary activities and seeking for lessons to be learned and benefits to be derived for the Bulgarian church. Missionaries from other churches and countries may be present at these meetings to share their experience in mission theory and mission practice.

4. Missionary meetings are also gatherings of church-organizational importance: at the meetings, specific issues of the ecclesiastical organization of the lives of the believers in their parishes are discussed, possibilities are sought for establishing and confirming specific types of organization

and structure where the believers are able to devotionally serve God, the church, and the people around them, and also to grow in their own ecclesiastical life in the spirit of missionary witnessing.

5. International aspects of Orthodox mission

Traditionally, Orthodox Christian mission is a mission of relations between the Orthodox witness of faith (the Orthodox preacher) and their non-Orthodox setting, predominantly outside their own country. This explains the fact that the ecclesiastical activity of the missionary is done, to a greater or lesser extent, through his relating to Christians of non-Orthodox Christian traditions, people of other religions and people belonging to the atheist layer of society: these relations between the missionary and other people find their realization either in the missionary's own country or in other foreign lands. In this way, the international aspects of Orthodox mission embrace both the internal and the external mission of the church where missionary service may take the form not only of effective witnessing the Truth but also of relations with other non-Orthodox Christians and with people belonging to various atheistic, religious or ideological layers of contemporary societies. Five are the internal and the international aspects of mission.

(1) Orthodox Christian mission as effective witnessing of the Truth.

1. Orthodox mission is a witness to the faith and a proclamation of the Word of God as found in the teaching of Christ, the apostolic heritage and the teaching and the practice of Orthodoxy: these foundations of mission are invariable and do not depend on circumstances of life or social changes in specific countries in the history of humankind. Orthodox witnessing is the testimony of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. From this perspective, Orthodox mission has always been international mission and all-human mission.

2. These characteristics of Orthodox witness point to its ecumenical (universal) nature and to the fact that the mission of the church, as looked from this perspective, is mission of proclamation of the Good News in the whole world where, in current times, we can observe complex relations between countries and regions and between religions.

3. As a witness to the Truth, Orthodox mission is rooted in its own ecclesiastical foundations where no new social practices are accepted: in one or another historical period of development of societies, there have always been new theories and practices in societies which contradict the commands of the Gospel and the entire ecclesiastical life of Christians.

4. Orthodox mission remains faithful to the church teaching and practice only if it observes in fullness all things whatsoever Jesus Christ has commanded us (cf. Mat. 28:20).

(2) Orthodox Christian mission and interchurch dialogue.

1. The catholic (the ecumenical, universal) character of the church and the true witnessing of the Orthodox missionaries presuppose proclamation of the Gospel in every place and at every time among all those who have never heard it, or who even having heard it do not understand it. This includes atheists and believers of other religions, too.

2. Preaching the Gospel today is done through the use of various forms and means of mission ministry, and one of them is dialogue with people who have not believed in Christ yet. Dialogue presupposes tolerant relations between people, unless tolerance contradicts the commands of the Gospel and the life and ecclesiastical practice of the missionary.

3. In the contemporary world, the existence of Christian communities that have departed from Orthodoxy represents one more fact which demands carrying out dialogue with those communities with the aim of reaching common understanding of Christianity and its importance and place in today's societies. This dialogue is not a process of imposing something on others or exerting influence, and certainly not a process of proselytizing, but is most of all sharing of ecclesiastical experi-

ence where Orthodox missionaries are able to show the deeply rooted spiritual foundations of Orthodoxy and its effective church practice in the lives of ordinary Christians.

(3) Orthodox Christian mission and the other religions.

1. For centuries, Christianity has coexisted with other religions and with the atheistic environment in societies, and nevertheless it continues to embrace the hearts and minds of people all over the world, to such an extent that today there is no single place on earth where the Good News hasn't been brought by its missionaries. This coexistence has seen both peaceful and violent periods of relations of Christianity to the "outer" world in human history. The last two centuries of spreading Christianity in the world has been characterized by intensive proselytizing activity.

2. The instances of proselytizing in today's world have been condemned by both the religions and the state's administrations. Religions today try to occupy spiritually territories and lands mostly through witnessing the true meaning and the God-given character of their religion and through the religious lives of their believers.

