

## THE PASCHAL DIMENSION OF THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY IN THE NOWADAYS BYZANTINE TRADITION

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**ABSTRACT.** The Feast of the Baptism of Christ has always been celebrated pompously and with great solemnity, being one of the oldest Christian Feasts together with that of the Nativity, having a period of Forefeast and one of Afterfeast. In the period of Forefeast of the Epiphany, the religious hymns of these days emphasize firstly the continuity between the two Great Feasts, the Nativity and the Baptism of Christ, but especially they emphasize the intrinsic structural relationship of the Epiphany with the Resurrection of Christ. This is the reason why the Feast of the Epiphany needs a special attention, especially regarding the content of hymnography and ritual, for the engagement of the Church in this celebration will always have a catechetical importance as well as pastoral and missionary in the same time.

**Key-words:** Feast, Baptism of Christ, Epiphany, Baptism, Forefeast, Canons, Acrostic, Triode, Troparion, Hymnography.

### Introduction

The Baptism of Christ or the Theophany represents, together with the Resurrection of Jesus and the Nativity of Christ, one of the oldest Great Feasts. The characteristic feature of this period represented the celebration of the Baptism, which was performed in the Holy Saturday in early days, and at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century extended also to the day of the Pentecost and subsequently to that of the Nativity and the Baptism of Jesus Christ. This baptismal dimension was indissolubly linked to the paschal light and joy, unifying the joy of the feasts with their spiritual introspection. Thus, the structure and the liturgical life of the great feasts of the Church will concentrate around the Paschal Feast.

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The feast of the Epiphany or the Baptism of Christ presents in the *Menaion for January*, structures of form and content which are similar to those used for the Holy Week. This determines us to consider the feast of the Baptism of Christ, together with the Nativity, as a third Easter, which unravels a paschal dimension of the feast. Both the canon from the Matins of the Forefeast and those which are sung daily at the Compline, as well as their acrostics represent the liturgical features of this period, underlining through their content this intrinsic hymnographic and structural bond between the Baptism of Christ and Easter.

This great Feast which is of high importance for the life of the Church, needed a special preparation, a liturgical introduction into the atmosphere of the feast, and this consisted of a period of Forefeast, which in its turn represents two incumbent traditions – the cathedral one (with changing date) that comprises the Saturday and Sunday before the Baptism of Christ and the monastic one (with fixed date). These traditions developed simultaneously, as a synthesis of the Typikon, according to the pattern and the structure of the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ. However, the Forefeast with fixed date is more precise and develops a theology linked to the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, with a broader thematic than the celebration of a cathedral type.

### **The Forefeast of the Epiphany with a fixed date in the nowadays practice (routine)**

#### **The days of 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> of January**

At a closer look of the offices in the days preceding the Feast of the Epiphany, one may observe that the prototype, the pattern according to which the period of the Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ – as well as that of the Nativity of Christ – was created is none other than the Great Holy Week. In other words, an ideal period of Forefeast for such an important Feast, should take six days, according to the pattern of the six days of the Holy Week. But, the Circumcision of Christ, celebrated eight days after the Nativity of Christ, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, determines a shorter period of preparation for the Theophany of only four days (2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> of January) in the current practice<sup>1</sup>. Also, the hymnography from the *Menaion for January* describes, both through its content, and mostly through its structure, the Baptism of Christ as another Easter<sup>2</sup>. This imitation regarding the

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<sup>1</sup> Cezar Login, *Înainteprăznuirea Botezului Domnului în mineiul românesc actual*, in *Vocație, slujire, jertfelnicie - cinșire și recunoștință Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Necula*, ed. Viorel Sava, L. Petroaia, (Bucharest, Basilica, 2014), 893.

<sup>2</sup> "Tertullian says On the relationship between the Mystery of the Baptism and the celebration of Easter: "The Passover provides the day of most solemnity for baptism, for then was accomplished our Lord's passion, and into it we are baptized. ... After that, Pentecost is a most auspicious period for arranging baptisms, for during it our Lord's resurrection was several times made known among the disciples

Eve of the Baptism of Christ is well known by everyone, when we celebrate the Royal Hours, the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great united with the Vespers. But the liturgical peculiarities of the other services preceding the Theophany are not very well known<sup>3</sup>. The Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ, in the contemporary tradition, stops at the service of the Royal Hours in the Eve. However, because of their content, origin and practice, they necessitate a separate thorough study. Hence, starting with the day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, the hymnography of the services from this period refers continuously to the Feast of the Baptism of Christ. To this respect, the days are introduced with the following formula: “The Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ and the feast of the saint...”<sup>4</sup>.

