Social Services Offered by Faith- based Organizations in the Post-Secular Society

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Abstract: Within this present paper we reviewed a series of particularities of the process of professionalization of charity and of formation of social work were reviewed, and also we highlighted the differences between the specificities of the social work carried out by secular organizations as compared to that carried out by organizations with a religious profile. A model of social Christianity was discussed, highlighting the Christian, historical foundations of social work. We started our analysis from the theory expressed regarding the post-secular society by Jurgen Habermas, in order to outline the model of social Christianity and the manner of its manifestation in faith-based social work organizations, so that in the end we were able to draw a series of theoretical conclusions regarding the types of faith-based organizations identified in the literature. The empirical research consists of a qualitative study, based on the application of semi-structured interviews, with 25 persons, priests, social workers and monks involved in the social-philanthropic activity of the Orthodox Church. The interviews were conducted between October 2018 and January 2019 within the Diocese of Iasi and were analysed using Grounded Theory. After analysing the results, emerged a theoretical model regarding the specific activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) as a faith-based organization providing social philanthropic services.

Keywords: *post secular society; faith based organizations; social work; professionalization of charity.*

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Introduction

Nowadays, there are extensive discussions about post-secular society, as a society resulting from the failure of the anti-religious policies carried out by the so-called secular societies, which failed in the activity of removing the religious elements from the public discourse. In the last decade, the complete and absolute separation of roles between the state and the Church has been questioned due to the increasing role of religious movements, in shaping the public agenda and in the background of the process of democratic deliberation (Nistor, 2018a). Religion cannot remain in today's society exclusively in the private sphere, as it is being recalled to take its place in the public sphere. Jurgen Habermas (2008: 17-29) and, alongside him, a number of other thinkers (Brieskorn, 2010: 24-35; Reder, 2010: 36-50; Ricken, 2010: 51-58), believe that society has reached the moment of forsaking militant secularism, because it is prepared to recognize and respect the role of religion in the public sphere. This imposed and unrealistic absence of the voice of religious persons from the course of the communicative action, through public dialogue generating consensus at the social level, constitutes an element of democratic deficit, in the sense that Habermas constructed the term - the lack of representativeness of some institutions that are named by the representatives of power, without being subjected to democratic control by vote - in this case, the elimination of some deliberation partners, the religious stakeholders, which impairs on the idea of deliberative democracy (Nistor, 2018b).

The central element of this research is the concept of post-secular society, and, in correlation with it, the concept of faith-based organization, as an institutional form of expressing the Church's participation in the social dialogue within the post-secular society. The Church expresses its spiritual values through the practice of philanthropy, that is continued with specific elements of social work, partially professionalized, but which are enriched, from the axiological point of view, with specific Christian values like mercy, compassion, serving ones neighbour (Nistor, 2019a). The aims of the present research are to clarify the specificity of the social-philanthropic activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church and to create a model of Christian social work (after the faith based social action model) as a particular form of expression of Orthodox-based social action.

I. Charity and social services offered by faith-based organizations

Charity is defined as the (social) action oriented towards the Other, taking the form of self-sacrifice, that implies tolerance, it is a form of manifestation of one's will (free will), without a discriminatory character (Heyd, 2016). Philanthropy is defined according to the Merriam Webster Dictionary as goodwill towards other members of humanity, manifested by acts of compassion or gifts of material value made for humanitarian purposes, as well as the activity undertaken by an organization, which distributes or supports such acts, offering funds or donations ("Philanthropy", n.d.). Faith-based organizations as providers of charitable services, but also of professionalized social work, are defined as private entities, religious cults or particular units of a religious cult, as well as non-governmental organizations affiliated with religious cults, which provide social services or carry out a charitable activity in favor of certain categories of disadvantaged persons, most often persons belonging to the respective cults (Sider & Unruh, 2004).

The debate on the participation of religiously orientated stakeholders is correlated with the attempt to answer the question about what should be and which really is the place of faith-based organizations and, through them, of religion in today's society. Braeckman points out that debates about the role of religion in the public sphere primarily refer to its moral and epistemic moral content, when, in fact, the fundamental dimension of any religion is its ability to build communities symbolically, thus instituting them from an identity perspective (Braeckman, 2009). The deconstruction of charity in post-modern post-secular society aims at moving away from the model of charity based on philanthropy, to the welfare state based on social-institutionalized and compulsory solidarity, as well as to the professionalization of social work (Nistor, 2019b).

A first question concerns the spiritual value of social work practice (Sideburg, 1922). Those who respond negatively appreciate that the purpose of the welfare act is the welfare and social integration of the beneficiary and that the welfare practice does not aim to do good, as is the case with philanthropic activities, namely the service of God through confession of faith, prayer or missionary work. From a secular perspective on social work, it is considered that social services are the result of the evolution of public policies aimed at reducing social inequities (Sandu & Caras, 2013), ignoring in both situations the value that the exercise of the social work profession has for the same practitioner, insofar as the professional vocation is built as

an expression of some deep, humanistic values of a religious nature (Nistor, 2018c).

Referring to the development of social work in complementing the charitable practices of the Catholic Church, Frederic Siedenburg (1922) pointed out that social services appeared to correct the social inequalities generated by the Western, Christian social order and to intervene where the simple giving of charity perpetuates those social inequalities or even generates dependence on the charitable support offered to entire categories of vulnerable populations. As such, in this perspective, the emergence and development of social services offered by faith-based organizations (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013) represents a professionalization of charity, but that generates a particular way of understanding the social work profession, infused with values such as compassion, mercy, the desire to serve the Other, but within the sphere of values of social work: respect for human dignity, rejection of social inequality, especially that expressed as inequality of opportunity etc. The professionalization of the practice of social work offered within faith-based organizations or even by social work services that are under the direct coordination of different cults does not exclude the conduct of these philanthropic activities in accordance with the charitable mission of the respective organization, but, on the contrary, it nuances them and personalizes them for certain categories of beneficiaries, in order to respond to their particular needs and to the specific social vulnerability of those to which such services are addressed.

