

Corona Virus and Eucharist

By Vasileios Giannopoulos*

Corona virus –or covid 19– is an infectious disease nowadays, which constantly mutates and has become a dangerous dimension of pandemic worldwide. Millions of people have already been affected. Incalculable is the number of those who died or will die from it. Incalculable are also its social and economic consequences.

The pharmaceutical and scientific research has managed to invent in a very short time the appropriate vaccines, which protect to a great extent the vaccinated from the painful consequences of the virus and death. However, despite the hecatomb of victims, excessive is also the number (in many countries exceeds the 50% of their population) of those who either reject the existence of the virus or deny to be vaccinated. Many of them deny to abide by the precautionary measures (mask, keeping distance) suggested by the specialists. The reasons for this behavior, as we know, vary. Therefore, it would not be necessary to refer to them here. It is generally accepted nowadays that our fellow-beings to a large extent do not trust, as appropriate, the scientists nor do they conform to the decisions of the State or of the Church (of the Holy Synod). On the contrary, they are influenced by views of people who pretend to be specialists, or enlightened, of quack doctors, of every kind, who take the opportunity, to make themselves known and to acquire publicity, to attract notice as being important and wise, without caring about the consequences of their “advice”, the pain the sorrow and the death that will cause to those who trust them.

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The religious, which interest us, instead of listening to the voice of the Holy Synod, the «ὁρθοτομούσης τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας», are persuaded by irresponsible rumours and advices which have inundated the media. They comply with the advices of fanciful monks, elders, half-taught spiritual fathers, and other false devout Christians and false prophets, cleric or secular. It is very difficult if not impossible to dissuade the objectors and those opposed to vaccines. It is probably to them that the words of apostle Paul: «Αἵρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον μετὰ μίαν καὶ δευτέραν νουθεσίαν παραιτοῦ, εἰδὼς ὅτι ἐξέστραπται ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ ἀμαρτάνει, ὣν αὐτοκατάκριτος»¹, apply. As we will discover later on, those who deny to be vaccinated –moreover when they incite others to do the same, under the pretext of betraying their faith and of being a prey to the devil/Antichrist when they are vaccinated-commit a deadly sin. The devil, if God allows him, does not need the vaccine so as to have power over us.

In those opposed to vaccines are included and some bishops. We were informed by the media of a bishop, who found the cure for corona virus in the sanctification of the waters («ἀγιασμός»). Another one said that corona virus cannot enter the Body and the Blood of Christ, as the sanctification water itself does not alter. We are not going to be engaged in aphorisms of such kind. We will try to treat the subject based on synodic and patristic references-testimonies and on the liturgical act of our Church.

The Holy Eucharist and the Baptism are two important and fundamental Mysteries of the Church. The crowning moment of the Holy Eucharist is the change («μεταστοιχείωση»), of the bread into the Body and of the wine into the Blood of Christ. Eucharist is the centre and the reference of the Divine Liturgy. The byzantine Divine Liturgy starts with the pronunciation of the celebrant: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...” («Εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος...»). It is preceded by the «Προσκομιδὴ» “Oblation”, the preparation of the precious Gifts at the offering, which will be carried in procession,

1. Tit. 3, 10-11.

during the Great Entrance, to the Sanctuary and will be laid on the Holy Sanctuary (Holy Table). There with the evocation of the Holy Spirit, the bloodless sacrifice-crucifixion of Christ will be accomplished. The bread and the wine will be changed into the Body and the Blood of Christ².

Therefore, the question of the transmission or not of the corona virus to those who participate in the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist is analyzed into two individual questions: a) Is the virus transmitted through the Body and the Blood of Christ or through the “Spoon” which is used and b) Is there a danger for the congregation to transmit the virus or to be infected with it particularly when they proceed most of the time in disorder, with or without the mask, to receive the Holy Communion and later on to take the “Antidoron” and kiss the hand of the priest or of the bishop?

The answer to the first question depends on whether the Body of Christ was indestructible or destructible before the Resurrection. In the ancient Church many heretics accepted that the Body of Christ was indestructible: Gnostics, Marcionites, Manichaeans, Aethartodokites etc. In general terms these heretics accepted that the world- and the people obviously – is the creature of a lower God, which justifies the attested imperfections in Him, the materiality the corruption and the death. The good God, send His Logos (a kind of angelic being) to deliver the human kind from the materiality, Who, however, could never take on material body. Therefore, the Logos did not become a real man, he just seemed to be and reacted like a real man.