The structure of the Vespers in the period of the Forefeast already introduces us unto the spirit of the Feast: After the chant “Lord I have cried...”, we sing first the Sticheron of the Forefeast and then those of the celebrated Saint, Glory..., Both now..., of the Forefeast. Then follows the Aposticha of the Feast and the Apolytikion of the Saint, Glory..., Both now..., of the Forefeast, tone 4:

Ἐτοιμάζου	ГОТОВЬСЯ,	Gătește-te	Be thou ready,
Ζαβουλών, καὶ	ЗАВУЛОНЕ, ꙗ	Zabuloane, pune-te	Zabulon; prepare
εὐτρεπίζου	КРАСНЬСЯ,	în rânduială	thyself, O
Νεφθαλείμ.	НЕФДАЛИМЕ,	Nefalime. Iordane,	Nephtalim. River
Ἰορδάνη ποταμέ,	ІОРДАНЕ РЕКО,	râuule, oprește-te și	Jordan, stay thy
σπῆθι ὑπόδεξα	СТАНН, ПОДНМН	săltând primește pe	course and skip for
σκιρτῶν, τοῦ	ВЗЫГРАА КРѢТНЕСЯ	Stăpânul, Cel ce	gladness to receive
βαπτισθῆναι	ГЛАДЦА ВЪКЪ,	vine să Se boteze.	the Sovereign
ἐρχόμενον τὸν	ВЕЕЛНЕСЯ, АДАМЕ, СЪ	Bucură-te Adame,	Master, Who
Δεσπότην. Ἀγάλλου	ПРАМАТЕРНЮ, НЕ	împreună cu	cometh now to be
ὁ Ἄδὰμ σὺν τῇ	КРЫИТА СЕБЕ, ꙗКОЖЕ	strămoașa; nu vă	baptized. O Adam,
Προμήτορι, μὴ	ВЪ РАИ ПРѢЖДЕ: ꙗВО,	ascundeți ca mai	be thou glad with
κρύπτετε ἑαυτούς,	НАГН ВЪДѢВЪ ВЪ,	înainte în rai. Că S-a	our first mother,
ὡς ἐν Παραδείσῳ	ꙗВНЕСЯ, ДА	arătat Cel ce v-a	Eve; hide not as ye
τὸ πρίν· καὶ γὰρ	ΩΒΛΕΥΕΤЪ ВЪ	văzut pe voi goi, ca	did of old in

and the grace of the Holy Spirit first given...” (*De Baptismo*, 19). At the end of the 4th century, Baptism was performed on Christmas Day, on the Epiphany (Baptism of Christ) or on the Pentecost [see A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, trans. F. Cross, rev. (Westminster, B. Botte, Md., 1958) 158-159]. It is important though, that from a liturgical point of view, the celebration of Christmas and of the Epiphany (Baptism of Christ) is even nowadays structured according to the celebration of the Passover, and in the older Typikons both feasts are mentioned as “Passover – three days celebration”, “Passover” meaning here including the Baptism within their celebration” [Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism*, trans. into Romanian by A. Mihăilă, (Bucharest, Sophia, 2009), 11.]

<sup>3</sup> Login, 893.

<sup>4</sup> Mineiul pe Ianuarie, 2<sup>nd</sup> day, the Vespers.

<p>γυμνοὺς ἰδὼν ὑμᾶς ἐπέφρανεν, ἵνα ἐνδύσῃ τὴν πρώτην στολήν, Χριστὸς ἐφάνη, τὴν πᾶσαν κτίσιν, θέλων ἀνακαινίσεια.<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>ΠΕΡΕΒΪΟΥ ΟΔΕΪΚΑ. ΧΡΙΤΟΣ ΕΒΗΕΛ, ΚΣΙΟ ГЛАВЪ ХОТѦ ЎБНОВИТИ.<sup>6</sup></p>	<p>să vă îmbrace în haina cea dintâi. Hristos S-a arătat, vrând să înnoiască toată făptura.<sup>7</sup></p>	<p>Paradise. Seeing you naked, He hath appeared now to clothe you in the first robe again. Christ hath appeared, for He truly willet to renew all creation<sup>8</sup>.</p>
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This Apolytikion (Troparion) of the Forefeast is repeated daily and its content emphasizes the soteriological dimension of the Feast that approaches, for Christ comes to be baptized to give back “the first robe again”, the shining robe of the grace, lost through sin. We underline again the relationship with the Pauline theology of the Baptism, which is a subjective or personal feature of the fruits of Christ’s work, which means in the same time clothing with Christ: *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Galatians 3:27)*. If today the Baptism of Christ no longer has in its center the service of the Mystery of the Baptism, the emphasis being placed on other rituals, hence this Apolytikion of the Forefeast no longer refers strictly to those who prepare to be baptized, but through its content it has the role of reminding us of the gift of redemption that we received with the Baptism of Christ and with our Baptism. That is why, it is persistently used for all the services during the period of the Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ.