Faith-based organizations continue to play an important role in providing social services, although their role in building the welfare state is often challenged. B. R Crisp discusses the role of these organizations based on examples from different countries and in the context of different religious traditions, identifying a number of opportunities, but also challenges regarding the development of the social services sector offered by religious organizations (Crisp, 2014). The sociological literature that deals with the role of faith-based organizations in providing social work services discusses a number of issues such as the relationship between these organizations and the state, as well as the development of partnerships with public social services, ethical dilemmas and possible conflicts of values between social work services offered by organizations with religious orientation and the professional practice of social work, especially in multicultural contexts and religious pluralism, possible tensions between the ethical obligations contained in the professional deontological codes and the religious teachings specific to the religion to which the organization belongs (Horstman, 2011), which, most of the times, is also the religion that the

social workers involved in the provision of social work services by the respective organizations belong to (Crisp, 2014).

In the sociological literature, as well as in public health issues literature, social interventions offered by faith-based organizations are examined, as it is often the case that victims of family abuse initially address these organizations (Beaman-Hall & Nason-Clark, 1997). Research shows that women who say they are deeply religious, involved in abusive relationships, are more reluctant to end such a relationship, precisely because of the traditional moral values that put the family at the centre of Christian life (Horton, Wilkins, & Wright, 1988). A series of research discusses the role of faith-based organizations in social intervention for adolescents abused by members of their family, including domestic violence, but also physical, symbolic or even sexual violence (Li, Fernandez y Garcia, Freedman, & Miller, 2016). In these situations, especially when the abuse is the act of the partner with whom no actual marital relationship has been established (Black et al., 2011), but with whom the person *de facto* lives, it is considered necessary to have emotional and social support, but also spiritual support, and faith-based organizations can provide such support, especially if they develop such support services for victims of family abuse, or even support services in crisis situations (Gillum, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006; Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001).

The literature highlights the role of faith-based organizations in working with young people, especially in giving support for personality development, by also instilling the feeling of religious belonging, but primarily the feeling of belonging to a community (Lyth, 2004: 9), which makes this type of organizations have a series of tools to re-establish the relationships between the adolescents and their family and, in general, the community where they live (Li et al., 2016), while also allowing the community to fulfil its mission of socializing these adolescents, especially in the current context of medical development, which generates non-traditional families and non-traditional social therapies, widely described in the literature (Huidu, 2019; Sandu & Unguru, 2018).

Although social policies in different countries are increasingly emphasizing the role of faith-based organizations, there is little research to highlight the differences between services offered by these organizations and secular ones. Graddy and Ye (2006), while analysing social services offered by faith-based organizations in the United States, conclude that faith-based organizations are more focused on providing social services than their secular counterparts, when these services are understood as acts of service. These organizations mainly operate on a humanitarian-charitable and

volunteer-based mission, playing an important role in assisting the beneficiaries in transitional situations, generally providing primary services or multi-oriented services and limiting their interventions to those that use their unique strengths, based on the quick and easy access to existing resources in communities and the active mobilization of community members towards solidarity.

Secular providers, both public and non-profit, instead offer a much more comprehensive set of services. The results suggest that faith-based organizations have a modest and concentrated role in the provision of social services in the US, being mainly complementary to the efforts of secular social service providers (Graddy & Ye, 2006). However, the social services offered by faith-based organizations cannot be substituted for the national system of social services, offered in particular by specialized public institutions, and by secular or secularized NGOs in public-private partnership, while the services offered by providers who have declared a religious affiliation are efficient in complementing the services offered by public organizations, but religiously affiliated organizations are ideal candidates for establishing public-private partnerships, maintaining their religious orientation in the process, but complying to national quality standards in social services.

Philip Giligan and Sheila Furness, discussing the role of religion in social care, refer to it as a resource available to beneficiaries, without analyzing the religious beliefs and values of the social workers themselves (Giligan & Furness, 2005). The transformative capacity that the religious faith can generate for the beneficiary is in correlation with the way the social worker himself relates to the religious or spiritual values (Caroll, 1998).

A series of studies cited by Graddy and Ye (2006) show that in different particular areas of social services, faith-based organizations may be even more effective than other NGOs or public institutions, due to the particularities of faith-based criteria involved in selection and recruitment of personnel, in the way in which the organization effectively provides the services, and, in general, in their organizational culture. Because faith-based organizations and their staff, who are members of the respective congregation, regard social work as a form of spiritual calling and mission, it makes them have a high degree of intrinsic motivation for social work and a different vision of the results they face compared to other service providers (Etindi, n.d.). This sense of spiritual mission offered to social practice causes service providers within faith-based organizations to devote more time to a beneficiary, providing support until real and profound changes occur in the beneficiary's situation.

Research into the relationship between commitment to work and the sense of self-realization described as "flourishing" shows that this "flourishing" is mediated by the subject's relation to values, especially to humanistic values. Research involving 144 Catholic nuns has shown a direct dependence between their commitment to helping the needy and their personal development in their professional environment (Ariza-Montes, Molina-Sanchez, Ramirez-Sobrino, & Giorgi, 2018). Personal development in a professional context is enhanced by the correspondence between the characteristics of the workplace and personal competences. Commitment to work meant a positive mental state of connection with the subjects own work, and flourishing meant self-perceived success, satisfaction with one's activity, self-esteem, feeling of a higher purpose regarding one's own activity. The mentioned results can be correlated with those presented by Schwartz (1994), who showed that the values associated by the individual with what is important in life, and which are defined by him as desirable, are perceived as a transcendent purpose that varies in importance, but which links the principles that guide the life of the individual and his social personality. Values acquire a special relevance in religious environments, especially in those involved in social services offered to disadvantaged categories, in which the interaction between the professional and the personal role of the individual is conditioned by his personal set of values (Schwartz, 1994).

