

The Sermon Today:
Research into the Transmission and Reception
of Social and Cultural Positions
in Contemporary Sunday Sermonaries

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Introduction

Sermon is one of the basic ways of communication, testimony and teaching of the Christian Church. Throughout the centuries the disciples of Christ have made disciples of *all the nations*, catechized those who accepted the invitation to join the ecclesiastical community and then strengthened them in faith. In their effort they codified the message of the Gospel in the surrounding social and cultural environment of each place¹.

Sermon today must be done with biblical documentation and correspond to people's quests and the needs set by the respective social and cultural context. Let us not forget that preachers and members of the Church more broadly live in specific societies and are bearers of a particular civilization. Thus, the written and oral word of the Church is in direct relation to the society and civilization of each place, because it is a product of the factors that participate in religious and social life². On the other hand, the members of the Church also exert

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1. Anastasios (Yannoulatos), Archbishop of Tirana and all Albania, *Έως εσχάτου τής γῆς*, Apostoliki Diakonia Publications, Athens 2009, p. 38.

2. N. Papageorgiou, *Η Έκκλησία στη Νεοελληνική Κοινωνία. Γλωσσικοκοινωνιολογική*

their own influence on the social space, while religion itself is socially shaped according to the various cultural circumstances³. “Religion always attempts to semantically provide feedback to the content of social relations, essentially ‘recreating’ social reality itself on a level of sacred determinations”⁴. In this way, the ecclesiastical word transfers the various social and cultural representations and often contributes in their creation⁵. The aim is the scientific study of this interaction between society and Church⁶. The collections of ceremonies offer the opportunity for scientific research and tracing the mutual influence of the Church with the social and cultural representations.

The scientific investigation of the sermon may contribute to the question on the course of the sermon in relation to the content, the theological views, the inclusion in the social-cultural space-time and above all the building and catechesis of the believers, as well as the witness of the Church in the world. Although the studies on sermon have been increased, most of them focus mainly on its historic formation and development, ethics and content. The investigation of the sermon on the basis of the principles and the factors of communication can promote the homiletic research and contribute to the effective transmission and reception of the Gospel’s message to a variety of recipients.

The question that arises is: What is the usefulness of the communicative process in the homiletic research? “The communicative approach of the homiletic process offers the opportunity to take into consideration all the factors that contribute to the transmission and reception of the

ἀνάλυση τῶν Ἐγκυκλίων τῆς Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 2000, p. 27.

3. Io. Petrou, *Θρησκεία καὶ Κοινωνία. Κοινωνιολογικὴ ἀνάλυση τῶν σχέσεων Θρησκείας καὶ Κοινωνίας στὴ σύγχρονη πραγματικότητα*, Barbounakis Publications, Thessaloniki 2012, p. 109.

4. P. Karamouzis, «Θρησκευτικὴ ἐκπαίδευση καὶ διαπολιτιστικὴ ἐπικοινωνία. Ἀπὸ τὴν πατερναλιστικὴ χειραγώγηση στὴν θρησκευτολογικὴ διερεύνηση», *Παιδαγωγικὰ ρεύματα στὸ Αἶγαίο/Paidagogika Revmata sto Aigaiο* 3, 1 (2008), p. 41.

5. P. Karamouzis, *Ἡ Κοινωνιολογία τῆς θρησκείας μετὰξὺ Ἐκπαίδευσης καὶ Κοινωνίας*, Hellinika Akadimaika kai Ilektronika Syggrammata kai Voithimata Publications, Athens 2015, p. 22.

6. Io. Petrou, *Θρησκεία καὶ Κοινωνία...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-113.

Gospel's message in a specific place and time"⁷. In this way, research leads to more objective and comprehensive analyses, while the use of methods and techniques, such as field research or the empirical research and the evaluation of the reception of sermon by a variety of recipients, contributes to the extraction of safer conclusions. In this way it is sought the substantial contribution to the study of sermon and the improvement of the factors that contribute to its transmission and reception. In simpler words, the study of these factors contributes to the support of the believers with "words of supplication and construction" but also to the announcement of resurrection "to all the nations" and "to the ends of the earth".