In fact, the entire hymnography prepares us continuously for this great mystery that has been done for us, a fact which is announced within the first sticheron of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, tone 4: “Let us devoutly intone songs for the Forefeast of the revered Baptism of our God; for see, in flesh, as a human, he is about to approach his Forerunner and to ask for saving Baptism for the refashioning of all those who with faith receive sacred enlightenment and share in the Spirit”<sup>9</sup>. The Feast of the nativity of Christ is compared to the Feast of the Baptism of Christ: “Radiant the feast that has passed; more radiant the saving

<sup>5</sup> *Μηναίον τοῦ Ἰανουαρίου*, (Athens, Apostoliki Diakonia, 2009), 17.

<sup>6</sup> *ЛІННІА ПЕРЕВІУ ОДЕІКІ*, (Kiev, Tipografia Lavrei Peșterilor, 1993), 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, (București, IBMBOR, 1997), 28. This Troparion is sung at the end of the vespers each day of the Forefeast until the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January a second Troparion of the Forefeast occurs.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.antiiochianladiocese.org/files/service\\_texts/great\\_feasts/lord\\_theophany/1-Theophany-Royal-Hours-BOTH.pdf](http://www.antiiochianladiocese.org/files/service_texts/great_feasts/lord_theophany/1-Theophany-Royal-Hours-BOTH.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, day 2, Vespers, stikheron I. For the English version see <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/jan02.htm> (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2015).

feast that draws near. The one had an Angel as the bearer of good tidings, and this found the Forerunner as the one who makes ready for it in advance. In the one, when blood was shed, Bethlehem grieved, as one who was childless; in this, when the waters were blessed, the Font was made known as source of many children. Then a Star guided the Magi, but now the Father revealed you to the world. Lord, who took flesh and are coming again made manifest, glory to you!"<sup>10</sup>.

Hence, we may observe that the Forefeast with a fixed date is more precise and develops a theology in relationship with the Feast of the Baptism of Christ with a broader thematic than the celebration of a cathedral type, with a changing date.

For the Matins we add besides the Canons for the celebrated Saints the Canon of the Forefeast. We can find the Troparion of the Forefeast (twice) daily together with the usual chants of the service, Kathismas of the Forefeast as well as the Kontakion and the Ikos. After the Exapostilarion of the Forefeast we have the Lauds with the Stichera of the Forefeast, tone 4, the Aposticha of the Lauds, then the rest of the service of the Matins as follows<sup>11</sup>. We may also mention the fact that for the liturgy, the days of the Forefeast of the Theophany do not have something special besides the Troparion of the Forefeast after the Little Entrance and several troparia from the canons, which are added up to the Beatitudes, from the Canon of the Forefeast, from the Matins. The Apostle and the Gospel do not refer to the feast, the koinonikon is the usual one for the day<sup>12</sup>.

Both the Canons for the Forefeast from Matins and those that are sung daily at the Compline represent the most characteristic feature of this period, underlining through their content that intrinsic structural and hymnographic relationship between the Baptism of Christ and the Resurrection of Jesus. Composed according to the pattern of the Holy Week, the canons of this period require special attention. The Canons sung during the Holy Week present no difference whatsoever between the Greek, Slavonic and Romanian traditions. Only one Canon is used both for the Compline and for the Matins (Triode, Diode or complete Canon, depending on the day)<sup>13</sup>.

The Canons sung at the Compline on the Holy Week are composed by Andrew of Crete and don't have a Greek acrostic, which shows the fact that these were not used as an hymnographic model for the Canons of the Complines from the Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ. But, the Canons sung at the Matins are different both in content and in the particular structure, the acrostics being composed in

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, day 2, Aposticha of the Vespers, 3<sup>rd</sup> stikheron. For the English version see <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/jan02.htm> (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Sf. Sava cel Sfințit, *Tipicon*, 198-201. See also *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*.

<sup>12</sup> Sf. Sava cel Sfințit, 199.