Another difference in approach is the emphasis that is placed on interpersonal relationships and transforming the social worker into a mentor for the beneficiary, encouraging him and at the same time, provoking him to produce transformations in his own life. This is in contrast to the provision of standardized services (Sandu & Ignătescu, 2017), based on financial efficiency as part of case management.

The differences between social work offered by secular organizations, especially by the nongovernmental ones, and the one established by various religious cults or by private persons with different religious orientations, which are legally transposed into the activity of the organization, are highlighted by a number of researchers, such as Helen Rose Ebaugh, Janet S. Saltzman, Paula F. Pipes and Martha Daniels (2003), who examine the differences between them in terms of variables such as the mission and goals of the organization, funding sources, program priorities, organizational culture, and the way they deliver social services (Reneve & Dunajevs, 2014). A number of studies seem to show increased efficiency of faith-based organizations from the perspective of services provided to beneficiaries over NGOs organized on secular principles (Ebaugh, Saltzman, Pipes, & Daniels, 2003).

A comparative research conducted in Lithuania between the specifics of social work offered by secular and religious non-governmental organizations (Reneve & Dunajevs, 2014) identifies a number of differences between welfare practices:

1. There are significant differences regarding the motivation of the practice, especially the high level of self-motivation of the people who work in faith-based organizations, which can be a consequence of the social workers own religious values, which constitute a powerful self-motivation resource.

2. There are also differences regarding the inclusion of potential beneficiaries in the target group and the decision to provide social services to them. The classification of potential beneficiaries as having the profile of the target group determined to a greater extent the decision of social workers from the secular organizations, than of the ones with religious orientation - Christian in the case of the analyzed study -, to offer social services to the respective beneficiaries, while the social workers from faith-based organizations have been more convinced of arguments such as the beneficiary's motivation and values. Compliance with institutional rules is a modern value, consistent with secular practice, while Christian solidarity and altruistic values were rather reflected in the priority given to the motivation of beneficiaries to receive help, that is to those who felt in need and asked for the social worker's support.

3. Regarding the evaluation of cases that require social work services, the professionals affiliated to faith-based organizations elaborate it on their own, while their colleagues from secular organizations prefer team evaluation. This difference can be a consequence of the different levels of trust that faith-based and secular organizations place on the individuals. Faith based organizations develop easier and wider interpersonal and professional relationships based on trust, due to the common values that members share.

4. In organizations with a spiritual profile, there is preponderance for team working methods, through mediation and offering direct material support. The value placed on communication in Christian culture would explain the first two methodological differences, while the easiness in offering material support is due to a greater capacity of Christian organizations to mobilize community resources. The predilection for working with groups of beneficiaries is the result of valuing the group in Christian faith, especially the one that brings together vulnerable people. Also, the preference for mediation is placed on the respect of the Christian value of forgiveness, which is rather fulfilled through reconciliation between

parties. We consider that another possible explanation for the predilection to offer material support may come from the tradition of philanthropic activity within the Church, which consists, among other things, in material and financial assistance of the poor.

5. There are a number of differences between the practices of the two types of organizations regarding the involvement in solving other people, from outside the organization, in solving cases: friends and representatives of other organizations are included as a personnel resource in case of social services offered by faith-based organizations to a greater extent than in secular organizations. Family members are equally included a personnel resource for the success of the intervention. The inclusion of friends can be explained by the traditional religious call to the community - especially to the community that shares the same faith as the organization - in solving cases, and the involvement of other organizations can be understood as the participation of faith-based organizations in networks of organizations established within or linked to the same Church.

6. Regarding the evaluation of social intervention, faith-based organizations emphasize more than NGOs on elements such as: developing self-esteem, social integration of the beneficiary, empowerment of the client and the positive change obtained through it, while in the case of secular organizations, a higher score was obtained for indicators such as: reaching - even in part - the purpose of the intervention and meeting the needs of the beneficiaries. The pragmatic orientation towards achieving the objectives of the intervention can be explained by the preponderance of public funding sources, in the case of secular organizations, which condition the financing of results, while religious organizations, focusing on community support, emphasize the human dimension of the intervention, such as empowering beneficiaries, self-esteem and their level of social integration (Reneve & Dunajevs, 2014).

7. A significant difference between the representatives of the two types of organizations appears in terms of the importance they place on the beneficiaries and which is much greater in the case of faith-based organizations, who perceive beneficiaries as being very important (by 75% of the staff), as compared to secular NGOs (only 45% of the staff). The importance of the beneficiaries for the social workers who share Christian values can be understood in the sense that the person in need is transfigured into the person of Christ, who has expressed very clearly that the good deed done for a needy person is a good deed done to Jesus Christ himself.

Both organizations offering secular social services and faith-based organizations use, in their practice, references to religious symbols and

terms, even though they are less commonly found in secular organizations. This allows Giedrė Reneve and Eugenijus Dunajevs (2014) to point out that secular social work organizations are in fact secular only in terms of mission and goals, but the practice and how social workers relate to beneficiaries are dependent on their inner values, which in many cases are of a spiritual, Christian nature.

II. Social work offered by faith-based organizations in the post-secular society

This post-secular understanding of the particularities of social work offered by Christian organizations causes a series of working hypotheses according to which in the post-secular society, the professionalization of charity occurs through the development, by faith-based organizations, as a continuum and completion of philanthropic activities, which do not disappear, of social, professional social services, based on the humanistic vocation of social work and on a number of particular values of a Christian nature, which are customized to be in line with the general values of social work.

Social work offered by faith-based organizations is conducted within the limits of quality standards imposed by state regulations, but the particular emphasis placed on the value of the beneficiary as a person, on communication and communion with him is what distinguishes the professional practice based on religious values from the secular one.