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the social-cultural positions in the contemporary *Homiliaria* or *Sunday Sermonaries* as also their reception by contemporary recipients. The method is based on the schema of human communication which develops into the following factors: the transmitter (preachers-authors), the message (basic positions and their documentation in the sources), the subject (central concept), the pipeline (each *Homiliario* or collection of sermons), the code (Greek language) and the recipients (Greek speaking Orthodox listeners – Greek speaking Orthodox students of the 3rd grade of Lyceum)⁸. However, it investigates a different field and highlights new elements, which are linked to social and cultural representations in sermon and their reception by contemporary recipients.

In order to achieve this purpose, it is divided in five separate short sections: the first refers to the *Sunday Sermonaries* or *Homiliaria*, the second to the research field and the subject, the next summarizes the message of

7. Dimitra Koukoura, *Tò Mήνυμα τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 2009, p. ix.

8. This article is based on post-doctoral research which was carried out at the Department of Theology of the A.U.Th. with Professor Emeritus Dimitra Koukoura as supervising advisor. Its main purpose is the study of the message of Christmas in contemporary *Homiliaria* but also the comparative examination and ascertainment of similarities and differences between the sermons, as also their reception by contemporary recipients. With additional material the research was published under the title: N. Tsirevelos, *Tò Mήνυμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων. Μελέτη σὲ σύγχρονα Ὁμιλάρια*, Barbounakis Publications, Thessaloniki 2021.

the sermons and the main theological positions, the fourth records the social-cultural positions which are found in the sermons under study and the fifth records the reception of these positions by contemporary recipients. At the end follows a discussion and the suggestions on the message and content of the sermon.

1. *Sunday Sermonaries* or *Homiliaria*

Sunday Sermonaries or *Homiliaria* are collections of sermons, which interpret the hagiographic reading of Sundays of the liturgical year or even of the feasts of the festive circle, therefore they are called *Heortodromia*. The first collection belongs to Basil of Seleucia 5th century A.D. while in 7th century appear the *Heortodromia*. The systematic publication dates back to the 11th century, while many collections are preserved dating back to the period of the Ottoman occupation and reveal the attempt to keep alive the faith of the Christians against the pressure and the tyranny of the Ottoman empire.

Besides, a large number is published by various experienced preachers during the 20th century. This flourishing is undoubtedly due to the improvement of theological studies, the ability for more people to study the sacred science as also to the possibilities provided by rapid technological development and low economic costs. Thus, a number of individual collections were published with sermons homilies and speeches, that were called *Kyriakodromia*, and rarer *Homiliaria* and *Heortodromia*. In recent years, with the possibility offered by the internet, informal digital *Homiliaria* or *Kyriakodromia* have been published on various websites and blogs⁹.

In the theological and ecclesiastical field, the name *Kyriakodromia* prevailed. In this research the term *Homiliaria* is often used, because it better conveys the literary genre of homily, that is, the form of the sermon with the specific characteristics of form and content that began to take shape from the post-apostolic times and took its exemplary form

9. N. Tsirevelos, *Τὸ Μήνυμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων...*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

from John Chrysostom and the Cappadocian Fathers. In homily “the documentation of the teaching is based on the Holy Scripture and its structure is determined by the interpreted text”¹⁰.

2. The Field of Research

The field of research consisted of 125 contemporary homiletic texts, which were published or delivered over a period of 50 years, that is, from 1960 to 2010 and had as their theme the feast of Christmas. The feast of Christmas and the common code of communication (Greek language) are the firm factors of the research. An additional common element is that most of these sermons have been delivered in temples or have been spread through other pipelines, e.g. radio and internet during the period of Christmas. In the appendix of this study there is a catalogue with the preachers and the titles of the *Homiliaria*.

The homilies/speeches were written by 61 preachers, who in our research constitute the transmitter. All are Greeks and serve or belong to various Provinces of the Ecumenical Throne, in the Metropoles of the Church of Greece, in Cyprus and Albania. They are all graduates of the Theological Schools of Halki, Athens and Thessaloniki. Higher studies were observed mainly in younger writers. The writing mainly of sermons by bishops reveals their responsibility to teach the word of God.

3. The Message

The basic theological thesis that “God became man in order for man to become God by grace” was developed in various ways. Thus, it was stressed that Christ is the Redeemer that the Jews anticipated and the nations expected. The redemption He gives refers to an ontological moral and social level. Christ redeems from death and sin. The Birth of Jesus

10. Dimitra Koukoura, *Η χριστιανική όμιλία*, Barbounakis Publications, Thessaloniki 2014, pp. 163-165.

took place in a miraculous way and with the contribution of the Mother of God. The Church and His disciples continued His work throughout the centuries. In other sermons it is emphasized that the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God is an act of emptiness. God assumed human nature and adopted the whole man, elevating him ontologically. The work of Christ which begins with His Birth is completed in His sacrifice on the cross and the Resurrection.