The so-called Quinisext Ecumenical Council, bearing in mind that some Aethartodokites who resided in the eastern provinces of the empire were using icons of Prothomos, who was showing Christ depicted as a lamb, published the πβ’ canon. This depiction meant for those who used it that Christ did not become real human. And that Prothomos saw Christ as lamb, when he was saying: «Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου»³. In the πβ’ canon Synod demands

2. The substance of the bread is transmuted, and is altered to the Body of Christ. As substance of bread is disappeared and sacrificed. However the things that have happened: color, smell, taste, weight and volume remain.

3. *Jn.* 1, 29.

that Christ henceforward should be anthropomorphically represented, as it is acknowledged thus that Jesus became real human, destructible, and changeable, like all humans, and alongside to criticize those who confess that Christ was from the very first moment of the conception indestructible.

John Damascene differentiates between destruction and corruption Christ's as human. He says that destruction, «σημαίνει τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πάθη, πείνα, δίψα, κόπον, τὴν τῶν ὅλων διάτρησιν, θάνατον, ἥτοι χωρισμὸν ψυχῆς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. Κατὰ τοῦτο τὸ σημαινόμενον φθαρτὸν τὸ τοῦ Κυρίου σῶμά φαμεν». However, that doesn't mean corruption, namely that: «τελείαν τοῦ σώματος εἰς τὰ ἐξ ὧν συνετέθη στοιχεῖα διάλυσιν καὶ ἀφανισμόν». Of the corruption «πεῖραν τὸ τοῦ Κυρίου σῶμα οὐκ ἔσχεν»⁴.

Anastasius Sinaita writing against the Gaianites, who accepted a) that the Body of Christ was from His first coming into being free from destruction and corruption and b) that the bread and the wine are

4. *Περὶ Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως*, ch. KH', PG 94, 1099-1100. John Damascene probably accepted that the Body and the Blood of Christ which we communicate cannot be corrupted neither can be changed inside us (see PG 94, 1152-1153). There are of course some objections, such as: 1. If the Body and the Blood of Christ (of the Holy Eucharist) remain incorruptible and unalterable inside us, then for what reason is the repetition of the Holy Communion, regularly or periodically, necessary? 2. If the Body and the Blood of Christ which are kept in the Pyx, in the event that are not perfectly desiccated, change, then how is it possible the Body and the Blood of Christ which we receive through the Holy Communion not to change, considering that we sin very often? 3. According to apostle Paul, «τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἡμῖν» (1 Cor. 3, 16), not the Body and the Blood of Christ. 4. In accordance with the prevailing orthodox teaching, the divine nature of Christ is not communicated. The pious and holy Christians become communicant and participant only of the divine energy. John Damascene accepts that people through the Holy Communion «μετέχουσι, καὶ κοινωνοὶ θείας φύσεως γίνονται». Ἀντιθέτως, οἱ ἄγγελοι «οὐ μετέσχον, οὐδὲ ἐγένοντο θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως, ἀλλ' ἐνεργείας καὶ χάριτος» (PG 94, 1348). The "thought" of Damascene is that, since the two natures of Christ were united in the hypostasis of Logos without *confusion* or *division*, it's impossible for the Body and Blood of Christ to be separated from the divine nature and to be corrupted or changed. If we ascribe the divine attributes of the divine nature of Christ to the human nature, such as the imperishability, we must accept the omnipresent of the human nature of Christ etc. According to the Orthodox Dogmatic we don't accept the reciprocation of the attributes and of the names of one nature to the other, but the reciprocation in their common hypostasis, namely the hypostasis of Logos.