III. Methodological design

Purpose and objectives of research: the purpose of this research is to sketch an analysis of the specificities of the charitable act and of social work within Romanian Orthodox Church, as a consequence of the professionalization process. The operational objectives are: identifying the specificity and significance attributed to the social-philanthropic activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church in different organizations of the Iasi Archdiocese; identifying the meanings attributed to the professionalization of the charity, correlated with the professionalization of social services offered by Romanian Orthodox Church; clarifying the priest's role in the process of combining philanthropy with professional services; constructing a theoretical model regarding the social-philanthropic and welfare activity of faith-based organizations operating within or with the blessing of Romanian Orthodox Church; identifying new solutions in the development and adjustment of social services offered within the Archdiocese of Iasi.

Sampling universe: the research aimed at studying social work and charity activities carried out in an institutional framework (whether accredited or not) and those provided informally, non-institutionalized, in the Archdiocese of Iasi. Thus, we took into consideration the 13 deaneries of the Archdiocese (of these, 3 do not have accredited services); 1221 parishes of the Archdiocese; 94 monasteries and hermitages. Several social actors that have a direct connection to institutionalized or non-institutionalized social work practices were participants in the research: priests offering professionally licensed and accredited services; priests and abbots who offer institutionalized charitable and social work services and who are not licensed or accredited, but who possess all the operating approvals; social workers who work in the social work programs carried out by the Church.

Methodological design: due to the exploratory nature of this research, it was considered necessary to use a mixed methodological design, based both on qualitative research, which we carried out through the working methodology called Grounded Theory and, on the basis of the resulting theoretical model following the qualitative research, we also carried out a quantitative research, which was based on the sociological survey through a questionnaire. Also, the sociological survey through the questionnaire aimed to identify how philanthropy is manifested in the parochial communities that do not have accredited social services and what actions initiated by the priest additionally bring to the practice.

Conducting the interviews: the research was carried out in a qualitative register, with a set of three types of semi-structured interviews applied to the main actors involved in the activity of charity and social work in the Archdiocese of Iasi. Thus, we had in mind: priests who coordinate accredited services; priests and abbots who do not have accredited services, with different types of beneficiaries; social workers who carry out their activity within institutions that are part of the Archdiocese of Iasi. Three interview guides were used in the data collection, one for each of the above mentioned categories.

The investigative work has been organized around a list of axes. For the interviews carried out both with priests coordinating specialized social services and with priests carrying out only social-philanthropic activities, and also with social workers, these axes are: the meaning of the term charity / philanthropy; charitable (philanthropic) activity; the specificities of the coordinated social service; motivation for involvement in social-philanthropic and / or social work activities; the main social problems faced by members of the community in which the

philanthropic and / or welfare activity is carried out; the stages through which the philanthropic activity or the organized social service went through; the most important achievements / difficulties encountered during the course of social-philanthropic activity; the ways of making the decision and the persons involved in the decision process regarding social-philanthropic and / or social work activities; the existence (or not) of an organization (association or foundation) through which the social-philanthropic activity is carried out and of a social worker (s) specially employed to carry out this activity; role and selection criteria of volunteers; the need to professionalize the social activity within the Church; what risks are foreseen regarding the desire to institutionalize and professionalize charity.

Pretesting research tools: interview guides were pre-tested and adjusted according to the data collection process, the resulting discursive categories and the way in which the saturation of the model was foreseen. The first pretesting of the initial form of interview was carried out on two subjects from each category, aiming at determining the clarity and relevance of the questions, how they are perceived by respondents, and the specificity of the answers received etc.

Sampling and selection of participants: sampling was made using the snowball method, starting from the requirement that respondents were priests or social workers involved in the social-philanthropic activity of ROC. The research aims at a theoretical sampling, which means that "saturation of the theoretical model" is pursued. The term saturation of the model represents the moment when new interviews no longer bring significant additional information that can be classified as new theoretical categories. The total number of interviews was 25.

Data collecting and open coding: the design of qualitative research comprises a series of interview axes, elaborated according to the research objectives. A total of 37 interviews were collected and interpreted, obtaining theoretical saturation of the model. The interviews were carried out between September 2018 - February 2019 with a number of 14 priests, 2 of which 2 are monastery abbots from Iasi and Neamț counties, 15 social workers and 8 others involved in providing social-philanthropic services within ROC. Out of this last category, 6 are laymen (social inspectors, coordinators of residential centres, managers) and 2 are monks, as well as 2 social workers belonging to faith-based organizations affiliated to the Catholic and Protestant faith.

Of all interviewed persons, 17 were from Iasi County (Iași, Târgu Frumos, Hârlău, Pașcani), 14 from Neamț County (Piatra Neamț, Târgu

Neamț, Roznov, Săvinești, Poiana Largului), 6 from Botosani County, (Dorohoi, Botoșani). We make a special mention about 2 interviewees who are not part of the social work system of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but interact with its activity within the social inspection sector. The results of the interviews with these persons are highlighted in the general analysis of the data obtained and placed in contrast with the data obtained from the interviews with social workers who carry out their professional activity within the Church.

The process of data collection took place at the same time as open coding (Sbaraini, Carter, & Evans, 2011). There are a series of operations aimed at: collecting data through semi-structured interviews, followed immediately by the transcript of the interviews and the primary analysis of the data, as they are collected; subsequently, the initial coding, also called open coding, is made, which takes place as the transcript of the interviews is actually carried out, when it is sought to apply a series of "labels" on the various discursive fragments, that are then grouped semantically (Sandu, 2018).

The data analysis process is in the open or initial coding stage (Cheer, MacLaren, & Tsey, 2015) involves systematic reading of data and making memo notes. In parallel, the classification of data into semantic categories is being pursued, and the coding stages - called axial coding and selective coding - are being developed, which aim to establish the predominant semantic categories in the speech of the interviewed persons (Sandu, 2018).