Christmas is the birthday of humanity and in the context of the liturgical time of the Church it is revived as the everlasting present. Thus, it is given to every person the opportunity to make a new start in their daily life. This new beginning is interwoven with the Christian way of celebration, which is based on repentance, forgiveness and the eucharistic life. An extension of all these is “the liturgy after the Liturgy”, that is the witness of love in Christ to every person. In other sermons these positions were associated with the peace offered by the birth of Christ. The peace that Jesus announces means reconciliation with God, our fellow human beings, ourselves and the natural environment¹¹.

The documentation of the above theological views mainly in biblical passages but also in hymnography and patristic passages proves the excellent knowledge of tradition by the preachers. At the same time, it reveals the dynamics of the message of Christmas over the centuries. The exception is a few sermons that are a compilation of biblical and patristic passages and their message is hardly received by the modern recipient.

4. Social and Cultural Positions

The feast of Christmas gives the occasion to the preachers to develop various contemporary or topical subjects and to set the recipients thinking. The sermons deal mainly with social issues, related to the cultural context of the recipients.

In this way they set the recipients thinking and teach them by giving meaning to their life through the timeless message of the Incarnation. In

11. For a detailed investigation of the message see N. Tsirevelos, *Tò Mήνυμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων...*, *op.cit.*, p. 69 ff.

50 sermons/speeches, a percentage of 40% was identified as the broad consideration of modern issues. The main positions are reflected in thematic groups.

Most of the sermons and speeches deal with social issues and highlight the witness of the Church to the ministry. The issues of poverty, injustice, exploitation, as well as the causes, consequences and how to deal with them preoccupied many preachers. Their exhortations underline the need for solidarity, support, and practical love. These views were identified with variations which are related to the personal style of the preacher and the recipients in the following sermons/speeches: 37, 39, 48, 50, 59, 62, 69, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, 88, 92, 113, 114, 117, 120 125. In the sermons 113 and 114 there were several references to the overconsumption as a symptom of egocentrism. Besides in sermons 52 and 111 there were exhortations for support to refugees and prisoners respectively, while in sermon 113 on homeless and people on the margins of large cities. In speeches 120 and 122 is developed the responsibility of the modern Church to heal the consequences of the economic crisis the was beginning in Greece at that time (year 2009). Generally, the preachers underline that the economic crisis is primarily moral and the Church must reveal the change the brought about in the world the newborn Jesus.

Many sermons and speeches develop other social issues related to the psycho-pathological passions and their causes. The scourge of drugs that threatens youth is highlighted in sermons 92, 103, 123. Besides sermon 123 highlights the dangers of smoking, alcohol, gambling, internet misuses and electronic “drugs”. The relevant remarks refer to the local community of Heraklion as well as the whole Crete. In sermons 56 and 60 the development of science and technology is commented positively. However, it is stressed that the exclusive belief that technology and science will solve all problems leads to their deification. Every construct that is raised and worshiped as an idol deprives us of human freedom. In sermon 60 it is clearly noted that the worship of money and sex disorientate man from his purpose which is deification. In sermon 125 the preacher draws the listeners’ attention to the treatment of depression which he describes as the greatest illness of our time. In fact, he considers it as a symptom of modern civilization that is indifferent to human relations. Then urges the

recipients to resist disappointment, to fight despair and to draw strength by the hope that gives the incarnated Son and Word of God. Similar references to psychic traumas were also found in sermon 63.

The issues concerning the coherence of the family are identified in sermons 48, 116, while in 35 and 48 are found practical suggestions to parents for the Orthodox upbringing of their children. Sermon 13 analyzes the problems of modern marriage and especially that of infidelity. Sermon 59 deals extensively with the topicality of such issues, and was delivered in 1983. The preacher strongly emphasizes that the passage of civil marriage in Greece will institutionalize (legalize) adultery while he is strongly critical of the Greek Parliament. He then sounds the alarm, that the introduction of civil marriage will also bring about the legal acceptance of gay marriage. These events mean the total moral decline of Greek society, as is happening in secularized England.