changed to Body and Blood of Christ, invites them to bring sanctified by themselves Body of Christ: «Καὶ ἀποτεθῶμεν ἐν πάσῃ τιμῇ τὸ τοιοῦτον ἅγιον σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ Αἷμα εἰς σκεῦος ἐνδόξως, καὶ ἐντὸς ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν, ἐὰν μὴ φθαρῇ, ἢ τραπῇ, ἢ ἀλλοιωθῇ, πρόδηλον ὅτι καλῶς κηρύττετε τὸν Χριστόν, κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ὄντα ἐξ αὐτῆς ἁκρας ἐνώσεως ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ. Εἰ δὲ φθαρῇ ἢ ἀλλοιωθῇ, ἀνάγκη πάσῃ ὑμεῖς ἐν ἐκ τῶν ὁποτέρων εἰπεῖν ἢ, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν, μεταλαμβάνετε, σῶμα ἀληθινὸν Χριστοῦ, ἀλλ' ἀντίτυπον, καὶ φιλόν· ἢ ὅτι διὰ τὴν κακοπιστίαν ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἐπεφύτευσεν εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· ἢ, ὅτι φθαρτόν ἐστι τὸ σῶμα Χριστοῦ πρὸ τῆς ἀναστάσεως, ὡς θυόμενον, καὶ νεκρούμενον, καὶ τιτρωσκόμενον, καὶ μελιζόμενον καὶ ἐσθιόμενον. Ἀφθαρτος γὰρ οὐσία οὐ γεννᾶ, οὐ γεννᾶται, οὐκ αὔξει, οὐκ ὑπνοῖ, οὐ διψῇ, οὐ κοπιᾷ, οὐ πάσχει, οὐ θνήσκει, οὐ τιτράται ὑπὸ ἡλῶν καὶ λόγχης, οὐκ ἰδροῖ, οὐκ αἰμορρόεσι», according to Hippolytus, whom Anastasius adduces⁵, and continues: «Ἀφθαρτος γὰρ φύσις οὔτε τέμνεται, οὔτε τιτρώσκεται πλευράν, καὶ χεῖρας, οὔτε μελιζέται, οὔτε νεκροῦται, οὔτε ἐσθίεται, οὔτε ὅλως κρατεῖται ἢ ψηλαφεῖται· οἷα ἐστὶν ἡ ἀφθαρτος τῶν ἀγγέλων καὶ τῶν ψυχῶν φύσις»⁶.

Christ's Body, in which the bread (lamb) is altered is the hanging from the cross, after the «τετέλεσται»⁷ dead Body of Christ, the εὐψυχο Body, since His soul descended in the underworld⁸. The Blood, to which the mulled wine is changed, is the blood and the water which came out from the pierced side of Jesus⁹. The «κλάσις», namely the breaking and the «ἔκχυσις» of His body, which the Lord mentions during the

5. From the *Περὶ ἀναστάσεως καὶ ἀφθαρσίας* speech. Anastasios while commenting the citation from Hippolytus, attests: «Καὶ γὰρ μυριάκις νηπιοπρεπῶς ἔκλαυσεν [ὁ Ἰησοῦς], μυριάκις ὡς ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος ἔπτυσεν· πεπεύραται γὰρ τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς ὡς φησιν ὁ Παῦλος, δίχα μόνης τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Ἴδου γοῦν περιτομὴν καταδεξάμενος οὐδὲν θαῦμα διὰ τῆς αἰμορροΐας ἐκείνης τῆς θεοσάρκου ποιῆσαι ἠθέλησε» (PG 89, 301).

6. PG 89, 297: «[ὁ] Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Τετέλεσται καὶ κλίνας τὴν κεφαλὴν παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα».

7. Jn. 19, 30.

8. According to John Damascene, the precious and all-holly Body of Christ «Σῶμά ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ἡνωμένον θεότητι, τὸ ἐκ τῆς ἀγίας Παρθένου σῶμα, οὐχ ὅτι τὸ ἀναληφθὲν σῶμα ἐξ οὐρανοῦ κατάρχεται» (PG 94, 1144A). See and footnote 11.

9. Jn. 19, 34.

deliverance of the Mystery, refer directly to His death on the cross and to the mystical union of all those who communicate His Body and His Blood with Him. The faithful who communicate participate in the death of Christ so as to become participants in His resurrection too. According to apostle Paul: «Ὅσάκις γὰρ ἐὰν ἐσθίητε τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον καὶ τὸ ποτήριον πίνητε, τὸν θάνατον τοῦ Κυρίου καταγγέλλετε, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ»¹⁰. Thus far in what we have been saying, the ancient Church granted the Body of Christ separately from the Blood to the cleric and to the secular.