3. In the contemporary world, people tend to accept as their own faith the religion which most effectively makes the connection between them and divinity active and life-proven, especially if this religion is not influenced by time and changes but preaches among people its traditional and steadfast foundations of its doctrine and religious practice. A number of non-Christian religions have spiritually invaded Europe and the world mainly because of their steadfast spiritual strength and their refusal to accept innovations in some of the contemporary societies which seem to have the desire to create paradise on earth here and now.

4. Orthodox mission is characterized by witnessing and proclamation of the Word of God in such a way that all nations of the world (including our own people) see, feel and get to know the purity of Christ's teaching which the Son of God Himself handed down to the apostles, and through them to the Orthodox church; it is mission that shows the nations the highly elevated spiritual practice and life in the church where Christians do not leave room in their hearts and minds for secular things and vainness but direct them to the heavenly and the unworldly. Orthodox mission ministry proclaims eternal, not temporal, truths about the lives of people and of societies.

5. The mission of the church is mission of exposing the power and the intransient value of the teaching of Christ, it is mission of attracting the nations to Christ, of winning for Christ those who are atheists, who are believers of other faiths and those who believe in various philosophical, ideological or other type of teaching. It is the mission which uses every means of proclamation and which in a peaceful and attractive way turns people's hearts to Christ.

(4) Orthodox Christian mission and globalization.

1. Processes of globalization affect people's lives all over the world today. These processes affect the lives of the believers of various religions, too.

2. If the processes of globalization do not negatively influence the religious foundations of life of a society, they may have positive effect in the development of societies, especially in connection with the more accessible ways of movement of people and goods and with the increased possibilities for preaching and Orthodox witnessing to the remotest places of the planet. If the processes of globalization affect the religious foundations of life of societies with the aim of changing their traditional ways of life, then the processes may have negative effect both on the lives of the believers and the unbelievers.

3. One of the most evident indications of negative influence of globalization on people's minds is the decline of morality and its substitution for new "all-human" moral values which are far away from the morality of the Gospel and from the moral values maintained by most world religions. The substitution of the moral values leads to substitution of the true understanding of man and his place and role in the world.

4. From this perspective, Orthodox mission has as its main central goal the task of witnessing and preaching the true teaching of the Gospel as proclaimed by the Church of Christ for centuries; it is this witnessing that shows the incorrect interpretations of some contemporary teachings and ideas about man where human beings are deprived of their aspiration for the heavenly and are forced to live and work only for their physical prosperity and well-being for as long as possible and as painless as possible.

5. At the same time, Orthodox mission sanctifies and spiritually strengthens the believers and those who accept the teaching of Christ and His Church by preparing them for a life in dignity; it is a life in difficult circumstances where all over the world we see decline of religion and its substitution for a worldly morality and the ideology of “global humanism”. Orthodox missionaries do their mission by taking into account the processes of globalization, which take place both in their own country and in the world as a whole, and by making every effort to limit the negative effect of these processes on the lives of the believers while at the same time trying to encourage the implementation in people’s lives the positive aspects of globalization.

(5) Challenges the Orthodox Christian mission faces today.

1. The challenges which the Orthodox Christian mission and the other religions face in contemporary world are numerous and multifaceted. In general, Orthodox mission needs to resolve various issues which the modern world poses as challenges to the Orthodox church: these challenges concern most of all the internal and the external mission of the church.

2. The biggest challenge the Orthodox church faces today was sent to the contemporary parish, diocese and the church as a whole. Orthodox missionaries need to strengthen the spiritual space of the Orthodox parish, to rightly teach the believers the foundations of a true spiritual life in the church through the God-serving, the mystical (the sacramental), the pastoral, the educational, the ecclesiastical-social (diakonal) and the missionary aspects of mission of the church. It is the Christians who are confirmed in their faith and their church life in the parish that keep live the connection between them and God as the Source of life and between the believers and Orthodoxy as teaching and church practice. It is these believers and this parish that are able to resist any temptation and any changes in societies which aim at apostasy of people and their retreat from God.

3. It is also the external mission of the church which faces big challenges today as the church needs to confirm the same Christian way of life and of Christian morality, which already exist in her parishes, in other peoples and among other cultures in the world. This type of challenge is overcome if mission ministry is initiated by a confirmed in her faith and practice missionary church which is able to pass on to others what she already possesses. The mission ministry of the missionary among other peoples and cultures can be successful only if it comes as a result of his mission among his own people and his own setting: the more successfully the missionary has been doing mission among his own people the more successfully he would do mission among other peoples.