The question of the war and its consequences are found in 15 homiletic texts. In particular, in sermons/speeches 23, 29, 45, 48, 80 and 90, 103 were identified anti-war references and exhortations for peaceful co-existence between states but also in every society. In older sermons, such as in 10 and 23, churches were recorded to end civil strife in Greece. Sermon 49 makes extensive reference to the Cold War between the United States and the USSR. Then, it is pointed out the danger of a possible global conflict, that could lead to a nuclear disaster. Besides in sermon 11 all Christians are called to co-operate in order to heal the wounds of World War II and the civil strife in our country. Sermons 21 and 22 refer to the current affairs of that time. The preacher urges Cypriots to remain loyal to their homeland and resist British exploitation. Sermon 38 highlights the problems that the Ecumenical Patriarchate faces. Then an appeal is made to all recipients, who are Greeks of the diaspora, to support the Mother Church. The preacher hints that the problems are political and linked to the attitude of the Turkish government.

The preacher in sermons 103 and 104 points out the causes that lead to violence and the new form of terrorism on the planet. He does not fail to link these issues to the rise of the nationalistic groups on the planet and specifically in the Balkans countries. Then he analyzes the dangers that Orthodox, Islamic and more broadly religious fundamentalism

(fundamentalism) hides. Peace in Christ is an antidote to fanaticism and is achieved by people who act as factors of peace with the Godman Himself as guide and inspirer.

In sermon 100 the treatment of peaceful coexistence extends to ending the oppression of peoples by tyrannical leaders, who serve a variety of interests. In sermon 104 the preacher analyzes with theological arguments the need for harmonious co-existence of people belonging to different religions and are bearers of different cultural traditions. The aim is peaceful co-existence and reconciliation without losing the members of each community their religious and cultural tradition.

The phenomenon of secularization is also part of contemporary issues¹². This subject was developed in various sermons and speeches and was characterized as a threat to Greece and its culture, which is founded on the Orthodox Christian tradition. In sermons 17, 76, 112, 11, 118 were given practical suggestions and exhortations, stemming from the Orthodox tradition and its culture, for Christians to resist secularization. In sermon 31 the dimensions of secularization in Europe were highlighted. The onslaught of the secularized way of life was linked in sermons/speeches 17, 59, and 60 to the various anti-Christian movements of the time (which are not named), atheism and neo-idolatry. The consequence of the above is the culturally secular celebration of Christmas, which differs, from the traditional customs, as it is emphasized in sermons 37, 59 and 62. In sermons 37 and 116 the secularization was considered dangerous to the moral integrity of the nation and the preachers pointed out ways to shield and save the nation. In fact, sermons/speeches 19, 20, 25, 34, 79 call on the recipients to give the outwardly good and moral witness, in order to stop the immorality of the modern world. Sermons 25 and 74 point out the need for re-evangelization of the Orthodox in their particular cultural context, while the first (25) also refers to the duty of the witness in Christ (external mission) in every corner of the earth. Such a witness is called upon to transmit the message of the Gospel in the language and the culture of every people.

12. In relation to the phenomenon of «ἐκκοσμίκευσις» (“secularization”) see A. Giddens & Ph. Sutton, *Κοινωνιολογία*, Gutenberg Publications, Athens 2020, p. 793.

The turn of the millennium has given to many preachers the opportunity to expand on global social problems, which are directly related to local communities and culture. These preachers are usually Patriarchs and Archbishops of international authority and shepherd Christians who belong to one or more countries¹³. Thus, the dangers of uncontrolled economic globalization are pointed out in sermons 94 and 120, while globalization is considered under conditions a great opportunity for Christians to bear witness to the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth and to every civilization (94). In sermon 100 the preacher emphasizes that the deeper cause for social impasses is selfishness and its various dimensions (personal, national religious, social). Then urges the recipients to be inspired by the Incarnation of God's Word and to fight against egocentrism.

Finally, sermons/speeches 94, 118 and extensively 120 enlarged upon environmental issues. The development of environmental issues in sermon reveals the care of the preachers to connect their sermon with contemporary social needs and cultural dynamics that are developing locally and globally. In them it is emphasized, that the rescue or the destruction of nature depends on human choices. The Birth of Christ brings peace to humans and to all of creation.

5. Research on Students

In the context of a more objective evaluation of the way the message was received by modern recipients, quantitative field research with anonymous questionnaires was selected. In particular the Likert scale was used (with "not at all" – "too much"), while all questions were given with the possibility of not being answered ("I do not answer"). The research was realized in February 2019 at Venetoklio 1st General Lyceum of Rhodes¹⁴.