The Quinisext Ecumenical Council refers in its ρα' canon to the practice of the early Church concerning the Communion of the Holy Gifts to the faithful. The Council published this canon due to some Christians, who were proceeding to be granted communion bringing with them «δοχεῖά τινα» from precious material, inside of which the priest was placing the Body of Christ. The Council condemned this practice and determined that those who proceed to receive the Body of Christ, must have their hands folded in the form of a cross, where the priest lays the Body of Christ¹¹. Henceforward the body of Christ was belonged to the one who received it. He had the right to it all or a part of it. He had the right to use the rest of it whenever he wanted. The faithful received the Blood of Christ from the Chalice, as they do nowadays the clerics.

The use of the Spoon, with which is granted communion of the Body and the Blood of Christ to the secular and to the monks, was introduced later on. It is true that the communion of the Holy Gifts to the faithful through the Spoon makes the whole procedure of the communion of the faithful safer and brief. However, this way of communion of the Body and of the Blood of Christ introduces a distinction between cleric and secular- we could say between holy and profane. This distinction

10. 1 Cor. 11, 26.

11. John Damascene attests: «Προσέλθωμεν αὐτῷ πόθῳ διακαεῖ καὶ σταυροειδῶς τὰς παλάμας τυπώσαντες τοῦ Ἐσταυρωμένου τὸ σῶμα ὑποδεξώμεθα καὶ ἐπιθέντες ὀφθαλμούς, καὶ χεῖλη, καὶ μέτωπα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνθρακος μεταλάβωμεν, ἵνα τὸ πῦρ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν πόθου προσλάβὼν τὴν ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρακος πύρῳσιν καταφλέξῃ ἡμῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας καὶ φωτίσῃ ἡμῶν τὰς καρδίας, καὶ τῇ μετουσίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ πυρὸς πυρωθῶμεν καὶ θεωθῶμεν» (PG 94, 1149B).

is radically against to what was valid in the early Church. At that time all the Christians were called saints and accomplished miracles with the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ, these living Christians, who had the gift to work «σημεῖα». Nowadays «ἄγιοι» are called the bishops and the Reverend Fathers of the Holy Monasteries. But mainly saints are called those who have fallen asleep, whom the Church has recognized and proclaimed saints.

Moreover, we point out that the addition of hot water («ζέον») in the Blood of Christ and the mixture of the Body and the Blood Christ's, just before their transubstantiation with the Spoon, weakens the sacrificial character of the Holy Eucharist, but also the connection of the communicated Body and Blood Christ's with the hanging from the cross lifeless Body of His and the overflow of blood and water from His side.

The matter («ὕλη») of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, as for the rest of the Mysteries, is strictly defined. It is the leavened bread and the mulled wine¹². The addition of hot water («ζέον») and of the portions («μερίδες») which were extracted from the offered holy bread in honor of the angels, of the Mother of God, of the prophets, of the patriarchs, of those who have fallen asleep etc. in the holy Chalice

12. The divine Liturgies of Jacob, of Mark and of Great Basileios justify the use of mulled wine, for Jesus Christ used mulled wine in the Blessing's Chalice. The offering of this Chalice introduce with the following words of Christ: «Ὁμοίως καὶ τὸ Ποτήριον ἐκ τοῦ γεννήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου λαβὼν κεράσας, εὐχαριστήσας, εὐλογήσας, ἀγιάσας, ἔδωκε ... εἰπὼν: Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες...» (d. Liturgy G. Basileios). The words that the redactors of the above divine Liturgies attribute to Christ do not agree with the evangelical narrative (Mt. 20, 26-28; Mk. 14, 22-24; Lk. 22, 19-20) and with that of Paul (1 Cor. 11, 24-26). However, the byzantine divine Liturgy connects the use of the mulled wine with the coming out of blood and water from the pierced side of Jesus. From the moment of course that we as Orthodox accept that during the Last Supper Jesus and His disciples did not eat the «νομικόν», Jewish Passover but the Christian Easter, it's obvious that they ate leavened bread and Jesus used mulled wine templetig thus the coming out of blood and water from His pierced side. The Quinisext Council in the λβ' canon referring to the divine Liturgy of Chrysostom attests that the holy Father «τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἔνθα τὴν ποιμαντικὴν ἐνεχειρίσθη ἡγεμονίαν, ὕδωρ οἶνω μὴ γινῶναι παρέδωκεν, ἥνίκα τὴν ἀναίμακτον θυσίαν ἐπιτελεῖσθαι δεήσεις, τὴν ἐκ τῆς τιμίας πλευρᾶς τοῦ λυτρωτοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξ αἵματος καὶ ὕδατος κράσιν παραδεικνύς...».