4. Orthodox mission faces challenges, both in internal and in international aspect of mission, which make it deal with issues of globalization and the changed vision of man as interpreted by the leaders of this all-embracing process. The apostasy of people today, their retreat from God, can be seen in such processes like aspiration of people to reach worldly prosperity and well-being, increase of man’s lifespan to a hundred and, striving to, even several hundred years of age, living a life without diseases and pain, abandoning the original role of man and of woman in human history and in the framework of family, and a number of other contemporary “desires” of people to “overcome” God’s role in the world and in creation. It is these challenges that make it more than urgent that Christians of various traditions intensify dialogue between their communities and respond to these threats so that Christians live true spiritual life and the believers are further strengthened in Christ’s truths: this is the most powerful shield against any threat, human or world’s (secular).

Conclusion

(1) Orthodox Christian mission and responsibility.

1. Orthodox mission means responsibility for the future of the local Orthodox church and for the future of Orthodoxy in the world.

2. Orthodox mission means responsibility for the future of Christianity. Mission aims to bring back to Christians today the original purity and perfection of life of the first Christians and to confirm the believers in the tradition of the church, thus making sure that the character and meaning of the church is not misunderstood as a result of the influence of the contemporary antireligious globalistic processes in the world.

3. Orthodox mission means responsibility for the future of all people and each single person who are to hear the Good News, to accept it in their lives and to take the path of spiritual perfection and of closest communion with God through the church and her saving means of spiritual struggle.

4. Orthodox mission means responsibility first of all before God. Whenever the missionary does his mission in the best possible way, he may be confident that he gives God a good answer for everything he did in his mission ministry so that the Church of Christ be "*glorious... holy and blameless*" (Eph. 5:27).

(2) Orthodox Christian mission in eschatological perspective.

1. Orthodox mission is eschatologically grounded: it most clearly shows the essence of people's temporal life here on earth and the consequences of this life for the future life of their souls.

2. Orthodox mission is preaching among nations where missionaries show the type of life people need to live so that it agrees with the commands of Christ and the order of God that we love Him and our neighbor: this is the mission through which the believers receive the hope that they will inherit life eternal in the life to come, the life which has been promised those who have been steadfast in their faith and in doing the works of faith.

3. Orthodox mission proclaims the glorious Christ's second coming and the end of this world. It is the mission that proclaims the Orthodox teaching and the Orthodox ecclesiastical practice where every aspect of church life is submitted to the eschatological perspective of the teaching of Christ in the expectation of His glorious coming again to judge everyone according to their faith and deeds.

4. The Orthodox mission as eschatological perspective is a powerful means through which the peoples of the world have the possibility to understand the false meaning and the pernicious tendency of the contemporary theories, practices and exhortations on how people could build paradise here on earth without God and even contrary to God. It is the mission which God wants every believer to implement in their personal, ecclesiastical and social life, and it is the mission which can bring sanctification on people's lives and on the whole world while leading the nations on the path of salvation.

II. Supplement

First steps to be taken to make the Concept statements practically possible **

The internal ecclesiastical activity of the Orthodox church in practice is the mission of the church where, unlike other Christian traditions, the believers firmly and resolutely work for churching of people and for attracting to Orthodoxy those who have only heard about it but never came to know it from inside and who have not experienced the spiritual joy of seeking salvation: their own and that of their neighbor.

A lot has been done in the church after the changes of 1989 but still there is so much to be done: catechization and churching of people, Orthodox education, making Orthodoxy attracting to Bulgarian people, work with the non-Orthodox citizens of the country and with the foreign citizens, strengthening the church in practical way through building new temples, opening of Sunday and other type of schools, cooperation with the state secular schools in towns and villages, cooperation with the country's mass media, etc. Multiple are the Bulgarian parish churches where the life of the parishioners seems to have stopped or been lived only inside the "church's fence".