13. More specifically, it concerns the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Archbishop of Albania Anastasios.

14. The research was carried out after the approval of the Association of Teachers of the Venetokleio 1st General Lyceum of Rhodes (Act no. 22nd/03.02.2019).

In this research 109 students (of which 65 girls and 44 boys) from the 3rd grade of Lyceum participated. The participants answered the questions, after the researcher first read a sermon from every decade. The sermons that were delivered are 11 (1963), 49 (1979), 66 (1986), 90 (1995) and 102 (2001). The selection of sermons was based on the demotic language, the brevity and the development of a variety of arguments. According to the results of the questionnaires, all participants were Orthodox Christians and in the year 2019 they completed 12 years in the Greek school. Therefore, they had almost completed circular education. About 84,5% (92 students) answered that the texts read refer to the Christmas celebration. The remaining 11% chose the feasts of the Epiphany, of the Annunciation, of Easter and one did not answer. These feasts were chosen after the reading of sermons 11 and 66.

It is of particular importance that in the questions for understanding the sermon the students identified positions that are related to the updating of the sermon and various socio-cultural references¹⁵. The following table 1 shows the positions identified by the students¹⁶:

15. For more details on the students' responses to the questionnaire and the related survey see N. Tsirevelos, *Τὸ Μήνυμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 115-120. In this work additional elements are reported on the investigation of the socio-cultural frame of the sermon.

16. In the first column is recorded «the number of sermons», in column b some responses of the students related to social or cultural references. Within the quotation marks the words of the students are copied identical. In column c the inclusion of these positions as social or cultural remarks is noted categorized.

TABLE 1

Number of Sermon	Positions Identified by the Students	Socio-cultural Remarks
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Christmas is not just for worldly events”. - “In today’s era people only care about themselves”. - “The correlation of Christmas with the indifference of people to their fellow human beings during the festive days”. - “The sermon speaks of all people that is, both rich and poor, and presents how one and the other spend Christmas”. 	Social Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Wants to emphasize that everyone is equal and have the same opportunities, and to stop hatred”. - “Through sermon tries to open our eyes and hearts especially on such holy days when we must help our fellow man, seeing him as Jesus”. - “I did not like the way sinners were treated”. - “Hypocritical faith, human arrogance and their opposition [meaning of people] to the words of God”. 	
49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “God is likened to the sun, that is, at the same time he illuminates people but is also inaccessible”. - “Christ just as the sun remains immaculate by man on earth, so he was not influenced or is influenced by us sinners, but He also managed to save us”. - “The likening of God to the rising of the sun that dispels the darkness of the night and scatters the light stresses the need to make our life and culture bright”. - “Christ took the form of man in order to be able to associate with men”. - “The unbelievers are not going to be convinced no matter how much they hear”. - “The values of the text are important to today’s culture”. 	Cultural Remarks

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66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Man is particularly focused on the future and is enslaved by time”. - “God and Christ set limits for Themselves to make people live better”. - “Jesus went from immortal to mortal so that we humans could live better”. - “God was incarnated so that He could improve the world and make it better”. - “Jesus comes to redeem man from the burdens of society”. - “God accepts them all”. 	Moral and Social Remarks
90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The joy of Christmas is “great” because it refers to the essential problems of human existence and society. God and faith in Him can redeem us from all pain”. - “God accepts them all and even more so the few”. 	Socio-cultural Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Peace among people is the essence and joy of Christmas and must enliven every people”. - “The newborn liberator comes to redeem man from the slavery of sin, from selfishness, lies, exploitation, injustice, anguish. And finally, from death”. - “All people regardless of their color or race must hear about God”. - “Christmas is presented in the context of society”. - “Clear references are made to passages from the Gospel which are then analyzed with references to today’s reality”. - “That we must proclaim the Gospel throughout the world without distinguishing between nation, race etc.”. 	
102	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The birth of Christ aims at the redemption and deliverance of man from evil and death”. - “God gives life where someone can be in the void”. - “The birth of Christ is a gift that He offers to the devotees of God”. - “Christianity praises the fulness of man’s life and glorifies his completion in the person of Christ”. - “The incarnation is Christ’s revelation and the abolition of any denial of His existence”. - “In today’s society of d corruption and immortality Christians must give the hope of life”. - “[is meant the preacher] considers them all his brothers regardless of whether they are from the same family and the same society”. - “The text presents the birth of Christ in a miraculous way and with words that emphasize the miracle and the wonder that the incarnation of the Divine causes in the world and especially in today’s society”. 	