<sup>13</sup> Login, 895.

such a manner that they indicate, beyond all order, the day in which each canon should be sung. They are the work of Kosmas the Monk. We will present the acrostics both in the Greek original and in Romanian and English<sup>14</sup> translation, as they are given in the Triodion<sup>15</sup>:

Holy Monday	<b>Triode</b> (Odes 1, 8 and 9), tone 2, by Kosmas the Monk: Acrostic: Τῆ Δευτέρα / În cea de a doua [zi din săptămână]/ <i>On Monday</i>
Holy Tuesday	<b>Diode</b> (Odes 8 and 9), tone 2, by Kosmas the Monk: Acrostic: Τρίτη τε / <i>Iar în a treia [zi], adică marți/ And on Tuesday</i>
Holy Wednesday	<b>Triode</b> (Odes 3, 8 and 9), tone 2, by Kosmas the Monk: Acrostic: Τετράδι ψαλῶ / În a patra cânt, adică Miercuri cânt/ <i>On Wednesday I shall sing</i>
Holy Thursday	<b>Complete canon</b> , tone 6, by Kosmas the Monk: Acrostic: Τῆ μακρᾶ πέμπτη μακρὸν ὕμνον ἐξάδω / În a cincea mare zi, cântare aduc, adică În marea Joi cântă cântare/ <i>On great Thursday a great hymn I sing</i>
Holy Friday	<b>Triode</b> (Odes 5, 8 and 9), tone 6, by Kosmas the Monk: Acrostic: Προσάββατόν τε / <i>Iar înainte de sâmbătă, adică, vineri/ And on Sabbath eve</i>
Holy Saturday	<b>Complete Canon</b> , tone 6, Odes 6, 7, 8 and 9 by Kosmas the Monk, and odes 1, 3 and 4 with the Irimi by Cassia the Nun and the Troparia by Mark the bishop of Idrunt. For Odes 6-8, the Acrostic is Σάββατιν μέλω μέγα, adică <i>Laud Sâmbăta cea Mare/ I sing a great Sabbath</i> . And if the Irimi of the first four odes are left the acrostic is: δέ Σάββατιν μέλω μέγα, adică <i>Și astăzi laud Sâmbăta cea Mare/ And today I sing a great Sabbath</i> <sup>16</sup> .

Thus, one may remark that for the service of the Matins of the Holy Week we have three Triodes (Monday, Wednesday and Friday), one Diode (Tuesday) and two complete canons (Thursday and Saturday). We also observe the fact that for Saturday, there were originally used four odes, which was subsequently completed. The Acrostics presented previously indicate us this<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> For the English version see <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/HWMonMat.htm> (accessed on 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2015).

<sup>15</sup> See for example *Triodul*, (București, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1930), 522 *et passim*. The contemporary editions, such as *Triodul*, (București, IBMBOR, 2000), have eliminated arbitrarily the acrostics of the canons. For the Greek text see the electronic edition of the Triodion, <http://glt.xyz/> (accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Login, 896.

<sup>17</sup> Login, 896.

Canons which are composed according to the pattern of the Canons from the Matins of the Holy Week, whose author remains unknown, but which have the same acrostic, may be found in the structure of the Compline from the period of the Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ<sup>18</sup>, because for the Matins of this period there already is another coherent series of canons composed by Joseph the Monk, for each day of the Forefeast<sup>19</sup>.

Due to the fact that the Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ last only four days, it required a “condensation” of the hymnography, maintaining all the canons correspondent to those from the Holy Week but without altering the logic of the celebrations. These canons present a great stability in the Greek, Slavonic and Romanian traditions<sup>20</sup>. We may see that they are composed in the same tone and use, in Greek, the same acrostics<sup>21</sup>, as their correspondent from the Holy Week: they are identical in form.

2 <sup>nd</sup> of January	<b>Triode</b> (Odes 1, 8 and 9), tone 2, with the acrostic: <i>Τῆ Δευτέρᾳ / În cea de a doua [zi din săptămână = luni]/</i> <i>of which the Acrostic without Irmī is the Alphabet</i> <sup>22</sup> and <b>Diode</b> (Odes 8 and 9), tone 2, with the acrostic: <i>Τρίτη τε / Iar în a treia [zi = marți]</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> of January	<b>Triode</b> (odes 3, 8 and 9), tone 2, with the acrostic: <i>Τετράδι ψαλῶ / În a patra [zi] cânt [= miercuri]/</i> <i>of which the Acrostic is the Alphabet</i> and <b>Triode</b> (odes 5, 8 and 9), tone 6, with the acrostic: <i>Προσάββατόν τε / Iar înainte de sâmbătă [= vineri]</i>
4 <sup>th</sup> of January	<b>Complete Canon</b> , tone 6, with the acrostic: <i>Τῆ μακρᾷ πέμπτῃ μακρὸν ὕμνον ἐξῆδω /</i> <i>În a cincea mare zi [= joi] cântare aduc/ of which the Acrostic is the Alphabet</i>
5 <sup>th</sup> of January	<b>Complete Canon</b> , tone 6, with the acrostic: <i>Καὶ σήμερον δέ Σάββατιν μέλπω μέγα / Și astăzi laud Sâmbăta cea Mare/</i> <i>And today I sing a great Sabbath.</i> <sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, (Sf. Monastire Cernica, Tipografia Bisericească, 1926), 35 et passim.