means addition of a third, fourth etc. matter¹³. For the time being we are not going to be preoccupied with the abovementioned individual questions. The dogmatic element of the Mystery is: the change of the bread and of the wine to the real Body and Blood of the Lord. The additions («προσθήκες»), indeed these which are absent from the early divine Liturgies of James and of Mark, prove that with reference to these points, their adjustment to conditions where cases of emergency such as the pandemic of corona virus require, is aloud if not necessary.

Therefore, since from what we have said results that the Body (and the Blood) of Christ before His Resurrection was destructible and changeable and that what is added in the Holy Chalice is not changed to the Body and Blood Christ's, it is plausible and consistent to say that the present of the virus also or of another pathogenic substance in the Holy Chalice is theoretically possible. Of course this cannot be proved. The Mystery is not susceptible of research. It is not something that can be proved by experiment. It is believed. It needs heroism and divine help for someone to believe, if of course he doesn't do it out of habit, that he communicates the Body and the Blood Christ's, although the taste, the color and their weight are the same of that of the common bread and wine.

The religious who are opposed to vaccines claim that God would never allow His temple to become source of the infection of the virus, therefore they proceed to it and pray together with their brothers in Christ without keeping the protection measures. Primarily, we should always keep in mind that the body of each conscious Christian is God's temple. Apostle Paul asks the Corinthians: «Οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν οἰκεῖ;». Καὶ συνεχίζει: «εἴ τις

13. Since the cleric, who grants communion to the faithful, should not offer to the communicants bread («ἄρτον») from the added portions («μερίδες»), that means that these, although they have been soaked in the Blood of Christ, they are not consider as Christ's Body. The Quinisext Council with the *κη'* canon condemned the practice, which was prevailing to some holy temples, the faithful to be able to offer grapes to the celebrants and the later to bled the grapes and the Holy Communion and to offer them to the communicants. The Council doesn't say if the Mystery with the addition of a third matter (grape) is profaned, and therefore in that case we would have had the return of the Body and Blood Christ's to their initial state. It was content to ask the dethronement of that celebrant who acts «παρὰ τὰ διατεταγμένα».

τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ [δηλ. τὸ σῶμα του] φθείρει, φθερεῖ τοῦτον ὁ θεός· ὁ γὰρ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιός ἐστιν, οἵτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς»¹⁴. Our body and the soul do not belong to us. They are God's gifts. We ought to take care of our body and of our soul. The holy Fathers consider the conjugation of body and soul as parallel to the conjugation of the divine and human nature Christ's, relatively speaking. The neglect of the natural needs of our body and its exposition to excess dangers is a sin, which in some extreme cases resembles to suicide.

Let us remember the case of Jesus Christ, Who after His baptism was led up into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days. A fast of forty days was the higher limit that a human had ever fasted. Just then he was hungry. The devil knew that, if a human for any reason, comes to the end of his endurance, becomes susceptible to the temptations.

The second temptation Jesus' s from the devil has a more specific meaning and opportuneness. According to it, the devil set Jesus Christ on the pinnacle («πτερύγιον») of the temple in Jerusalem and suggested to Him: «εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ [as it was said about you during your baptism] βάλε σεαυτὸν κάτω· γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ ἐντελεῖται περὶ σοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ χειρῶν αὐτοῦ σέ μὴποτε προσκόψῃς πρὸς λίθον τὸν πόδα σου»¹⁵. The devil, that is to say, suggested to Christ, if he was indeed the Son of God to throw himself down and as it is written in the Scripture he will come to no harm. Jesus Christ answered to him: «Πάλιν γέγραπται¹⁶, οὐκ ἐκπειράσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου»¹⁷: What does this answer of Jesus Christ mean? It means that the human should not proceed to acts or omissions meaningless and dangerous for his life, confident that God will intervene in a miraculous way to protect him. Again, to tempt God the one who, despite the documentary evidence of God's love, is ready to challenge Him, or to make complaints to God,

14. 1 Cor. 3, 16-17.