The semantic categories obtained inductively were: social problems of the Christian-Orthodox community (semantic category that allowed us to elaborate some considerations regarding the necessity of the social-philanthropic activities carried out by the Romanian Orthodox Church), philanthropy, charity and service of the neighbour in the participants' discourse on philanthropy, the spiritual motivation of social-philanthropic practices, the conduct of social-philanthropic activities within the Romanian Orthodox Church, the sources of financial support of the philanthropic activity, the professionalization of charity (a category that highlighted the perspective of the persons involved in charitable activities within the Romanian Orthodox Church on the transition process from philanthropy, as a form of social work, to helping the Other within accredited social work services), particularities of Christian social work (based on Christian values). Another important thematic focus was the one regarding the influence that the professionalization of charity could have on a possible secularization of social-charitable practices of the Church,

meaning that we paid special attention on the way priests and professionals (social workers) collaborate, as well as on the difficulties that this process of professionalization raises in the fulfilment of the social-charitable mission of the Church (from the perspective of those involved in these activities). Subsequently, after a series of discussions regarding the organizational structure and management of organizations within the Romanian Orthodox Church operating in the field of charity, we presented a model that shows the way social-charitable services function and the professionalization of charity in organizations affiliated to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Discussions and limits of research: due to the specificity of the methodological framework we used, which is based on Grounded Theory, as it was developed by K. Charmaz (2006), in the process of operationalizing research objectives we did not propose any research hypotheses, but instead we listed a number of assumptions, who guided the process of collecting and interpreting qualitative data. These constructive assumptions were: 1. the professionalization of the social services offered by the Church is based both on the desire to adapt them to the increasingly complex needs of the beneficiaries, as well as the secular pressure of the state, by introducing quality standards and orienting the sources of financing mainly towards services of social work; 2. there is a reluctance on the part of some of the representatives of the Church regarding a professionalization of the charitable mission of the ROC through the establishment and functioning of accredited and licensed social services, due to the traditional social vision of philanthropy, which is the basis for the fulfilment of the social mission of the Church.

These assumptions were not ranked as hypotheses and their validation was not pursued, but they were benchmarks in the construction of the methodological design of the research. In order to ensure a greater credibility of the theoretical model, a process of parallel reading of the data was carried out (partially), in order to ensure the triangulation of the researchers.

The limits of the research are given by its exploratory nature and the qualitative approach of this study. The generated model is especially valid for the social services offered by ROC through its institutions within the Archdiocese of Iasi, but it can be generalized with a high dose of plausibility for the social-charitable and social work services offered by ROC nationwide (as the transferability principle states). Regarding the generalization of this model for the analysis of social services offered by faith-based organizations, other than the Orthodox ones, a series of particular limitations given by the

specificity of this particular religious faith are added, namely its social-humanistic vocation and the Church's mission for pray, healing, and eternal salvation.

Conceptual categories: the semantic categories obtained in the axial coding process: the need for social-philanthropic activities; conducting philanthropic activities in ROC; supporting (financially and with human resources) the philanthropic activity; the perspective of the personnel involved in philanthropic activities in the Orthodox Church; „professionalization” of charity, from social-philanthropic services to accredited social services; accreditation and licensing of social services; faith-based organizations that provide charitable and social work services; particularities of social work centred on Christian values; the collaboration between the priest and the social worker in the social-philanthropic services offered within the ROC; professionalization of charity versus secularization of social-charitable practices of the Church; difficulties encountered in fulfilling the social-charitable and social work mission of the ROC; the significance of professional success within philanthropic and social work services offered by the ROC.

IV. Faith-based organizations that provide charitable and social work services

Faith-based organizations are entities with or without legal personality, established on common religious beliefs (Conovici, 2013), which carry out activities in the social, educational and cultural sphere, being “articulated directly or indirectly, mainly or secondary as forms of manifestation of the respective beliefs” (Constantinescu, 2012: 9-11). Faith-based organizations are established as associations and foundations, which function according to the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000, and which, either by title or by mission, define themselves as having a religious profile (Constantinescu, 2012). In the case of faith-based organizations, statutory values are declared to be religious in nature, or humanistic, but with a religious or spiritual background (Cojocaru, Cojocaru & Sandu, 2011).

Sociological literature identifies five categories of faith-based organizations:

- *Faith-permeated organisations* and *faith-based organization*:

in these organizations we observe the closest connection between the programs carried out by the organization and the religious element, the first being an explicit expression of religious values, clearly expressed in the mission of the organization. The selection of staff involved in the

organization's programs and - at least partially - of its beneficiaries is influenced by their religious affiliation. The board or the staff with decision-making authority are directly involved in the activity of the Church, and are, in most cases, people inside the Church, or even its hierarchs. The religious content of the programs is mandatory, and considered necessary for the success of the social programs carried out by the organization. Program funding is largely based on funds from the religious congregation to which the organization is affiliated. The relations of the organization with other organizations, secular or affiliated to other religious denomination, are often reduced or even non-existent (Cojocaru et al., 2011, Sider & Unruh, 2004). An example of such an organization, as presented by the interviewees, has the purpose, as defined by its programmatic documents, of promoting the traditional Orthodox Christian values, and carries out activities and programs in this regard, with the help of a staff carefully trained and prepared and able of mixing the social-philanthropic activity with the spiritual and catechetical one. The most difficult stage in preparing and conducting social-philanthropic activities is considered to be the spiritual and catechetical training of personnel who participate in the fulfilment of the social mission of the Church. This stage is seen as absolutely necessary so that the people involved in social-philanthropic activities can further promote to the beneficiaries of the social-philanthropic services the mission of the Foundation, that of promoting the traditional Orthodox values. From one of the interviews we can deduce that the Organization where the respondent carries out his social-philanthropic activity can be considered a faith-permeated organization, as classified by Sider and Unruh (2004), whose mission is to promote Christian spiritual values, through programs that have a clear spiritual component, related to helping poor people, and implemented by a staff that unconditionally adheres to these values.