<sup>19</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, 35 et passim.

<sup>20</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, (București, IBMBOR, 1997; *Μηναίον τοῦ Ἰανουαρίου* (2009); *ΜΗΝΙΑ ΑΡΧΕΔΙΟΥ ΙΑΝΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ* (1993).

<sup>21</sup> These acrostics “match” the days of the week to which they refer only in the case in which the Baptism of Christ happens to be on a Sunday.

<sup>22</sup> For the English version see <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/jan02.htm> (accessed 11 of on June 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Login, 897.

Thus, we have the days of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of January with special Triode, whereas the days of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of January contain the complete Canon. The Triodes of the first two days of Forefeast were concatenated: on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January the Triodes of Monday and Tuesday, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, the Triodes of Wednesday and Friday, so as to have the complete Canons for the last two days: on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January the one from Thursday and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January the one from Saturday. Although they change between them the order of the canons from Thursday and Friday, yet the alternative is ideal, because it is much easier to combine two Triodes then to combine a Triode with a complete Canon. The structural identity of the Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ with that of the Holy Week was, unfortunately, shaded by the correction of the last editions of the Romanian Menaion for January<sup>24</sup>, which as the nowadays Triodion excluded the acrostics of the canons<sup>25</sup> and by the perpetuation of an incondite translation<sup>26</sup>.

It is these acrostics as well as the content of ideas of the hymns of the canon from the Compline that connected the Feast of the Baptism of Christ with Easter and thus, with the Nativity and the Resurrection of Jesus, they represented the three Great Christian Feasts of the church year that had the same idea, the redemption and deification of man and of the creation, through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, through His public presentation and through His Sacrifice, Passions, death and Resurrection. The canons from the Compline and especially their acrostics are highly important for the theological understanding of the Feast, firstly for those who were baptized in this day and for whom the Feast of the Epiphany represented Easter, or the passing from the death of the sin to the life in Christ, through the Mystery of the Holy Baptism. They are equally important for us, who in the day of the Baptism of Christ renew our Baptism in a mysterious way through celebration and Liturgy<sup>27</sup>.

At the Compline of these days, at Ode 8 of the Canon we find the stich: *Să laudăm bine să cuvântăm și să ne închinăm Domnului cântându-I și preainălțându-L întru toți vecii!* (*Let us glorify Him and bless Him and bow to Him singing and exalting Him to all the ages!*)<sup>28</sup>. We can find this stich only in the Romanian and Slavonic version. Usually, this stich is part of the Ode of Moses (Ode of the three young men), which are used only for the canons of the matins<sup>29</sup>. Since it appears in the

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<sup>24</sup> Amongst the last editions which maintain the acrostics we mention the complete collection of Menaion from the Cernica Monastery. The one for January was published in 1926 and maintains the translation of the acrostics for all the canons (35 *et passim*).

<sup>25</sup> For example, *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, (București, IBMBOR, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Login, 894.

<sup>27</sup> Schmemmann, 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (1926), 36.

<sup>29</sup> *Psaltirea*, (București, Cartea Ortodoxă, 2004), 323-344. For a more detailed study on the odes of Moses see: Cezar Login, "Cântările lui Moise: stihologia Canoanelor Utreniei", *Altarul Banatului*, (4-6, 2007), 89-96; Juan Mateos, *Utrenia Bizantină*, (Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea, 2009), 39-41.



Slavonic version, we assume that the Romanian version took it from Slavonic, because the translations of the Romanian books used Slavonic versions. Since the Slavonic translation is much more conservative<sup>30</sup>, one may provide here the idea that in the early ages, the Odes of Moses were used at these Feasts for the Compline as well<sup>31</sup>, but this idea is only a supposition.

