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MONASTIC TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES IN MACEDONIA AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN MODERN TIMES

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present several fundamental aspects in the reconstruction of the issue related to the monasticism in Macedonia. In that sense, taken into consideration is the historical and spiritual continuity of the monasticism beginning from the ninth century to modern times, as well as the monastic practices established in the existing *typicons*, and the implications of the revival of the modern monasticism in Macedonia in the 1990s.

Research at digressive methodological level points to the fact that in monasticism, the same traditional Christian values are cherished as they have been cherished in the previous period. Namely, monasticism does not represent only a spiritual accomplishment and enthusiasm, but also a movement consisting of cultural-educational, artistic and philanthropic tendencies.

Key words: monasticism, Christianity, hermits, *typicon*, monasteries

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
(Acts 2:44-47)

1. Historical Continuity of the Monasticism in Macedonia

Monasticism, being a kind of acme of the Orthodox Christian tradition represents a relevant and authentic spiritual phenomenon whose beginnings are chronologically connected with the period between the third and fourth centuries A.D., and are territorially identified with Asia Minor, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. The founder of the eremitic monasticism is considered to be St. Anthony who had lived a strictly ascetic life for 12 years in Pispir, located in the desert areas of Egypt as an attractive and isolated destination for contemplative prayer and abstaining from possible bodily or material temptations and challenges.¹

There is no doubt that eremitic monasticism in the early Christian period represented a challenge for a large number of Christians, however, we should not neglect the fact that its practical application meant, at the same time, certain difficulties like the hermit monk, as an individual, could hardly provide food and did not attend joint prayers which in turn also imposed psychological problems.² In order to overcome the condition of absolute isolation at least partially, the need of organizing a so-called *lavra* was imposed, within which the ascetics lived their life separate from each other, but they were under the administration of one abbot and jointly participated in the Sunday Holy Communion. Great contribution to the development of the monasticism was given by Pachomius (290-345 AD), who promoted the fourth century cenobitic monasticism based on a centralized commune and joint life in the form of brotherhoods, that is, sisterhoods, taking into account the fact that parallel to male

¹ Д. Ангелов, *Византия – духовна култура* (Byzantium-Spiritual Culture). (София: 1994, 44.

² А. М. Talbot, "An introduction to Byzantine Monasticism." *Illinois Classical Studies*, XXII, 2. (1987): 234-235.

monasticism, female monasticism was also developing. In order to maintain faultless discipline and absolute conformism within the monastery complexes, Pachomius had also compiled the first monastic constitution which defined the duties and lifestyle of the monks, which, as a principle, remained throughout the Middle Ages, and is also being implemented in modern times.³

In Macedonia, the monastic tradition is concretely connected first of all with the missionary activity of the holy brothers, Cyril and Methodius, and especially with their disciples, St. Clement and St. Naum of Ohrid, although in this region, there are indications of organized monastic life since the end and beginning of the fifth and sixth centuries.⁴

It is necessary to underline the fact that even at the time of Cyril and Methodius and later, in the time of Clement and Naum, monasticism functioned on a popular basis, meaning there was active interaction between the monks and the local population, which to a large measure, deviated from the strongly established principles of the monasticism in Constantinople.⁵ St. Clement of Ohrid not only advocated the affirmation of the cultural and literary activity realized among the clergy within the Ohrid Literary School, but was also peremptory in the tendency of adopting the Christian mistagogy in a direct and understandable manner. The direct interaction of St. Clement with the Macedonian population can be also seen by the fact that he had actively participated both in the education of the people and the practices of daily life, especially in the field of agronomy, in a manner that “from the Greek land he has brought all kinds of fruit trees and by planting them he has cultivated the wild ones.”⁶

³ D. Obolenski, *Vizantiski komonvelt* (Byzantine Commonwealth). (Beograd, 1991), 352.

⁴ From this period also originate the first monastery complexes distant two kilometers south of Stobi near the road which runs from Stobi to Heraclea Lyncestis. See: *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*. Ed. by J. Roisman and I. Worthington. (Blackwell:2010), 562.

⁵ М. Ангеловска-Панова, “Монаштвото во духовно-историскиот континуитет на Македонија” (Monasticism in the Spiritual-Historical Continuity of Macedonia). *Спектар*, бр.57, год. XXIX, кн.І. (2011), 35.