Another feature of faith-permeated organizations is that among the expected results of the developed social programs there is a profound spiritual and moral transformation, in accordance with its specific religious values. One interviewed person, who carries out his activity in such an organization, shows that among the spiritual results obtained as a result of social activities with young people is that the beneficiaries have acquired Orthodox values and managed to reach an authentic relationship with the Divine, and, more so, the beneficiaries find themselves able to transmit the values thus inherited to society. The results obtained are such programs are considered to be superior to the ordinary ones in the case of secular social services, they are achievements that "exceed the human". In the social sphere, achievements that are considered exceptionally humanitarian are

presented, like taking in and educating orphaned children, abandoned at the door of the monastery, who are now socially and professionally accomplished, as a way to overcome the social-economic dimensions that generate inequalities in education (Cristea, 2019).

By acquiring the Orthodox values, young people have come to a living relationship with Christ, being able to transmit the knowledge accumulated throughout society. The spiritual preparation of young people for the confrontation with life, their metamorphosis through the gospel are achievements that surpass the human. Their involvement in social life, their professional achievement is the result of our work. I had children in the centre who were abandoned at the door of the Centre, or small infants abandoned at the door of Father Justin, and adopted by nuns, I educated them here, sent them to school and now they are graduates of higher education (MON 1).

The interviewees (MON2) show that in the case of faith-based organizations where they work, the religious dimension is paramount in raising and educating children. The spiritual dimension of the education received by beneficiaries is considered essential for their good social integration and forming young people as morally upright people, because the spiritual dimension is combined and harmonized with the social-educational one (MON 1).

Decisions regarding the programs, and in general the activity of the organization are made by the religious management of the organization (Mother Director and the Deputy Mother Director). This is somewhat expected, given that the faith-based organization is set up next to a Monastery, and a significant part of the staff is a member of that respective Monastery.

Social-philanthropic activities are decided by the Mother Director and the Deputy Mother Director. Decisions are taken in meetings where the strengths and consequences of the promoted activity are presented. Proposals of social workers who have direct contact with beneficiaries are taken into account. It is emphasized that decisions should be taken for the gain of the beneficiaries (MON 1).

In selecting beneficiaries, there may be a series of subjective criteria, like the religious affiliation of the faith-based organization (Christian Orthodox in the case of the respondents) (MON1, MON2). In addition to the confessional criteria, a number of criteria may also appear regarding the availability of beneficiaries to follow a certain program, which will include specific activities and results, whether material or spiritual in nature.

Within the same Organization, no strict rules or criteria are established regarding the acceptance of people who want to do volunteering or specialized practice (MON2) in the Centers coordinated by the organization, although as a rule they are members of Christian-Orthodox youth organizations, but they can also be students in programs that train professionals in psycho-social specialties, but recommendations are requested from the latter.

- Faith-centred organizations

They carry out their activity in close connection with that of the religious confession they are a part of, and depend on it as the main source of funding. The implemented programs have an explicit religious content, but the participation of beneficiaries in the activities of a religious nature is optional. The selection of staff is influenced by the religious membership of candidates, but this is not an absolutely mandatory criterion for employment. A series of constituent elements for this type of organization are highlighted in the case of organization "D.", which is directly subordinated to and coordinated by the Archiepiscopate, does not have its own statute, as an independent organization, because its status is based on the statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church itself, - hence the declared mission of the organization is the mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church itself. The organization was established based on a decision issued by the Church, it is not a civil autonomous association or foundation, which is why the organization acts as a part of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The services provided by the organization operate both in the social-philanthropic sphere, as well as in specialized, non-residential social services. The personnel involved in the activity of the organization - the social workers involved - have a religious affiliation, are graduates of educational programs like theology-social work, but in the selection of volunteers, professional competence and social involvement prevail, and students or graduates of other secular faculties (specialized in social sciences) are accepted. According to the interviewed persons within the institution, the organization does not have a professionalized system for volunteers' selection. The selection of personnel was dual, either through a transparent competition, which formally allows the access of any interested person, on the basis of competences, but also on the basis of recommendations, and of the volunteering activity previously carried out.

Funding comes exclusively from Church funds. Partnerships developed by the organization are generally with various parishes and other organizations established within the Church, or with specialized public

institutions. The organization avoids such partnerships with secular organizations or belonging to other religious beliefs.

The organization did not turn membership to the Orthodox faith into a criterion for selection of beneficiaries, due to the humanistic specificity of Orthodoxy, which does not require a limitation of the charitable duty to members of the Orthodox community. Some respondents indicate that the decision not to limit access to services exclusively to members of the Orthodox Christian community is partly influenced by the importance placed by the legislator on non-discrimination as a specific value of the social work practice. Moreover, the social work programs carried out do not have an explicit religious content, except for the spiritual counselling that the assisted persons can benefit from upon request. From the interviews with representatives of this organization, it appears that the social activity carried out remains transparent to the Christian values and imposes them as being specific to the welfare practice - the call to existing resources in the parishes, and to the support of the priests, when the case requires it, spiritual counselling etc. During the interviews, it is mentioned that organizations of the same type, that also carry out residential social work activities, also offer beneficiaries the possibility of participating in religious practices and ceremonies, including in the morning and evening prayer, right in the premises of the building where the services are offered (AS 3).

The internal regulations of the Organization are those of the Romanian Orthodox Church, supplemented by national legislation, generally applicable to all social service providers.