In text 11 the students identified different positions of the sermon, especially those that refer to the updating of the sermon and the moral and social dimension of life of Christians. The references of the students also include cultural perceptions about respecting and accepting differences.

In text 49 the students mainly referred to arguments that emphasize that Christ is the Sun of Righteousness. This position apart from its theological significance, essentially expresses a basic cultural representation that is found in the religious world. In the context of Christian teaching, it reflects the universality of the Christian message.

In text 66 the students pointed out the concept of time in human life, but they were not able to render it completely. That is why they chose phrases with social implications. They also recognized the Incarnation as an event of the highest humility and offering salvation for man in the context of his social co-existence. Although they used the term *Incarnation*, it is not always correctly attributed theologically.

In text 90 the students identify mainly theological positions, which are connected with the witness of the Church in the universe. These positions include social issues, such as peace and various social problems. At the same time, however, they also have cultural and, above all intercultural implications because they highlight the acceptance and harmonious coexistence of the heterogeneities.

In text 102 the students emphasized the theological position that Christ is the Redeemer of the world and that the redemption He offers is important for every person. As it has been pointed out, this redemption necessarily has an existential content. However, it also extends to social issues and offers the hope of life in the social space.

On the basis of these data, there is a variety of opinions. However, all recipients prefer that the theological discourse be framed with a variety of references and examples from everyday life, so that it can be better understood. That is why, they highlight theological positions that are linked to the social space, culture and intercultural encounter.

Discussion – Proposals

The feast of Christmas gives the preachers the opportunity to develop various contemporary or current issues and to make the recipients think. The sermons deal mainly with social issues and reflect the attitude of the Church as Christ's Body towards social and cultural conditions. Thus, it is emphasized that social ministry is a basic element of the Christian life. Christians are called to fight against poverty and injustice, secularization and war (civil and national), violence and terrorism. The dangers also from, drugs and soul-destroying passions and depression are highlighted. In many sermons the message of the feast highlighted the need for charity towards the weak, while in few it was understood with moralistic norms, was associated with the nation and criticized political decisions. Above all, however, the values of solidarity, compassion, and empathy and practical love were underlined. These values are the foundations of the Christian faith and life, as also the ingredients for the production of a human-centered civilization. These positions were developed as a proposal for an Orthodox civilization against the phenomenon of secularization, whose dominance is increasing in the Western world. In the most recent sermons, the danger of environmental destruction was highlighted and the need for re-evangelization of the Orthodox and the witness to all the nations was emphasized.

The empirical research carried out on students of the third grade of the Lyceum reveals that the explanation of theological terms in simple words and their connection with contemporary social issues, cultural quests and current affairs make the sermon interesting, lively, familiar and obviously welcome by modern recipients.

In this context, it is highlighted that the scientific examination and study of the sermon on the basis of the communication factors contributes to the objective study of the sermon. At the same time, it sets the conditions for the effective transmission and reception of the message of the Gospel to various recipients.

On the basis of the above research and the conclusions, some proposals for modern sermon follow in brief¹⁷.

17. For the discussion on the sermon see the special edition of the journal *Σύναξη*/

A. With regard to the theological message of the sermon it is proposed:
 - to transmit the biblical word¹⁸, to extend to contemporary social, moral, cultural and environmental issues and to highlight the experience and the proposals of the Church as «πηγή ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον»¹⁹;

- to utilize the cultural and social representations of each place and time and to offer the interpretative schemes so that the sermon is beneficial for the daily life of the listeners;

- to take into account and respond to historical, anthropological, cultural and social conditions in order to transmit the joyful news of the Gospel to the prevailing cultural atmosphere and to be an inspiration for the transformation of the world;

- to be a reason for teaching, spiritual edification and prayer to baptized Christians, neophytes but also to every person, regardless of their social class, cultural identity, gender, national/racial origin.