⁶ Ibid.

Not less important regarding the ambition for establishment of the monastic enthusiasm in Macedonia was Naum of Ohrid, who being extraordinary erudite for his time, had knowledge of the existing *typica* which regulated the way of living within the cenobitic communities, such as: the *Typica* of Pachomius, Basil the Great, and Theodore the Studite. In that sense, the opinion of the Rev. Justin Keliski is quite justified, having revived the life and activity of St. Naum, he identified him as "...wise teacher, unique leader of the monks, decisive inspirer, miraculous man of prayer and ecclesiastic."⁷

The period from the end and beginning of the eleventh and twelfth centuries marked the spiritual rise of the anchorite monks, Joakim Osogovski (Joachim of Osogovo), Gavril Lesnovski (Gabriel of Lesnovo), and Prohor Pčinski (Prohor of Pchinja), who were later canonized as saints and whose veneration left a deep impression in the collective memory of the Macedonian people. And while the anchoritic monasticism in Byzantium was characteristic for the period between the third and fourth centuries, its establishment in Macedonia was realized in a later period, which was most likely due to the tendency of distancing from the spiritual and cultural domination of Byzantium, even more due to the fact that in said period (eleventh to twelfth centuries), Macedonia functioned within the Byzantine Empire.

The penetration of the Ottomans in Macedonia and beyond in the Balkans brought organized monastery–church life to a certain standstill, which has been partially confirmed by the plentitude of Macedonian folk stories and traditions that speak about conversion of the Christian religious buildings into mosques. Regarding such tendency, folklore of Macedonian provenience has also appeared, which scholars like Tanas Vrazhinovski has profiled as a new thematic-motif construction :“the hero is alive, that is, the patron saint of the given church at

⁷ С. Санџаковски, “Манастирот Свети Архангел Михаил (900-905) на преподобен Наум Охридски чудотворец” (Monastery of St. Archangel Michael (900-905) of Reverend Naum of Ohrid the Miracle Worker), 36. In *St. Naum of Ohrid and Slavic Spiritual, Cultural and Literary Tradition* (Ohrid: 2010), 46.

a relevant important moments of destiny in its existence, regardless of the historical period, protects them and does not allow them to be converted into mosques."⁸

Important Macedonian figures of national and ecclesiastical revival such as Joakim Krchovski, Kiril Pejčinović, Teodosij Sinaitski, and Partenij Zografski have exerted extraordinary impact over the development of the monasticism in Macedonia in the nineteenth century, which undoubtedly represented a kind of relapse into the time of the Holy Clement and Naum of Ohrid. It was about a monasticism realized on the principles of intensive communication with the local population in terms of teaching certain skills related to the daily life and a clearly expressed tendency for implementation of literacy in popular language.⁹

The period after World War II, more precisely from 1944 to 1967, was characterized by a significant decrease of the religious life, and in that context, also by a decrease of the number of monks in Macedonia, first of all due to the dominant secularization of the church and especially, the expansion of atheism at all levels of society.¹⁰

During the 1980s, monasticism in Macedonia, with regard to the still present socialist system and dominant influence of atheism, functioned predominantly on a spontaneous basis, wherein individuals or a small community of two to three monks were frequently changing their stay in monasteries. At a time when the Orthodoxy was almost completely marginalized, significant contribution for the restoration of the liturgical life of the church was given by Gavril Svetogorec (Gabriel of Mount Athos) who had mastered monastic practices during his ten-year stay on Athos. Until his death on January 12, 1990, Gavril Svetogorec (Gabriel of

⁸ Т.Вражиновски, *Манастирите и црквите во народната традиција* (Monasteries and Churches in the Folk Tradition). (Скопје: 2011), 191.

⁹ Јоаким Крчовски, *Собрани текстови* (Collected Texts). Приредил Б.Коневски (Скопје: 1974), 386; Кирил Пејчиновиќ, *Собрани текстови* (Collected Texts). Приредил Б.Коневски (Скопје: 1974), 20; В. Миронска-Христова, "Просветителот-Кирил Пејчиновиќ" (The Educator - Kiril Pejčinovic). *Спектар*, 45-46. (Скопје: 2005): 41; Б. Петковска, *Јазичните погледи на Партениј Зографски и јазикот на неговите текстови*. (Linguistic Views of Partenij Zografski and the Language of His Texts) (Скопје: 1996), 20. М. Георгиевски, *Македонската печатарска дејност* (Macedonian Printing Activity). (Скопје: 1972), 70.