Orthodox Christians and Orthodox missionaries need to go out of their seclusion and cross that "fence" – to go among the citizens of our town or village, among the people of other faiths, among the foreigners, among those who are hungry and needy – and to sow there the seeds of the Word of God and to pray God so that the seeds bear good fruit. This is the mission of the Orthodox church. Many are the Orthodox Christians who got used to the term "Orthodox witnessing" and to whom the term "Orthodox mission" may seem foreign. At the same time we should not forget that Orthodox mission has been done for centuries now. In fact, it is not as important which terms we would use, more important is the content which the term denotes. Even the phrase "Orthodox witnessing" may not denote any meaningful content if we don't do what the church wants us to do so that we are witnesses of the faith. The phrase "doing mission" may even encourage the Orthodox believers in the parishes and the dioceses to realize in a new way their role as Orthodox Christians and make them take on various Christian tasks to fulfill by using the gifts given to them by God and their skills to accomplish the tasks, thus contributing to the salvation of their souls and the souls of their neighbor.

We need to constantly remember that the mission of the Orthodox church today is about strengthening the spiritual space of the church (first within her own boundaries and then outside them, in the world) and about confirming Christianity on its own territory and in the world as a whole. This is well expressed in the documents on mission of other local Orthodox churches, including the Russian Orthodox church where even today the practical activities of the missionaries show the Russian society and the world the enormous creative and positive role of Orthodoxy for preserving the traditional cultures and the Christian morality as a shield against the moral depravity and the incredible in scale and effect disinformation which is being continuously spread over to the minds of contemporary people and their conscience: it is the moral depravity where deceit and vices have become a standard and where the morality of the Gospel and purity of life are judged and even persecuted.

The Orthodox church is first of all called to strengthen her spirituality on her own "territory of pastoral responsibility" and to bring back to the mind and the heart of the Orthodox believers the

teaching of Christ and the faith in their original purity. Today we can see that not only the believers who affirm that they are true Orthodox Christians but also those, who are church members and think of themselves as being actual members of the church and active parishioners of their parish, often have a distorted understanding (and distorted practice) of Orthodoxy and of the Orthodox Christian way of life. Secondly, the Orthodox church is called to confirm Christianity not only on her own “territory of pastoral responsibility” but in the world as a whole because we can see today that Christianity goes away from the Old continent where to some extent the western Christian churches seem to have failed in showing the peoples the power of Christianity and its teaching and could not prevent the processes of secularization of their societies and the processes of “tolerant” mixing the Christian tradition with the traditions of other religions and other foreign to Christianity cultural samples. These two aspects of the calling of the Orthodox church – the first one as the internal mission of the church and the second as the external mission of the church – need to be further developed and “put into action” in the life of every local Orthodox church. In the course of such a mission, the experience the local Orthodox churches obtain in mission may suggest certain ways of common and agreed missionary activity of all Orthodox churches on the field of mission: the hearts of people all over the world who need to feel the love of the Gospel and to unconditionally accept Christ in their mind, heart and life as His true followers – this is the mission field, now and as ever.

While reflecting on the necessity for Orthodox mission today and the need for positive and effective change of the old status-quo in the Bulgarian Orthodox church (BOC), I engaged in developing and proposing my vision on the BOC’s mission by founding my consideration on the good experience of mission of other Orthodox churches and on the specific conditions in our country. Bulgaria does not have the large scale of recourses, territories, possibilities, etc. which other countries with predominantly Orthodox Christian population have, it does not have as powerful and influential Orthodox church as other local Orthodox churches do, and nevertheless on the small “territory of pastoral responsibility” and on the basis of the restored Orthodox tradition after the changes of 1989, we can do not less successful mission than other churches do. The most important thing is that we come to wish to be missionaries, that is, to be witnesses of Christ in our faith, words and deeds: to Him and to His teaching and to the teaching and the practice of the Orthodox church. If we have such sincere desire, and if we firmly believe we will succeed, then our life as witness will bring good fruit.

The Concept on mission of the Bulgarian Orthodox church involves fulfillment of various ecclesiastical tasks and activities in the church so that this document becomes an effective foundation on which the long-awaited positive change in our parishes and dioceses comes true. These tasks are not only tasks of the Concept but are a call to all Orthodox Christians in the country to make every effort so that they successfully carry out their duty as Christians and as responsible before God faithful for the benefit of the church and the country. The document only points out what direction these efforts may take: then, in our dioceses (and even in our parishes) these directions may be further developed in accordance with their specific circumstances and the tasks they need to fulfill.