We absolutely apply the legislation as a social welfare institution. So, the legislation is applied and respected, but if something happens, the necessary measures are taken, but as a structure of the Church we have internal regulations, that we also apply. (AS1)

Faith-affiliated organizations

They keep a number of spiritual elements in their mission, the fulfilment of which is often regarded as a condition for the organization's programs. The founders of the organization, physical or legal persons belonging to the religious community, maintain a significant influence on its activity, but members of the management committee, although mostly religiously affiliated, are not necessarily part of the religious hierarchies. In their evolution, some of the faith-affiliated organizations can transform their discourse, under the impact of secularizing processes related to access to financial resources, and the need for accreditation of services, into one with references to ethical and moral social values, rather than to religious values.

This change of discourse allows the organization to have a better ranking in the social services market, and wider partnership opportunities with secular organizations or belonging to other religions (Chaves & Wineburg, 2010; Cojocaru et al., 2011; Sider & Unruh, 2004). No such secularizing developments have been identified within the Organizations affiliated to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

- Faith-background organizations and faith-secular partnerships

Faith-background organizations keep in their history a series of references to religious values, but they act in a secularized manner. The content of programs, the decisions regarding the activity of the organization, the selection of personnel and beneficiaries are in no way correlated with religious affiliation. This form of drift towards secularization has been identified mostly in neo-Protestant faith-background organizations, which, under the impact of the need to support and finance the activity in a religious climate with few neo-Protestant influences, and by switching to a nationwide type of management, have been secularized and became organizations that had religious elements in their past but gave up the spiritual content of their activity (Cojocaru et al., 2011). Partnerships between faith-based organizations and secular organizations usually operate in a secular manner, and the organizations that have a religious origin or belonging generally adopt a type of secular discourse and practices.

Faith-based associations and foundations belong to the non-profit sector and are active in social, medical, educational, and other areas.

Respondents are reluctant to acknowledge the existence of a real danger of secularization of the social activity of the Church. This type of evolution for the social-charitable activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church is considered impossible, due to the strong faith that binds those involved in this activity with the social-charitable mission of the Church. On the contrary, the professionalization of social services offered by the Church is welcomed for the fulfillment of its social mission, and in bringing believers together spiritually.

The expression: "secularization of services" is a little forced. The professionalization of the social work services, if done within the Romanian Orthodox Church, would surely lead to an increased closeness of the faithful to the Church. (AS1)

However, the risk - which must be completely avoided - that the development of the Church's philanthropic activity will align it with other social service providers is underlined, which would really lead to a risk of secularization, at the level of public perception (PR1).

It is the risk of developing philanthropic activities in the Church and that the Church will be perceived as being obliged at any cost to develop philanthropic activities that would align it with other institutions of the same profile. Hence, the danger of secularization! But, with the risk taken in regard to this danger of secularization, the Church also cannot abandon these activities (PR 1)

The professionalization of social services is not in itself perceived as a laicisation of the social activity of the Church; it remains within the sphere of its social charitable mission. There is perceived interference and pressure of the secular in the social mission of the Church. This pressure arises through the imposition by law of quality standards – determined in a specific way to social work based on values of secular inspiration.

These values do not contrast with the spiritual ones in the fundamental way, but the emphasis on the ideology of rights, and the primacy of the individual's autonomy as central values in secular social work can be understood to be in complementarity with those of and *practicing obedience*.

The dedication (of itself) is somewhat opposed to the required professional detachment – in the sense of the emotional non-involvement and the detachment of one's own values of the social worker and his conformation exclusively to the general humanist professional values.

Adopting the secular values necessary for the development of professional services could involve in some situations the internalization of these principles by the social worker, with consequences on the practice. One of the interviewees appreciated at one point that *"there are some cases in which I got involved, perhaps exceeding the professional limit, cases in which I resonated with the soul and not only, and which were happy ending cases"* (AS1).

This exceeding of the professional limits, leads to the complete and reckless internalization of the values of secular social work, which would set in the professional conscience of the social worker those professional limits rejected by the Christian vocation of the practice. It is precisely the adherence to the Christian values of one's neighbour's service that determines the professional to integrate, where they agree with the Christian values, the principles of modern care practice, but to overcome them where they are limited, as is the case of the principle of non-emotional involvement in cases she/he is working with.

The reference to non-discrimination on the basis of religious criteria is, on the other hand, motivated by the requirements of licensing the services - to which is added the deep charitable vocation and the Christian love – and it reinforces our belief that the social worker in question bases his

professional judgment including on the general values of the profession of social worker, to which the Christian ones are naturally and harmoniously added (AS1).

"Religious membership has no role (in the selection of beneficiaries - n.n.). A social service is not allowed to discriminate. Clearly...we don't even ask. We happened to find out about some of the challenges, tasks: chat, internet, etc., but we are not related to these things. Of course, at counselling I tell the psychologist what I know, even if her ears grow the size of the elephant's, but that's it. I think that helps her to approach those points, but we don't do more."(AS1)

The interviewed specialists show the adherence of the organizations with social work specific that function within or with the blessing of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the value of non-discrimination, a fundamentally Christian value, derived from the very call to salvation of all nations, but at the same time a central value of social work as a profession. However, the interviewees show the existence of some forms of discrimination to which such organizations are subjected during the licensing process, precisely because of their religious affiliation.

In the context of the development of professional social services within the Church, a theological reflection on the welfare values and their integration into the social practice of the Church would be welcomed, not necessarily in the sense of shaping a social doctrine of the Church, but of establishing the foundations and limits of the professionalization of services and transforming charity into offering social services, keeping the Church's prayerful mission, but also its philanthropic vocation. This dialogue between theology and social work should take place under the specific social conditions of the 21st century, taking into account the evolution of social needs and the proven welfare practices.

In this sense, the speech of one of the interviewees who underlined the need for supervision felt by the social workers working in the Romanian Orthodox Church. Supervision must be carried out by professionals with double specialization, social work and theology in order to be able to understand the values of the social worker, in the whole spiritual and moral fullness.