15. Mt. 4, 6; cf. Ps. 90, 11-12. 90, 11-12. More about the temptations of the Lord see Savvas Nanakos, *Ἐξηγητική προσπάθεια τῶν πειρασμῶν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἰδίᾳ βάσει τῶν ἐλληνικῶν ἐρμηνευτῶν*, Thessaloniki 1967.

16. Deut. 6, 16. According to apostle Peter, the sudden death of the couple of Ananias and Sapphira is due to the fact that by saying lies they tempted the Holy Spirit (Acts 5, 1-6).

17. Mt. 4, 5-7.

when he is faced with the first adversity or failure, saying that He has forgotten him¹⁸.

Many miracles are accomplished. However, God cannot be forced to work miracles. God intervenes for our sake whenever He wants, having as a criterion our own good and with respect to our freedom, and not when we want to¹⁹. God created the human free and with free will. He made him rational. He endowed him with mind, will and the right to choose. God doesn't take back these gifts. If God guided us in everything that we want and do, then we wouldn't have the responsibility of our invisible deeds or reward for our good deeds. Therefore, that Christian who attends the Divine Liturgy or draws near the common Chalice in a haughty manner looking at those who wear mask scornfully, for he thinks that by doing so makes his faith known to God, in reality he is unworthy of the Holy Communion for he is deprived of the love for the fellow-being. In this case, not only he doesn't profit from the Holy Communion but also he will do harm to himself. He sins against God and the congregation.

18. Apostle Paul points out to Corinthians: «Μηδὲ ἐκπειράζωμεν τὸν Χριστόν, καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν, ἐπείρασαν καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ὄψεων ἀπώλλυντο» (1 Cor. 10, 9; Num. 21, 56). Paul, during the first years of his mission, believed that the second coming Christ's would happen in those days (1 Cor. 4, 15-17). However, it happened that some of the new baptized were weak and ill and a lot of them died. The reason for that was that all of them questioned the change of the bread and wine to Body and Blood Christ's. They communicate them as if it were common bread and wine (1 Cor. 11, 27-30).

19. The miracles are accomplished in such a way that anyone who doesn't believe in them to be able to dispute them or to interpret them as an absolute or accidental fact or as a natural phenomenon, which will be explained sometime by science. John writes in his Gospel: Jesus said: «Πάτερ δόξασόν του τὸ ὄνομα. Ἦλθεν οὖν φωνὴ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Καὶ ἐδόξασα καὶ πάλιν δοξάσω. Ὁ οὖν ὄχλος ὁ ἐστὼς καὶ ἀκούσιος ἔλεγεν βροντὴν γεγονέναι· ἄλλοι ἔλεγον, Ἄγγελος αὐτῷ λελάληκεν...» (Jn. 12, 28-29). According to the Fathers, neither all the saints accomplish miracles, and they bring as an example John the Baptist nor all those who accomplish miracles are saints, according to the words of Jesus Christ: «Κύριε κύριε, οὐ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι ἐπροφητεύσαμεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι δαιμόνια ἐξεβάλομεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι δυνάμεις πολλὰς ἐποιήσαμεν; Καὶ τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς ὅτι οὐδέποτε ἔγνω ὑμᾶς· ἀποχωρεῖτε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν» (Mt. 7, 22-23). See more in the answer of Anastasios Sinaitis to the question K': Ἐκ ποίας δυνάμεως οἱ τὰ ἐναντία φρονοῦντες [καὶ πράττοντες] προφητεύουσι πολλάκις καὶ θαυματουργοῦσιν; (PG 89, 517-532).

In the case of the deniers of the virus and of those opposed to vaccines doesn't apply the apostolic: «Πειθαρχεῖν δεῖ Θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρώποις»²⁰. Christ never said that those who believe in Him, as God and Redeemer, will never fall ill or be infected by pestilential diseases etc. The holy Fathers are often asked to answer the question: Why do the pious and the righteous go through terrible ordeals, anguishes and misfortunes in their life and in the life of their family, whereas the unjust, the morally hardened and the sinners prosper and progress and provoke with their behavior like the rich of the well known parable²¹? What does it apply then? It applies the Pauline: «πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω. Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ Θεοῦ ... ὁ ἀντιτασσόμενος τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ διαταγῇ ἀνθέστηκεν»²².