1. Opening a Mission department in the Holy Synod of BOC.

The title “mission department” may sound to some a bit excessive and immoderate but such a department is necessary within the church as its main function will be guidance and supervision of the missionary activities of the church in the Bulgarian society. What is the Mission department like? It is the body which not only manages and supervises mission but it also takes responsibility for the activities it does. An effective missionary body is the structure which includes a head of department and an assistant missionary (Synodal missionary) who in a practical way works for the implementation of the mission tasks the Mission department has to fulfil. The head of the department coordinates the activities of the diocesan missionaries, agrees the diocesan mission programmes and plans and keeps connections with mission departments of other local Orthodox churches. The assistant missionary (the Synodal missionary) makes sure the statements of the Concept are being “put into

action” and he also reviews the reports on mission the dioceses send to the Synod, and he also presents them to the head of department for assessment and approval; in fact, the reports are presented to the whole church for opinion and consideration.

2. Establishing a mission fund of BOC.

Without financial and other material ensuring of mission, we can't expect big results of it. This fact makes it necessary that a mission fund of BOC is established. The Head of mission department deals with the fund's resources after the Holy Synod has approved the volume and the type of mission activities in the BOC's dioceses. The fund resources' volume needs to be constantly increased as it will be constantly used: by the rate of how much the resources are accrued and spent, the missionaries may judge what type and what volume of mission work has been done in the dioceses over certain periods of time. We are sure that people and organizations will want to take part in the establishment of the mission fund and then in accumulating resources for it to be used for the mission of the church. It seems possible that each diocese establishes their own mission fund the resources of which to be used for the missionary activity within the diocese; as a basis for such a fund, the deductions which every diocesan office currently makes from the parishes' budgets for education may be used. In fact, it is exactly the educational activity which forms the foundation of any missionary activity. The diocesan mission fund insures the salary of the diocesan missionary, as well as the resources needed for carrying out missionary activities in the diocese where these activities are not funded by the mission fund of the Holy Synod.

3. Appointing diocesan missionaries in the diocesan offices.

If the above two issues are resolve, then we can see in our dioceses Orthodox missionaries who will be able to carry out the tasks of mission as agreed with the diocesan bishop. It is only if in the diocesan offices missionaries are appointed that the whole vision of mission and the mission fund resources are “put into mission action” on local level (the vision on mission being the Concept and the guidance on the part of the Synodal mission department). These missionaries do church mission in the dioceses in accordance with the tasks as defined by the Synodal mission department and further developed in the diocesan office and approved by the bishop after the specific needs of the diocese have been taken into account. The diocesan missionary is also responsible for the organization of mission tasks and activities in the diocesan deaneries by engaging priests and lay people for specific mission work. Where the diocese can ensure a salary for a deanery missionary (or at least some additional support), this missionary is responsible for the organization of mission activities in the towns and the villages of their region. It is very important that the diocesan missionary is appointed as a staff of the diocesan office where they can fully use all their energy and spiritual gifts for the fulfillment of the tasks of mission as defined by the Synod and the diocesan bishop. If we think that the housekeeper of the diocesan office, or the accountant, or anybody else in the office, is the missionary only by name, who would possibly “do mission”, then we simply delude ourselves. The appointment of a diocesan missionary means responsibility, accountability and most of all – results as an outcome of the activities they do so that the church grows.

4. Electing parish missionaries in the parishes

In every parish, a missionary should be elected: a Christian who in their ecclesiastical and spiritual life has proved that they are worthy to be called Christ's witness and who are believed to have the skills and the experience to practically implement Orthodoxy within the parish and outside it. At the decision of the parochial church council, the missionary may receive additional financial support for the activities they do, without the need to be appointed as staff of the church. The parish missionary carries out mission in accordance with the mission plans as developed and sent down by

the diocesan missionary and after the blessing of the bishop and the chief priest of the parish church has been received.

Both the diocesan and the parish missionaries need to be priests. As priests, in their mission ministry they are able to perform various ecclesiastical activities which a lay missionary cannot do, for example, performing divine services, baptisms, receiving confession, serving various ecclesiastical orders and rituals, etc. It is mostly these church's activities which most often are needed in doing mission. Where the diocesan and the parish missionaries are lay Christians, in their activity they need to always make sure to do mission accompanied by a priest or in cooperation with the local priesthood in the places where they go to fulfill one or another missionary task.