¹⁰ Т.Јанчовски, *Монаштвото во Македонија* (Monasticism in Macedonia). (Скопје: 2010), 72.

Mount Athos) was active in the restoration of the monasticism in Macedonia. He became its spiritual father and introduced many believers to the practice of Jesus's prayer.¹¹ His intention was also to open a school for the education of monks which would initiate the process of the revival of monastic life in Macedonia. Regretfully, he never accomplished it due to his personal engagement in the reconstruction of Lesnovo Monastery.¹²

Also serving as solid ground for revival of monasticism in Macedonia in the beginning of the 1990s are the sermons of Priest Jovan Takovski and Father Stefan Sandzhakovski, who among high church authorities, have managed to attract a large number of believers, especially among the younger population who undertook the furtherance of their theological education at the Theological Faculty in Skopje.

Additional concrete steps regarding the revival of organized monastic life in Macedonia have been carried out by Bishop Naum, who in 1995, established the monastic brotherhood in the monastery of the "Presentation of St. Mary Eleusa" in the village of Veljusa near Strumica, where brotherhood will be soon moved to the monastery of "St. Leontij" in Vodocha, while the monastery of the "Presentation of St. Mary Eleusa" will continue to function as a female monastery. In addition to the eparchy of Strumica, reconstruction of the monasteries and the introduction of active monastic life will also be made in the other eparchies. Namely, in the western part of Macedonia, under the leadership of the archimandrite, Partenij and Father Ilarion, a monastic brotherhood will be established in Bigorski monastery with its location in Rajchica.¹³

The highest accomplishment in terms of the revival of the monastic life happened in 1997 in the following monasteries: "St. Archangel Michael" in Varosh, "St. Transfiguration" in Zrze, in Slepche, Treskavec and Zhurche. In the eparchy of Skopje, monastic life was

¹¹ Ibid., 102.

¹² Ibid., 103.

¹³ For more about Bigorski Monastery, see: R. Cacanaska, M. Angelovska-Panova, "Saint Jovan Bigorski – A Macedonian Orthodox Cultic Place." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 35, 5, (November 2015): 25-39.

restored in Marko's Monastery "St. Dimitrij", "St. Nikola" in the village of Ljubanci, "Assumption of St. Mary" in Matka, and others.

The restoration of organized monasticism in the territory of Macedonia will result in satisfactory statistical data of 37 active monasteries and over 200 monks and nuns, according to the statistic data for the year 2007.

2. The Role and Significance of *Typica* in the Development of Monastic Accomplishment

The etymology of the term *typicon* is connected with the Greek term *Typicon*, which basically means a pattern for performance of religious service, with a parallel set of relevant rules which regulate the life of the monks in terms of their behavior, duties, rights, and obligations. Although there are exceptions, the Greek term *typicon* has had dominant use within the Slavic lingual area exactly because of the fact that the Slavic translation of the constitution or rulebook has more implications to texts with legal and political content, and therefore have not reflected the true character of this literary genre.

As we have already indicated, the first *typicon* was a work of Pachomius and was composed of 194 rules, out of which 142 were categorically defined as rules, and the other 52 represented additions which referred only to the exegesis. More precisely, it was about implementation of the regulation which referred, first of all, to physical labor, joint prayer and reading the Holy Bible without the possibility of developing the intellectual potential and authentic literary activity of the monks. It meant gaining reputation for discipline and piety, but not achievement in education and intellectual growth.