However, the days of the Forefeast were considered to be the Holy Week, in which the catechumens prepared for the Baptism, and for us it is a real preparation for the Feast. Thus, the similarity of the mentioned canons is indisputable and does not regard only their structure and allocation, but goes far beyond this, to a profound similarity of the content, and even to the use of identical phrases. We will emphasize this through some of the most representative examples. Thus, we have the Iirmi of the Odes 1 and 9 from the Canon of the Matins of the Holy Thursday:

Ξενίας δεσποτικῆς, καὶ ἀθανάτου τραπέζης, ἐν ὑπερώῳ τόπῳ, ταῖς ὑψηλαῖς φρεσὶ, πιστοὶ δεῦτε ἀπολαύσωμεν, ἐπαναβεβηκότα λόγον, ἐκ τοῦ Λόγου μαθόντες, ὄν μεγαλύνομεν. <sup>32</sup>	СҢРІАҢСҢТІА КЛІНІА, ꙗҢ ВЗЕМЕРІТНІА ТРАПЕЗЫ НА ГОРНІЕМЪ МІСТІѢ, ВЫСОКІМН ОУМІ, КЪРНІИ ПРІИДІТЕ НАСЛАДНІМЪ, ВОЗШЕДША СЛОВА, ꙗҢ СЛОВА НАВІЧІВШЕА, ЕГОЖЕ КЕЛИЧІЕМЪ. <sup>33</sup>	Din ospățul Stăpânului și din masa cea nemuritoare, la loc înalt, cu gânduri înalte, veniți credincioșilor să ne îndulcim, pe Cuvântul Cel înălțat, din Cuvânt cunoscându-L, pe Care Îl mărim <sup>34</sup> .	Come believers, let us enjoy the Master's welcome and the immortal table in the upper place, with minds raised high, having learnt a transcendent word from the Word, whom we magnify <sup>35</sup> .
Τμηθείση τμᾶται, πόντος ἐρυθρός, κυματοτρόφος δὲ ξηραίνεται βυθός, ὁ αὐτὸς ὁμοῦ ἀόπλοις γεγωνώς βατός, καὶ	СҢКЧЕНОЕ СҢЧЕТІА МОРЕ ЧЕРМНОЕ, КОЛНОПНІТІАЕМАА ЖЕ НЗЕШІАЕТІА ГЛЪБННІА: ТІААЖДЕ КЪПНІА ВЕЗОРЪЖНІМЪ	Cu tăiere s-a tăiat Marea Roșie și adâncul cel hrănit cu valuri s-a uscat, aceeași împreună făcându-se celor fără de arme	The Red Sea by a cut staff is cut, the deep, source of waves, grows dry, itself becomes pathway for the unarmed and a

<sup>30</sup> ΜΗΝΙΑ ΜΕΣΟΔΩΝ ΙΑΝΝΙΝΑΡΤΙΩ (1993), 34.

<sup>31</sup> The same thing may be observed regarding the Complines from the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ.

<sup>32</sup> <http://gl.xyz/texts/Tri/t95.uni.htm> (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

<sup>33</sup> ТРІОДЪ ПОСТНІА, (Moscova, Tipografia Patriarhiei Moscovei, 1992), 428.

<sup>34</sup> Triod, (București, 2000), 588. Translation after the quoted Greek original.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/HWThu-M.htm> (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

<p>πανοπλίταις τάφος.          Ὡδὴ δὲ θεοτερπῆς          ἀνεμέλπετο·          Ἐνδόξως          δεδόξασται,          Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς          ἡμῶν.<sup>36</sup></p>	<p>ΒΪΒΪΨΗ ΠΡΟΧΟΔΪΜΑ,          Ἡ ΒΕΞΟΡΪΖΗΜΪΖ          ΓΡΟΒΞ.<sup>37</sup></p>	<p>trecere și celor prea          întrarmați          mormânt. Și          cântare lui          Dumnezeu          cuvioasă s-a cântat;          căci cu slavă S-a          preaslăvit, Hristos          Dumnezeu          nostru<sup>38</sup>.</p>	<p>tomb for the fully          armed. A song          pleasing to God was          raised, 'Christ our          God has been          greatly glorified<sup>39</sup>.</p>
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And in the Canon at the Compline of the Forefeast of the Baptism of Christ we find the following two Irmi:

<p>Ξενίας Δεσποτικῆς,          καὶ ἀθανάτου          τραπέζης, ἐν          πενιχρῶ σπηλαίῳ          πρίν, ἀπολαύσαντες,          νῦν πρὸς Ἰορδάνην          δράμωμεν,          μυστήριον ὀψόμενοι          ξένον, τὸ τῆς ἄνω          λαμπρότητος          πρόξενον.<sup>40</sup></p>	<p>ἘΓΡΆΝΪΣΤΪΛ ΒΛΪΝΑ Ἡ          ΒΕΞΜΕΡΤΗΜΑ          ΤΡΑΠΕΖΥ ΒΟ          ΟΥΒΟΞΪΜΖ ΒΕΡΤΕΠΪ          ΠΡΕЖДЕ НАСЛАДНΪШЕΛ,          ΝΪΝΪΕ ΝΑ ἸΟΡΔΆΝΖ          ΤΕΪΕΜΖ, ΤΆΙΗΝΪ          ΖΡΆΨΕ ἘΓΡΆΝΗΪ,          ΓΟΡΝΪΛ ΕΒΪΤΛΟΙΤΗ          ΧΟΔΆΤΑΪΣΤΪΒΗΝΗ.<sup>41</sup></p>	<p>Din ospățul Stă-          pânului și din masa          cea nemuritoare, în          peșteră săracă, cei          ce mai înainte ne-          am îndulcit, acum          la Iordan să aler-          găm, taină străină          să vedem, care găz-          duiește strălucirea          cea de sus.<sup>42</sup></p>	<p>Having first          tasted delight on          the Master's          welcome and his          immortal table          in the poor Cave,          now let us run to          Jordan to see the          strange mystery,          host to the          splendour from          above<sup>43</sup>.</p>
<p>Τμηθείση τμᾶται,          πόντος ἐρυθρός,          κυματοτρόφος δὲ          ξηραίνεται βυθός, ὁ          αὐτὸς ὁμοῦ ἀόπλοις          γεγωνὼς βατός, καὶ</p>	<p>ἘΪΨΕΝΟΕ ΕΪΨΪΤΕΛ          ΜΟΡΕ ΨΕΡΜΝΟΕ,          ΒΟΛΗΝΟΠΗΤΛΕΜΑΛ ΖΕ          ἩΖΕΪΨΛΕΤΕΛ ΓΛΪΒΗΝΑ,          ΤΆΛΑΖΔΕ ΚΪΠΗΩ          ΒΕΞΟΡΪΖΗΜΪΖ ΒΪΒΪΨΗ</p>	<p>Cu tăiere s-a tăiat          Marea Roșie, iar          adâncul cel hrănit          cu valuri s-a uscat,          făcându-se totodată          trecere deschisă</p>	<p>The Red Sea was          cut by a cutting          rod, while the          deep nurse of          waves grew dry;          it became a</p>

<sup>36</sup> <http://glx.xyz/texts/Tri/t95.uni.htm> (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

<sup>37</sup> *ΤΡΙΩΔΗ ΠΟΣΤΗΔΑ* (1992), 424v.

<sup>38</sup> *Triod*, (București, Tiparnița Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, 1949), 643.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/HWThu-M.htm> (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

<sup>40</sup> <http://glx.xyz/texts/Jan/04.uni.htm> (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

<sup>41</sup> *ΛΙΝΝΙΑ ΑΡΪΣΑΔΥΞ ΛΙΝΝΥΑΡΪΪ* (1993), 77.

<sup>42</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (1997), 66. Translation after the quoted Greek original.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/HWThu-M.htm> (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

πανοπλίταις τάφος· ὡδὴ δὲ θεοτερπῆς ἀναμέλπετο· Ἐνδόξως δεδόξασται, Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν. <sup>44</sup>	προχοδήμα, ἡ κεκορβήθημιζ γρόβζ. Прѣнь же вѣокрѣнаа коспѣблѣшеа: ελάνω προελάθηα χρίτος βῆξ νάωζ. <sup>45</sup>	pentru cei fără de arme, iar pentru cei prea înțrarmați mormânt. Și cân- tare plăcută lui Dumnezeu s-a cân- tat; căci cu slavă S-a preaslăvit Hristos, Dumnezeul nostru <sup>46</sup> .	pathway for the unarmed, and a tomb for the fully armed; while a hymn pleasing to God was sung: Christ our God has been greatly glorified <sup>47</sup> .
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In the Byzantine tradition these meanings of the Baptism of Christ have been developed both in the Liturgy and in the theology of the icon of the feast. Thus, the theological thinking observes a profound relationship between the content of the feast of the Epiphany and Easter, for all the concentrated and compact symbolism of the Baptism, that the icon of the feast presents, makes us understand the great importance of this act: death is already on the Cross. In the words addressed to John: *Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15)*, Christ anticipates the final word spoken in the garden of Gethsemane: *My Father..., yet not as I will, but as you will (Matthew 26:39)*. The liturgical correspondence of the feasts underlines explicitly this thing: the liturgical chants of the day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January present a stunning analogy with those from the Holy Wednesday, those from the 4<sup>th</sup> of January with those from the Holy Thursday, and those from the 5<sup>th</sup> of January with those from the Holy Friday and Saturday<sup>48</sup>. The iconography absorbs these correspondences the icon of the Baptism presents the water as a flowing tomb<sup>49</sup>, under the shape of a dark cave, iconographic image for Hades, inferno or hell<sup>50</sup>, covering the entire body of Christ, as an anticipation of Christ's descent to hell, for: "Descending into the waters He tied the powerful one"<sup>51</sup>, says St. Cyril of Jerusalem; and St. John Chrysostom adds: "The immersion and the coming out are the images of the descent to hell and Resurrection"<sup>52</sup>. Water change its significance; once image of