5. Teaching missiology in the spiritual seminaries and the theological faculties

Mission studies was taught in our spiritual schools and its abandoning seems justified as it used to deal only with issues of non-Orthodox Christian denominations and means of fight against sects. Mission studies needs to be restored in the curricula of our spiritual schools today where its content should correspond with the contemporary principles of the study and the practice of mission as exposed in the discipline of missiology. This means that new curricula and new syllabuses need to be developed and new textbooks and teaching aids to be composed: this could be done by the church hierarchy and the teaching staff of the theological faculties who are interested in the discipline or have researched into it. As a rule, the authors of research books and textbooks in missiology are at the same time practicing missionaries. Teaching missiology at the spiritual seminaries and the theological faculties would enable some of the graduates to choose and to take the path of mission, something that is so much needed today in the church. In this book, the first attempt in this direction has been made by proposing a syllabus on missiology which is mostly suitable for the theological faculties.

6. Training of missionaries.

Obviously, without missionaries no mission is possible. This means that special organization of training and education of missionaries needs to be undertaken so that the Bulgarian Orthodox church has her own missionaries. This can be realized if one of the two spiritual seminaries becomes a missionary seminary through the missionary-oriented curricula and including mission studies in different teaching subjects and through the mission practice of the seminary students: this practice may be organized through individual commissioning letters, given each student by the seminary staff, and in coordination with the parishes to which the students belong. Missionaries can be prepared if a theological college is opened and missiology as specialization is introduced in it. Missionaries can be prepared at mission courses organized by the dioceses according to their needs. Missionaries can be prepared at mission seminars or mission conferences where for a short period of time the Christians who want to become missionaries get to know the basics of mission work and then initiate mission; on the first possible occasion, they will need to attend and finish missionary courses. Bulgaria is a small country, and our church is small, and this means that there is no need of big organizational work and big efforts in carrying out missionary courses. The diocesan missionaries may carry out such courses by themselves, even if they would have only a couple (or more) candidates for missionaries: it is not the scale of activity but mainly the results of it that matters. If the result is only ten missionaries of the church, we should be satisfied and be sure that the church would benefit from them: even this result is much better rather than not training missionaries at all. We all need to recognize that the work missionaries do is specific, and for this work they need to be trained, apart from the need to be called by God.

7. Missionary commissioning letters.

This is probably the most essential constituent of mission in a parish, a diocese and in the whole church: the personal pledge (obligation, rather) of the believer to work for the fulfillment of specific tasks as assigned to them by the parochial trustees, the parish priest, the diocesan bishop or diocesan missionary, by the mission department of the church or by mission brotherhoods or sisterhoods in the diocese or in the deanery regions. The fulfillment and the achievement of the ecclesiastical tasks – this is mission. In this, the most natural and effective means of taking the pledge of mission is the assignment of commissioning letters. These letters are in fact the commitment (the commission) of the entire church because the missionary tasks in them are in full agreement with the Concept of mission, the mission department of the Holy Synod, the missionary plans and programmes of the dioceses and the missionary activities which the parish needs to carry out. The commissioning letters are made in written form where more easily for fulfillment tasks may be stated (for example, catechization work in the parish with the aim of churching the believers) or more difficult ones (for instance, doing mission among non-Orthodox, among those who belong to other Christian traditions or other religions, among special social groups, such as medical doctors, teachers and lecturers, military staff, governmental administration, etc.) which, on its part, requires from the Christians high missionary and personal qualification. No effective mission of the church is possible without commissioning, which inevitably presupposes responsibility. In the cases where, because of circumstances, commissioning is done in oral form, without assigning special commissioning letters, after the mission tasks have been completed the letters are specifically written and then accounted for when reports are sent to the diocesan missionary.

8. Missionary seminars and conferences.

Missionary experience needs to be regularly and constantly summarized and shared with others so that the criteria of mission are discussed concerning the specific mission activities in the dioceses and the means of improvement of their efficiency. This sharing may occur at missionary conferences organized at least once a year where all the missionaries of the Bulgarian Orthodox church need to be present, including the missionaries of the mission department and the diocesan missionaries. Quite a number of the missionaries are priests and so the possibilities of their participation will greatly depend on their engagements in the parishes. These are not conferences of high scholarly level, which universities or other organizations carry out, but conferences of practical-ecclesiastical importance where the experience of mission is summarized and the new mission tasks for the next periods are approved. Apart from these conferences, it is a good practice of organizing missionary conventions or seminars in each of the dioceses where the missionary qualification of the Christians, who have pledged to become missionaries of the church, will be increased. These conventions are organized by the diocesan bishop and the diocesan missionary and are carried out either in the metropolitan centre or in one of the most active in mission deaneries.