However, apart from this imperfection, the monastic constitution promoted by Pachomius represented a relevant pattern for Basil of Caesarea (329-379 AD), who later compiled the Greater Asketikon and the Lesser Asketikon, composed in the form of questions

and answers.¹⁴ The term Asketikon (Rulebook) was not authentically incorporated by its author, Basil the Great, but it represents an interpolation of later transcribers.¹⁵

The modest asceticism focused on self-discipline and abstinence from everything that can stimulate the soul to destructive gratification was a priority principle, incorporated within the Greater Asketikon and the Lesser Asketikon. Basil the Great especially insisted on collective labor for the physical survival of the monastery, but at the same time, he also pointed to the importance of the collectivity in terms of mutual encouragement in the process of spiritual accomplishment. As a man with exceptional intellectual charisma, he was decisive in his ambition for permanent improvement of the monks in terms of education, absorbing Christian theology and doctrine, as well as engaging in activity of social character through charitable goals. According to his perception, “above all, the monk should not be greedy, isolate his body, he should have decent appearance, moderate voice and polite speech; he should consume food and beverages quietly and temperately; in the presence of seniors he should keep silent; he should listen to the wise people, and to have love for equals; to the lower he should give advice full of love; to stay distant from spoiled, passionate and vain people; to think more and to speak less; to avoid arrogance in his speech and exaggeration in conversations; not to expose himself to mockery, and to be obedient; to work with his own hands; ... to pray continuously; to thank for everything; to be calm in front of others; to hate arrogance; to have clear mind and to keep his heart away from malicious thoughts...”¹⁶

Basil the Great attached great importance to the obedience of the abbot, and also to the liabilities and responsibility of the abbot to those who live an ascetic life, indicating:

¹⁴M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism. From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 36.

¹⁵ A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church. The Monk–Bishop in Late Antiquity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 49.

¹⁶ *Sveti Vasilije Veliki, Tragom jevanđelskog podviga* (Tracing Evangelical Venture). Transl. from Russian by N. Kovačević. (Hilandar: 1999).

"And the abbot himself, as a father who takes care of his own children should examine the needs of all and, depending on the possibilities to use appropriate treatment and care. He should support every monk who became disabled spiritually or bodily with love and favor characteristic for a father."¹⁷ He especially insisted on establishment of monastery complexes in urban environments so that the monks would have the possibility to communicate with the believers more easily, and especially be involved in charitable work.¹⁸ In that sense, monasteries offered food for poor, shelter for travelers, and assistance for sick and exhausted persons.

In one quite delicate period of iconoclastic confrontations at the end and beginning of the eighth and ninth centuries, significant contribution to the establishment of the monastic regulation was also given by Theodore the Studite. The reform that he carried out in regard to the monastic life was focused on three basic principles: creation of a monastic rulebook which would restore the teaching of the holy fathers, insisting on monasticism in the cenobitic manner, and life in absolute poverty.¹⁹ The monastic reform promoted by the *Typicon* of Theodore referred, first of all, to the restructuring of the hierarchical organization by assigning particular duties to the monks. In that sense, beside the abbot, the economic manager (*oikonomos*) was mentioned, who took care of the monastery property, then the monk (*kellarites*) in charge of the food and the kitchen, and finally, monks (*epistemonarches*, *taxiarches* and *epiteretes*) assigned to be in charge of the maintenance of the discipline in the monastery.²⁰

The *Typicon* of Theodore the Studite was implemented in numerous monasteries in Constantinople, and beginning from the second half of the tenth century, it was also

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Talbot, *An Introduction to Byzantine Monasticism*, 234.

¹⁹ R. Morris, *Monks and laymen in Byzantium 843-1118*, (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15.

²⁰ Ibid., 17.

introduced in Athos,²¹ which in very short time, became the cradle of Orthodox monasticism, and later, of the mystic-contemplative tendencies proclaimed with hesychasm.

Also significant for its authentic character and comprehensiveness regarding the internal church-legal organization was the *typicon* composed for the needs of the monastery “Presentation of St. Mary Eleusa” in the village of Veljusa in the immediate vicinity of Strumica. The monastery had an autonomous status confirmed by imperial decree of 1085 issued personally by the Byzantine emperor, Alexios I Komnenos (1085-1118).²² The author of the *typicon* was Abbot Manuel, who had earlier stayed in the monastery “St. Auxentius” near Chalcedon, where according to his words, he experienced the asceticism and in a figurative speech, “the good milk” of life in isolation.²³

The *typicon* was composed of 22 rules and abounds in literary expression in the spirit of ethical and religious reminiscences, containing quotations from the Holy Bible, from the patristic literature, as well as parts incorporated from the *Typicon* of Theodore the Studite. All of that spoke in favor of the fact that Abbot Manuel acted from a position of an exceptionally erudite man. Actually, like his predecessors, Manuel had insisted on structuring the monastic community in a coenobitical manner, or as authentically stated in the text of the *typicon*: “...monks should live in a community so that there will be no difference among them with regard to consuming food in order to avoid disruption of the joint life, but all of them should participate in eating and drinking with satisfaction. Because, joint life means absence of difference in all regards...”²⁴

The *typicon* also regulated the competences of the abbot who, in order to deserve that position, should stay for a longer period in the monastery, to distinguish himself with

²¹A. Rigo, *Mistici Bizantini*, (Einaudi: 2008), 13.