“Governing authorities” are the Government and the Synod. The coronavirus is a disease which infects our body. The specialist doctors for each case are competent in our corporal diseases. We must be careful. There are traps, there are quack doctors who take advantage of the pain, the misery and the despair of some people. Let us remember the “medicine” of the squirting cucumber, the water of Kamatero etc.

An irrefutable example of the fact that the righteous are tested to excess is apostle Paul, who suffered from a periodic and particularly depressing disease. He writes with reference to this in the 2 *Corinthians*: «ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ, ἵνα μὲ κολαφίσῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι. Ὑπὲρ τούτου τρις τὸν Κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστῇ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ· καὶ εἴρηκέν μοι, Ἀρκεῖ σοι ἡ χάρις μου»²³. And as we know, Paul had always with him his doctor Luke (and no doubt he would follow his advices).

According to the synodic tradition the place («ἐπέχουν θέσιν») of the monks, of the monks of Mount Athos, of “elders” and spiritual fathers, in Church is among the pupils and not among the teachers²⁴.

20. Acts 5, 24.

21. Lk. 16, 19 ff. and 18, 10 ff.

22. Rom. 13, 1-2; see and Heb. 13, 17: («Πείθεσθε τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπείχετε, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀγρουπνοῦσιν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν ὡς λόγον ἀποδώσοντες»).

23. 2 Cor. 12, 7-9.

24. See canons δ', η', κγ' of the 4th Ecumenical Synod β' and μβ' of the Quinisext Synod. The emperor Markianos in a “holy letter” which has sent to the archimandrites and to

The teaching authority belongs to the bishops-metropolitans and this is under the control of the Synod. The Reverent Fathers and the presbyters have authority as a concession and under the control of the familiar bishop- metropolitan. Do they: the bishop-metropolitan, the presbyter, the Reverent Father and the monk, have the right to disobey for reasons of conscience? Yes, in some particular cases (for dogmatic issues and moral questions) and on conditions²⁵. It is not expected a bishop-metropolitan to cancel in practice the synodic decisions, since he was ordained bishop-metropolitan with a synodic decision. It is inconceivable that a bishop should accept the decision of the institution of the Church (Synod), which elected him to be bishop, as taken of the divine Spirit, and reject the decision of the same institution with which he disagrees. In any case the majority prevails. The disobedience of the priests and of the monastic brotherhoods to the fellow bishop -metropolitan and of bishops to the synodic decisions is a bad example (then, how do they demand that the flock should obey to them?).

The corona virus is, apart from the pain, the orphanhood, and the loss of whole families etc., a great temptation for all Christians. It has put to the test the relationships among monks, presbyters and bishops, but also their relationships with the head ecclesiastical authorities. The relationships between the Clergy and Laity are also tested. Corona virus will pass off. Be that as it may it will lose its “center”. It will take a long time and many efforts, by God’s help and good will, to heal the wounds that it will leave to the committed Church.

the monks of Jerusalem and of the neighboring areas wrote: «... δέον γὰρ τὴν ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν καὶ τελεῖν ὑπὸ τοὺς ἱερέας [ἐνν. τοὺς ἐπισκόπους] καὶ τοῖς ἐξ αὐτῶν μαθήμασι προσομιλεῖν, διδασκάλων τάξιν ὑπὸ τῆς ἁγαν ἀνθαδείας ἑαυτοῖς ἐποιήσατε οἱ μηδὲν τὰ παρὰ τῶν διδασκόντων ὀρθῶς μαθεῖν ἀνασχόμενοι, πείσαντες δὲ ἑαυτοὺς ἀνοήτως, ὅτι δεῖ μᾶλλον ὑμῖν πάντας ἀκολουθεῖν...» (Meetings of the 4th Ecumenical Synod, ACO II/1, 3, σ. 124).

25. It’s difficult for each one of us to know whether his conscious is good («ἀγαθή») [Acts 23, 1; 1 Tim. 5; 1 Pet. 3, 16, 21], clear («καθαρά») [2 Tim. 1, 3], or is weak («ἀσθενής») [1 Cor. 8, 7]. It happens quite often those who have weak conscious to believe that their conscious is healthy. How can anyone dissuade them? First of all he must dissuade those who are responsible for their misinformation. We must have I mind the Pauline: «τύπτοντες αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν ἀσθενοῦσαν εἰς Χριστὸν ἀμαρτάνετε» (1 Cor. 8, 12).