9. Missionary service of lay people.

In general, the missionaries of the church are a small number in comparison with the ecclesiastical body as a whole, especially as we have in mind the beginning of mission in the Bulgarian church. This makes it necessary that active lay people, as many as possible, in our parishes need to be engaged in mission: they are the helpers of the missionaries in the church. The parish missionary assigns mission tasks (missionary commissioning letters) to them while taking into consideration the specific conditions of the parish, the level of churching of the parishioners, who are going to help him, and the abilities and gifts each of them possess. In many instances, the male parishioners may be assigned tasks which otherwise would be difficult for women to be fulfilled, and vice versa: there are missionary activities which would be much better carried out by women rather than men. Depending on the civil profession of the parishioners, the parish missionary, in agreement with the

diocesan missionary, may assign them specific missionary tasks in connection with their profession or their setting or working place where they would perform the missionary activity in the best way. Active lay Christians need to be included in the mission of the parish, no matter which age they are, young or old, as each of them is called to be a witness in their own group (age) and setting: there is no such setting and community which would not need Christian enlightenment and churching.

10. Making Orthodoxy understandable to people.

Mission cannot be successful if the truths the church and the missionary proclaim do not touch the heart and the mind of those who come into contact with Orthodoxy. In the 1990s, we saw temples full of people, and today we see them half-empty. Among the many other reasons for this, one of them is the fact that more and more people do not understand old church Slavonic language. Many of the people, who some 15 to 20 years ago came into the church, would probably stay in the temple if the clergy there gave them the “spiritual food” in “digestible” form, that is, in understandable for them form and content. Today we can see only a small number of believers at the morning and the evening services: not that they would not want to come (though their work may prevent them from coming) but because even if they came, they would not understand anything (or almost anything) from what has been read or sung from the church books, when this is done in old church Slavonic language. This requires special missionary work on translation of the most frequently used church books and the books of the Orthodox services, as well as publication of these books. Such an activity can be done only if the Holy Synod gives their blessing and if both, the Synod and the mission department, coordinate and supervise it because this is a task of all-church importance.

In some parishes today we can see people translating books into modern Bulgarian but this process is not coordinated and it is incidental; it does not receive the sanction of the Synod and often there is no supervision on the translations as to what the quality of this type of work is. It is a regrettable fact that some of these “translations” are far away from the true meaning of the Slavonic originals. In the last years and decades it became evident that the Holy Synod cannot cope by themselves with the enormous work on making the language of the divine services closer to the believers’ heart and mind, and this makes it necessary that this work is assigned to specific parishes which would carry out the task under their (the Synod) supervision and in cooperation with specialists in the field of old Bulgarian and church Slavonic language. The translated in this way books need to be first approved by the Synod and only then published.

11. Cooperation with other local Orthodox churches and participation in the inter-Christian dialogue.

The approaches to mission in BOC are mostly defined by the specific circumstances of Bulgaria and of the church, and at the same time this does not exclude sharing experience in mission with the other local Orthodox churches. Cooperation with other churches would prevent us from “inventing the wheel” once again: there are practices which have already been experienced and successfully implemented in mission. Cooperation in mission between the Orthodox churches may have another important result: it will define the “Orthodox” criteria of mission, the common Orthodox approach to mission, without belittling the local missionary circumstances of the specific countries. And criteria are needed, especially having in mind the contemporary dynamic situation in the world and the processes of globalization.

The cooperation between the local Orthodox churches in mission and the definitions of common missionary criteria would suggest which may be the all-Orthodox criteria for dialogue with the non-Orthodox Christian churches. The refusal of the Bulgarian Orthodox church to participate in the inter-Christian dialogue need to be overcome and the church, along with the other Orthodox churches, should take its proper place in the process of talks and dialogue with the other Christian

traditions because such a dialogue may bring further strengthening of Christianity in Europe and in the world as a whole.