²²F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, (Cambridge University Press 2000), 285.

²³ П. Миљковиќ–Пепек, *Манастир Св.Богородица Милостива во село Велјуса кај Струмица* (Monastery of St. Merciful Mother of God in village Veljusa near Strumica). (Скопје: 1981), 259; *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A complete translation of the surviving typica and testaments*, ed., J. Thomas and A. Constantinides - Hero. (Dumbarton Oaks Library and Collection, 2000), 174 .

²⁴П. Миљковиќ–Пепек, *Манастир Св.Богородица*, 260.

exceptional ethical integrity and to show experience in carrying out the administrative affairs, order and discipline, and the moral obligations of the monks, as well as for proper performance of the religious service.²⁵

In accordance with the criteria for monastic life, the monks had a very restricted possibility to have private ownership; it meant that they were allowed to possess “only beddings, cloths and holy icons for worship,” which corresponded to the clearly expressed tendency for a life in poverty as imperative for liberation of the spirit from desire to possess material things.²⁶ Independently from the physical labor, which was part of the daily life of the brotherhood, the monks spent most of their time studying the Christian mistagogy. Namely, special attention was paid to the observation of the principle of age in terms of “old and young”, or as stated in the *typicon*, “the young, transforming himself according to the character of the old, should although being young, manifest the wisdom possessed by the old," which indeed also had educational importance like a kind of methodology for the introduction of the monk in the Christian theology and doctrine. Also, for the cultural and educational activities in the monastery was the data from the inventory of the monastic property, compiled in 1164, and kept in later transcription from the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries with interpolated data.²⁷ According to the inventory, the monastery library had a collection of 68 handwritten books with legal, religious-historical, and liturgical content and established the practice of borrowing books.²⁸

²⁵ Л. Славева, “Типик на манастирот Богородица Милостива во селото Велјуса кај Струмица” (Typicon of the Monastery Merciful Mother of God in Veljusa Village near Strumica), *Акта Велјуса*. (Скопје: 1984), 126.

²⁶ *Слово за монаштвото* (Word of Monasticism). (Скопје: 1997), 19.

²⁷ В. Мошин, “Грчката архива на манастирот Богородица Милостива кај Струмица” (Greek Archive of the Monastery Merciful Mother of God), *Акта Велјуса*. (Скопје: 1984), 95.

²⁸Н. Цумурова-Јањатова, “Некои компаративни согледувања за манастирските библиотеки во Велјуса и на Патмос” (Some Comparative Observations for the Monastery Libraries in Veljusa and Patmos), *Акта Велјуса*. (Скопје: 1984), 117.

3. Daily Monastic Life and the Modern Times

The fact that at the present time, monasticism still exists in its authentic form within the Macedonian Orthodox Church, supporting the same traditional Christian values as in the past, is impressive. Except for the mandatory liturgical practice and manual work needed for the economic survival of the monasteries, the monks are engaged in a number of activities such as creating artistic handicrafts, authentic literary and creative activity, translations of the works of church fathers, restoration of the Byzantine painting, organization of museum exhibitions within the monastery complexes, etc.

For example, the sisterhood of the monastery “St. George the Victorious” in Rajchica beside their daily monastic duties, are engaged in the manufacture of *mitres*,²⁹ which definitely represents a curiosity in the Orthodox world. It is about decorative caps, modeled after the Byzantine royal crown which the bishops wear during the liturgies. Usually on the sides of the mitre, the images of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are placed. According to the statements of the nuns, the manufacture of one mitre requires a ten-day intensive work of about eight hours per day. So far, the sisterhood has manufactured approximately 300 mitres, which are worn not only by the bishops of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but also by the bishops of the Orthodox churches in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Russia, including the Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.³⁰

The example of the monastery “Assumption of St. Mary“ in Matka is also interesting, where on the initiative of the Abbess Perpetua, a sewing workshop was opened wherein ceremonial robes for the Orthodox priests are manufactured, as well as festive curtains for the churches and monasteries.³¹

²⁹ Part of the high clerical headgear.