B. With regard to the content of the sermon and the collections of sermons/speeches, where the preachers analyze a passage on the basis of the interpretative principle: “the Scripture interprets the Scripture”²⁰ or develop a subject more freely²¹, it is suggested:

- to “imitate” creatively the homiletic work of the Fathers²², who transmitted the Gospel in the particular cultural conditions of each age;

- to document the sermon in the work of the Fathers of the Church and in the living Orthodox tradition (e.g. hymnology) and to codify the

Synaxi 83 (2002) titled: «Τὸ κήρυγμα μεταξὺ λιμοῦ καὶ κορεσμοῦ», as also the special edition of the journal *Θεολογία/Theologia* 82, 2 (2011), under the title: «Τὸ κήρυγμα στὴν Ἐκκλησία». Besides all the proposals of the research with full documentation on modern sermon are available in: N. Tsirevelos, *Τὸ Μήνυμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 125-128.

18. Γ. Φίλιας, «Ἡ “ἱερουργία” τοῦ λόγου: ἡ θέση τοῦ κηρύγματος στὴ θεία Λειτουργία», *Σύναξη/Synaxi* 83 (2002), p. 14.

19. *John* 4, 19.

20. Dimitra Koukoura, *Τὸ κήρυγμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἡ διαμόρφωσή του. Ὁμιλία – Λόγος*, Barbounakis Publications, Thessaloniki 2019, p. 333.

21. Dimitra Koukoura, *Ἡ Ρητορική καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησιαστική Ρητορική. Διαχρονική Μελέτη*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 2011, p. 345.

22. Dimitra Koukoura, *Ἡ Ρητορική...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 348-349.

patristic spirit in the quests and needs of the modern contemporary and cultural context²³;

- to utilize the work of contemporary theologians, as well as people of the spirit (writers, poets, and philosophers, educators, scientists)²⁴;

- the interpretative approach of the Scriptures should take into account the experience of the recipients and extended to examples of application, in order to lead the recipients to fruitful reflection rethinking and practical change of the way of life (repentance);

- to move the recipients, “by touching on the existential problems of their lives”²⁵ and to offer the conditions to discover the meaning of the Gospel in their daily lives;

- to cultivate the sacramental life²⁶ and aim to cultivate the experience «of the liturgy after Liturgy»²⁷, so that Christians after the end of the divine Liturgy and their participation in the Mystery of the holy Eucharist, may be motivated to share the gift that they have received in order for the world to be transformed into God’s Kingdom.

C. With regard to the style of sermon it is proposed:

- the “evangelical message should be codified in the language and the style of education and literature”²⁸ of modern times;

- the word should be simple and friendly, without strict moral control or elevations that lead to stereotypical cultural perceptions and fanaticism²⁹.

23. Dimitra Koukoura, *Τὸ κήρυγμα...*, *op.cit.*, p. 280.

24. Indicatevely see P. Yfantis, *Ἡ ἀγιότητα τοῦ μαρτυρίου καὶ ἡ μαρτυρία τῆς ἀγιότητος. Θεολογικὰ μελετήματα*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 2009, p. 276.

25. N. Matsoukas, *Μυστήριον ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶς κεκοιμημένων*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1992, p. 77.

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29. N. Matsoukas, *Μυστήριον...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-80; Th. Papathanasiou, *Ἡ Ἐκκλησία γίνεταὶ ὅταν ἀνοίγεται. Ἡ ἱεραποστολὴ ὡς ἐλπίδα καὶ ὡς ἐφιάλτης*, En Plo Publications, Athens 2008, p. 70.

Such are the sermons of religious intolerance, fundamentalistic beliefs³⁰, racist expressions, moralistic and nationalistic ideologies³¹ that create tensions, quarrels and cultivate fanaticism and fundamentalism, while injuring peace in Christ and the harmonic co-existence of differences.

D. With regard to the scientific investigation of sermon, it is proposed:

- the development of the homiletic science;
- conducting scientific research to study of the transmission and reception of the sermon based on the respective social and cultural representations;
- the conduct of evaluation surveys and appraisal of the sermon.

The art of sermon and the science of Homily teach the model of the Fathers to the needs of modern times. The above-mentioned proposals set a framework for work with the ultimate aim of achieving the goals of missionary, catechetical and liturgical sermon. The achievement of these goals can be done by codifying the timeless evangelical truths in the social and cultural context of each age. In this way, the word of God can be transmitted with vividness and immediacy and intimacy in order to be understood by various recipients and to have practical benefit in their lives.

30. Chr. Stamoulis, *Η γυναίκα του Λώτ και η σύγχρονη θεολογία*, Indiktos Publications, Athens 2008, p. 65.

31. P. Kalaitzidis, *Όρθοδοξία και Έλληνισμός στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα*, Indiktos Publications, Athens 2012, p. 89.

ANNEX

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