Mission has always been the borderline of church activity where mission ministry is placed between the church and her secular environment. In the same way, the Orthodox missionaries as church activists are placed between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox social areas, both in their own country and abroad where they do mission. The dialogue with other non-Orthodox Christian traditions may not only contribute to strengthening Christianity in the world but it can also attract to Orthodoxy those who have not found satisfaction in their search for spirituality in the other Christian churches, in the other religions and in the secular way of life.

These are briefly the steps which I would suggest to be taken so that mission is initiated in the Bulgarian Orthodox church, too. As in the previous chapters of the book, here I would like to again mention that these are only suggestions and visions as to how mission could be done in Bulgaria: they may be further developed, reviewed and formulated. Here only the beginning has been laid, and the most important thing is that this beginning has its continuation which could bring clearer theoretical exposition and practical application of Orthodox mission in our country and at any other place where the Bulgarian Orthodox church is pastorally responsible for her believers.

Valentin Kozhuharov, April 2010.

Notes

I. To the English-speaking Christian readers

1. Although the Concept presents the theoretical-practical vision of mission of Orthodoxy (and more specifically – of the Bulgarian Orthodox church), in fact most of its principles and statements are all-Christian. As a suggestion, for example, if you replace in all sentences the word “Orthodox” with “Christian” in the document, the all-Christian meaning of the Concept would be much more visible.

2. On the other hand, there are specific Orthodox notions of understanding mission and here the non-Orthodox readers can find assertions which may sound quite different from the way you do mission or the way your Christian theology presents the teaching of the church. These are such notions as salvation through faith and works of faith (that is, not through faith alone), equal importance of both Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition in acknowledging the sources of faith and the practice of faith, recognition of the seven sacraments of the church and their importance in the lives of Christians and their closer communion with God (the seven sacraments being: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance/ Reconciliation, Holy Matrimony, Anointing of the Sick, and Holy Orders), the nature of the Church and her apostolic succession, hence the importance of ecclesiastical hierarchy in the practical profession of faith, the meaning of the Holy Gifts in Eucharist /the dogma of *transubstantiation*/ where the bread and wine lose their natural substance by being transformed into the Body and the Blood of Christ, as well as other specific Orthodox Christian teachings. In this, we need to say that these specific notions in no way do diminish or distort the all-Christian understanding of mission of the church as in fact every missionary activity starts and finishes with witnessing Christ and proclamation of the Gospel.

3. The citations from the Holy Scriptures are taken from different English language versions of the Bible to correspond (as far as possible) to the usage and the meaning of the “Orthodox” biblical texts as given in the Slavic Bible. Only one citation differs between the “Orthodox” and the “Western” Bibles, and this is **Ps 18:5** in the Slavic Bible which corresponds to **Ps. 19:4** in the English language versions of the Scriptures.

II. Authorship and publications

* The Concept was first published in: Valentin Kozhuharov. *Christianska missia v usloviata na pomestnata tsyrkva*. Vesta, Veliko Tarnovo, 2010 (*Christian Mission in local Orthodox Churches*. Vest Publ. House, 2010), pp. 39-109.

** The “First Steps” were first published in: Valentin Kozhuharov. *Missionerskata deinost na ruskata pravoslavna tsyrkva dnes*. Vesta, Veliko Tarnovo, 2008 (*The Missionary Activity of the Russian Orthodox Church Today*. Vesta Publ. House, Veliko Tarnovo, 2008), pp. pp. 265-275, and then slightly supplemented and published in: Valentin Kozhuharov. *Christianska missia v usloviata na pomestnata tsyrkva*. Vesta, Veliko Tarnovo, 2010 (*Christian Mission in local Orthodox Churches*. Vest Publ. House, 2010), pp. 133-145.

III. Citations in the Concept

1 In order for the first part of the Concept to be clearer and more well-arranged, any citations and sources have been omitted but they are abundantly presented in the second part of the document, mostly in the body of the text itself.

2 Under “Bulgarian Orthodox Church” we should understand “Bulgarian Orthodox Church – Bulgarian Patriarchate”

3 Ustav na Bulgarskata Pravoslavna Tsykva. Tsykoven Vestnik, 09.01.2009 (Statute of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Church’s Newspaper, 9 January 2009, article 1, paragraph 1).

4 Statute, article 1, paragraph 2.

5 Statute, article 2.