³⁰ Маја Ангеловска-Панова, *Македонски цркви и манастири* (Macedonian Churches and Monasteries). (Младинска книга 2015), 311.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

In most of the monasteries throughout Macedonia, there is rich publishing activity focused not only on translations, but also on contents of authentic church character. Illustrating this is the example of the monastery “St. Transfiguration” in Zrze, which for a long time, has represented a significant scriptural center, a tradition which has been preserved until the present time. In that context, we should also mention “the Zrze Monachologion,” which in essence is a kind of historical review of the monasticism which has permanently existed in this monastery, even in the period of communism.

Furthermore, the monastery “St. Athanasius of Alexandria” in the village of Zhurche functions as a female monastery and organized the library “Sky Blooms,” through which a rich publishing activity is taking place. “The Secret of Salvation,” “Casiana,” “St. Seraphim of Sarov,” “St. Nifon,” and “New Testament” are only a part of the rich monastery creative literary production.³² Not less important is the library “St. Gavril Lesnovski” (“St. Gabriel of Lesnovo”) within the Lesnovo Monastery in which the brotherhood, headed by Abbot Damaskin, *inter alia*, intensively works on publishing works of religious-didactical content.³³

Revitalization of the Byzantine painting and organization of museum exhibitions is also a part of the rich contents which are realized in the monasteries in Macedonia. In that sense, also important is the contribution of both Sister Ilijana, Abbess in Markov Monastery in nearby Skopje, and Abbes Sinklitija of the monastery “St. Archangel Michael” in Berovo, who works on frescos, icons, and mosaics in the spirit of Byzantine painting which are available for purchase in the galleries of said monasteries. They are also known by the museum exhibitions which are mainly composed of old monastery inventory such as old handwritten books, old photographs, weapons, and documents.³⁴

Cherishing the Christian cultural and educational tendencies is also one of the priorities of the monastic mission. Such tendency does not apply only to the monks and

³² *Ibid.*, 277.

³³ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 160, 297.

believers, but also to the younger generations for which, precisely in the Bigorski Monastery and the monastery in Rajchica, are recently organized camps for religious instruction intended first of all “for introduction of the fundamental values of the faith and generally deepening the religious experiences of the participants, who during their stay take active participation in the liturgical life and sermons, prescribed with the monastery *typicon*.”³⁵

The Bigorski Monastery and the ambitious activities of the Archimandrite Partenij also resulted in organizing a one-day seminar intended for the professors of the subject “Ethics in religions” which is taught in the sixth grade of elementary education, and the main topic is focused on the positive experiences from the introduction of said subject and the tendency for achieving higher results in working with students in achieving educational progress.³⁶

All of the above activities which are directly or indirectly carried out by the monastic brotherhoods and sisterhoods represent a relevant indicator of consistent nurture not only of the Christian, but also of the intellectual and artistic values and spiritual culture in Macedonia. Accordingly, the statement of Father Partenij seems completely justified when he stated in the interview for the newspaper *Vecher* of January 6, 2015: “...that the monasticism is the driving power in Orthodoxy. During many moments it has distinguished itself with its faithfulness and consistence in respecting the original postulates and tradition in our faith. Thus, in our context as well, monasticism was the renovator of the authentic and liturgical life in the Republic of Macedonia in the last two decades.” And what is especially important in the context of the topic on monasticism and modern times in Macedonia, and is supported by the words of Father Partenij is that, “... despite all temptations, monasticism was, is and

³⁶ <http://bigorski.org.mk/vesti/nastani/2017-seminar-etika-vo-religiite/>

remains one of the strongest pillars of the Church which most strongly witnesses the crucified and resurrected Christ.”³⁷

³⁷ <http://vecer.mk/makedonija/vo-duhot-na-hristijanskoto-bratoljubie-ja-imame-poddrshkata-i-od-nekoi-grchki-arhierei>.