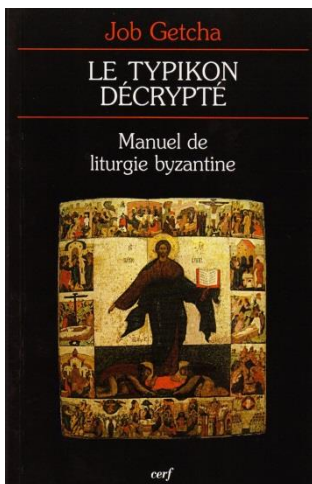


Job Getcha



*Les Éditions du CERF, Paris,
2009, 348 p.*

Reviewed by
Viorel Sava

In 2009 appeared at the prestigious Parisian publishing company, Les Éditions du CERF, the work of the theologian Archimandrite Job Getcha (recently elected as Archbishop of Telmessos for the Russian Orthodox Church in Western Europe, under the

Review

Le Typikon
Décrypté.

Manuel de liturgie
byzantine



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Ecumenical Patriarchy jurisdiction), professor of liturgy and church history, with the title *Le Typikon Décrypté*. A Byzantine Eucharistic Liturgy handbook, consisting of one introduction, five chapters, a glossary and general references, summing up 348 pages, the work was published for the first time in French. In 2012 the same paper was published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press Yonkers (New York), with the title *The Typikon Decoded*. The handbook is in fact an explanation of the Byzantine Liturgical Practice, the English translation being completed by Professor Paul Meyendorff. The English version of the book follows the same structure as the French translation and counts for 313 pages. In addition to, this edition contains an abbreviations list. The book introduction is signed by Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petras from Mount Athos, a brilliant connoisseur and interpret of the Orthodox divine order himself, the author of an exceptional book with the title *La Mystagogie du temps liturgique dans les Triodion*, published in Paris, 1978. He underlines, right from the beginning, that the liturgical pattern must not be understood as a simple collection "of dry and legalistic rules", but as a summary of two millennia of Church experience, manifested in the divine cult. In other words, the Typikon must be seen and understood as a means of life, and not a biological one, but life in Christ, as Saint Nicholas Cabasilas stated it.

In the *Introduction*, the author offers a few definitions regarding the Orthodox divine order, showing the true meanings of it that the reader must observe. He also points out that Orthodoxy defines itself through its celebrated divine order, and that it is fully expressed (in its content of faith) through the same divine order. The Greek term "doxa", as emphasized by the author, expresses both doctrine and glorification, a necessary amendment for understanding the profound relationship between prayer and doctrine in the Orthodox tradition. The foundational motivation for writing this book is the Orthodox divine order and ritual complexity, as the first reason of why the divine order continues to be preserved, for many of the

participants, is its very performance that is often misunderstood and inaccessible. The main purpose of this handbook, determined by already shared motifs, is the need for making more accessible the Orthodox ceremonies, to a greater understanding of those participating in.

The title of the first chapter is *Liturgical Books* and it refers to the following books used in the Orthodox divine order: the *Psalter*, *Horologion*, *Octoechos*, *Menaion*, *Pentecostarion*, *Euchologion*, *Archieratikon*, *Apostle*, *Gospel*, and *Typikon*. In presenting the liturgical books the author follows the same pattern for each one of them. Firstly, he presents the origins of the liturgical book, the main stages of development tracing them back from the primary and very simple versions to the more elaborated ones that we could find today; then, the author looks at the factors that have determined the development of the liturgical books, their content along with their usage within the divine order pending the specific liturgical season and the content of the liturgical day.

The second chapter title is *The Services of the Horologion* and presents the daily divine service of the Orthodox Church as it is reflected in the *Horologion*. Each divine ceremony consists of two parts: a fix and invariable one, captured in the *Horologion*, and a flexible one containing the specifications for each and every liturgical day.

Although the liturgical day begins with the *Vesper* order and ends with the *Ninth Hour*, the order being reflected in the great majority of the liturgical books, the author opts to start presenting the daily praying cycle with the *Midnight Office* (*Mesonyktikon*). The author's option is based on the *Horologion* structure which starts with the Midnight Office service and not with the *Vesper*. After finishing the *Midnight Office* and its three slightly different structures as it can be found during the common week days, as well as on Saturday and Sunday, Fr. Job Getcha presents the *Matins* of common days, then the *Liturgical Hours*, the common *Vespers* and the *Compline* (*Apodeipnon*). The author puts together in a very balanced way all the liturgical-

historical aspects, emphasizing the Constantinopolitan and Jerusalem-based contributions of the evolution of daily divine services. His scientific approach is based on first-hand documents adding to each of the services presented, the structure of how the service is performed nowadays.