<sup>44</sup> <http://glx.xyz/texts/Jan/04.uni.htm> (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

<sup>45</sup> *ΛΗΘΙΑ ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΩΝ ΜΗΝΩΝ* (1993), 74.

<sup>46</sup> *Mineiul pe Ianuarie* (1997), 63.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/HWThu-M.htm> (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Paul Evdochimov, *Arta icoanei – o teologie a frumuseții*, (București, Meridiane, 1993), 245.

<sup>49</sup> Evdochimov, 249.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Ratzinger xvi. Benedek, *A Názáreti Jézus*, 34.

<sup>51</sup> Sf. Chiril al Ierusalimului, *PG* 33, 441 B [See the Romanian translation *Cateheze*, (București, IBMBOR, 2003), 45].

<sup>52</sup> Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *PG* 61, 34 B.

death by flooding, it becomes now *spring of water welling up to eternal life* (John 4:14; Rev. 21:6) and the image of the birth into a new life<sup>53</sup>.

The poetical prefiguration's of the Old Testament, in which we find the image of the Baptism find correspondences and are evoked by the hymnography of the Forefeast, such as the passing through the Red Sea or the Jordan's reversion through Elisha's mantle: "The River Jordan receded of old by the mantle of Elisha when Elijah ascended into heaven; and the water was separated to this side and that, the wet element turning into a dry path for Him, being truly a symbol of Baptism, by which we cross the path of transient age. Christ hath appeared in the Jordan to sanctify its waters"<sup>54</sup>. The psalmist says that: *The Sea looked and fled; the Jordan turned back* (Psalm 114:3), and the hymnography continues: "David, singing in advance by the divine Spirit, cried out: What is it, sea that you have now fled? What is it, Jordan, that you have turned back, as you look on Christ standing naked in you?"<sup>55</sup>.

## Conclusions

Both the formal structure and the content of the hymnography of the Forefeast of the Epiphany present similarities with the Holy Week. This unravels a new dimension in the perception of the Feast in general and of the Epiphany in particular. Hence, the Church sees the great feasts in a paschal light. It all starts from Easter "Feast of feasts" and reports back to this Great Feast. The Liturgy of the Church which crowns each feast is the mystical-sacramental bringing up-to-date of the Resurrection of Christ. In time, this kind of understanding was forgotten as one may observe in the new editions of the Romanian Menaion. Those who correct these books should take into account the old thinking of the Church, which through certain forms and structures (e.g. acrostics, canons) wanted to express certain profound theological ideas. The research of these forms and bringing them back into the structure of the nowadays books of service would help theology a lot to a thorough understanding in the spirit of the Orthodox tradition of the hymnographic thesaurus which is nothing else than a confessing and practical form of the dogma of the Church, making the dogma accessible for the faithful too. The rediscovery of these paschal forms of the Feasts, in our case of the Epiphany, will contribute to the activation of the resurrectional-eschatological character of the Christian life, as it was lived by the Apostolic Church, but which denatured along the years.

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<sup>53</sup> Leonid Uspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *Călăuziri în lumea icoanei*, (București, Sophia, 2003), 179.

<sup>54</sup> Apolytikion of the Forefeast, *Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, București, IBMO, 2010), 87. For English version see [http://www.antiochianladiocese.org/files/service\\_texts/great\\_feasts/lord\\_theophany/1-Theophany-Royal-Hours-BOTH.pdf](http://www.antiochianladiocese.org/files/service_texts/great_feasts/lord_theophany/1-Theophany-Royal-Hours-BOTH.pdf) (accessed on 11th June 2015)

<sup>55</sup> Day 3, At Matins, Ode I, sticheron 4 (*Mineiul pe Ianuarie*, 52). For English version see [http://www.anastasis.org.uk/3\\_january.htm](http://www.anastasis.org.uk/3_january.htm) (accessed 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015).