In the third chapter entitled *The Services of the Menaion* after presenting the daily divine services as they are captured in the *Horologion*, the author points out the fact that the liturgical days are separated and distinct from each other. This difference is determined by the importance of the person (persons) and events commemorated. The difference is reflected also in the solemnity of the service performed in that day. In the liturgical books the importance of liturgical days and the solemnity of the ceremonies performed are shown through conventional signs specific to the Slavic and Greek Orthodox liturgical traditions.

After the introductory aspects, the author presents the Vespers and the Matins of common days and of the feasts with an extended doxology and the *Polyeleos* verses dedicated to the feast or the saint (saints) commemorated. Furthermore, the reader walks into the description of the Sundays and of the most important feasts Vigil (Agrypnia), mentioning, for the latter one, the Feast of Nativity and Epiphany; then Saturdays services that combine elements taken from the *Octoechos* and *Menaion*. There are mentioned also, the notions of pre-feasts and after-feasts, as well as the important holidays throughout the year which have periods of pre-feast and after-feast celebration.

Chapter four is a significant section of Fr. Job Getcha's book dedicated to the divine services performed during the *Triodion* season, that is the ten-weeks period preceding the Easter Feast. The first part of this chapter describes the typical-liturgical particularities of the time preceding the lengthy fast period, respectively the time between the *Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee* and the *Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise* or the *Cheese-fare Sunday*. Within this period one can find two special Saturdays, the Saturday remembering the

departed ones, that precedes the Horrific Sunday of the Last Judgement Day or the *Meat-Fare Sunday*, as well as the Saturday of the Cheese-Fare in which one commemorates “*all our venerable and Godbearing Fathers who have shone through fasting*”. Moreover, the author does not forget to emphasize the particularities of the Cheese-Fare week when liturgical elements specific to the Lent, such as the Great Compline, the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian “*Oh, the Lord and Master of my life...*” etc, are combined with those elements specific to times outside the Lent season. This week can be seen as “the antechamber of the Lent”.

In the second part of this chapter there are presented liturgical particularities of the Lent season as reflected in the structure of the services of the each liturgical day, emphasizing what is specific to the Vespers, Matins, Compline and the Liturgy of the Hours, showing also the differences that are specific to the common days of the week from the ones performed on Saturdays and Sundays. The Eucharistic Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts is also the subject of the research and presentation in this chapter that ends with the presentation of the liturgical structure of the Holy Week.

The next chapter follows the same structure of the forth one though this time, the subject of the presentation is given by the divine order of the services held during the liturgical season of the Pentecost (as captured in the liturgical book of the *Pentecostarion*), covering the time between the Easter and the Sunday of all Saints (first Sunday after Pentecost). At the end of the chapter one can find brief references to the fasting period dedicated to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

The end of the book consists of a glossary for over 135 liturgical terms and expressions which the author explains, helping this way those less initiated to better understand certain aspects of the divine order of the Orthodox Church, which, otherwise, would only remain accessible to few or only to the experts.

Father Job Getcha’s work, *The Typikon Decoded*, is a book that I received and read with great joy. Firstly, because it is a new

achievement of the author, whom I had the honor to meet and whose academic liturgical research activity I have always admired; and second, as this handbook meets the urgent needs of our schools of Theology and not only. Together with *La réforme liturgique du Métropolitain Cyprien de Kiev. L'introduction du typikon sabaïte dans l'office divin*, Les Éditions du CERF, Paris, 2010, 587 p., this handbook defines and fulfils the personality of Fr. Archimandrite Job Getcha.

The Typikon Decoded reflects, in a focused and systematic manner, the structure of the Church liturgical year that is made up of three broad periods: the Octoechos, the Triodion and the Pentecostarion. If in the predominantly Orthodox countries the attention paid to specifying, explaining and observing the ritual has been a constant feature, in the West, this aspect has been less taken into account. Orthodoxy is defined and expressed by the liturgical and typikonal unity and uniformity. Fr. Job Getcha's book is not only a first in the West but also an essential contribution to the affirmation of the liturgical and typikonal pan-Orthodox unity and uniformity. The author is a great connoisseur of Greek and Slavonic liturgical sources which he puts forward in a balanced way, as much as the reader needs in order to understand the complex phenomenon of the emergence, development, generalization and standardization of the orthodox worship units. Furthermore, while enhancing the value of the book and revealing the author to us as a profound theologian, its content emphasizes that the typikon is not a mere sum of cold and lifeless rules, but that they lead us and deepen for us *the mystery of life in Christ* that we experience in divine worship and during every liturgical period and day. Finally, we also emphasize the fact that the way the material is presented to the reader makes it obvious that it addresses theologians while also being accessible to those without theological training and those that are less initiated into "*the mystery of Christianity*" and the Eastern Orthodox Church liturgical life.

At the end of the introduction to *The Typikon Decoded*, Father Job Getcha asserts: “*our hope is that the publication of this work will contribute to the understanding and knowledge of the Byzantine liturgical offices and will allow us to progress in the knowledge of God, which is true theology*”. By reading the book, I believe, Father Job’s hope becomes embodied reality.