No one supervises us. We need supervision, we need supervisors, but supervisors who are theologians, because I will never accept to be a supervisor a person who is not a theologian, who does not understand my religious, moral, spiritual, social values (AS1)

The danger of transforming the Church into a simple provider of social and philanthropic services is shown and, by joining it with other such providers, it will diminish its public impact and it will no longer clearly perceive its vocation of faith. Serving of the poor must be done in the grace of Christ, as a confession of faith. The mere substitution of Christ with the poor is not capable of fulfilling the social mission of the Church, but on the contrary, helping the poor come from the serving of Christ, in the spirit of the Gospel, through the good deeds and helping those in need, of all categories of people in difficulty.

The necessity of the existence of professional social workers, in the settlements that offer social work within the Church is clearly understood and expressed by the interviewed persons. In addition to vocational training in social work, they should have a series of skills and competences, the most important of which are those of receptivity to human suffering, catechetical knowledge, the ability to communicate, medical knowledge, didactic-pedagogical knowledge, didactic-artistic skills: sculpture, painting.

The peculiarity of the social work offered by the Faith Based Organization is that it also includes a spiritual side, which includes the development of beneficiaries in the spirit of moral and spiritual values. This approach is in line with the previously mentioned specialty literature, in the sense that the Faith Based Organization operates in a post-secular society, in which the spiritual values are present and constitute a significant part of the public discourse, especially of the professional discourse in the field of social services.

The social work activity implies the need for social workers, of persons trained in the field. [...] The conditions according to which the social workers from the Foundation were selected are: The activity of the social worker has two branches: a material one, in which he has the obligation to support beneficiaries from a material, medical, and spiritual one, in which he develops moral, spiritual values (MON1).

Where supervision exists, it mainly concerns the hierarchical control side of the activity of social workers, from the management of the faith based organisation, as well as from the Department of Social Work existing at the level of the Diocese. As described by the interviewee, from the point of view of the relationship between the supervisor and the Organization, supervision can be internal and external (Muntean, 2007; Unguru, 2019).

The specialized literature in the field of supervision (Caras, 2013; Cojocaru, 2005) shows that, in social work, this activity is a multidimensional one, besides the quality control dimension, considered managerial-administrative dimension there are also a number of dimensions of the social worker's support, in overcoming dilemmas and professional stress, a formative educational dimension, etc. (MON 1).

V. Particularities of the social work centred on Christian values

The social workers involved in the social programs and services of the Romanian Orthodox Church declare its adherence to the general values of the profession of social worker, non-discrimination and respect for the human being, as considered prominently important.

Since we are all graduates of social work, it is non-discrimination and valorisation of the human being as a person [is important n.n]. [...] Regardless of religion and no matter what we find out he does in his life. (AS5).

The Christian values that make the social worker a good professional are mercy, compassion and orientation to the needs of the Other. The vocation of the professional – translated by the inclination to help others – should be accompanied by a spiritual education aimed at being merciful.

The good professional in social work cannot be satisfied to be a mere civil servant, who manages the file (do the case management), deciding in an emotionally detached manner the type of services suited to the beneficiary and the way of their implementation. Such a care practice, emotionally disengaged, makes the interviewee consider it inefficient, the beneficiary, in his capacity as a human being, having practically nothing, since the human relationship between the social worker and the beneficiary is itself transformative (AS 1).

From the perspective of professionalization in the context of social institutions sponsored by Romanian Orthodox Church there is a differentiation of the (self) perception according to the interviewed person and the place where he completed his studies. Thus, the respondents with studies of Theology - Social Work, identify a series of *"differences between the graduates of Theology Social Work and Social Work within (the faculties of profile)"* (AS1).

Although, the interviewee admits, in rare cases both graduates of theology - social work, the social workers who have been formed in the secular public or private system may be cold, distant, less willing to look for alternatives to solve the client's situation beyond the letter of the law and existing standard methodologies.

[...] through public social work institutions we will meet graduates from (at public faculties) or other private and very rare faculties within the Faculty of Orthodox Theology Social Work. [...]. They are very cold, very distant, "this says the law, this we do", and few of them are willing to look for other solutions (AS1).

Unlike social workers trained in a secular professional culture, based on the formalism of the social norm – or, even more strictly, on the formalism of the legal norms (Ignătescu, 2017) – those who have a solid theological formation are pro-active, motivated by the care for the person in need and the Christian values, including charity, which was the basis for choosing the professional option in the sphere of care (AS 1).

In the same sense, another social worker, a graduate of social work - theology, involved in the social services offered by the Church, appreciates that the way in which social work practices differs from what is considered to be objective, professional social work, precisely because the social worker theologian cares, and suffers with the beneficiary, showing empathy for the beneficiary. The practice of social work is not carried out exclusively according to the methodological guides, but with the soul.

I think the difference comes here, that I not only do social work in a very objective and professional way, only by canons and standards, but I doing social work with the soul, wishing and putting my soul into what I do, really wanting to improve something and the man in need to be changed. To feel that I offer with love what I offer, that I care, that I suffer with him, I empathize with him, with his pain, with his suffering, with his lack. (AS3)

Philanthropy is seen by some of the respondents as different from charity, meaning more than this, from the perspective of Christian values. Philanthropy is, in the interviewee's opinion, an act of dedication, in the form of a sacrifice, manifested by "breaking something I have. (AS3) [...] and give it to the partner in need."

One of the interviewees considers it essential to introduce, even for students in social work from lay education, a course of "spiritual, spiritual formation" (AS4). This course would "somehow determine them to evaluate their own values, to raise awareness of whether or not they are capable of working with what the practical environment offers you" (AS4). Next, the

interviewee shows that "the way you are trained and educated puts your mark on you as a professional, no matter what you profess: a priest, a social worker, a teacher, whatever and it manifests itself in the relationship with the Other." (AS4).

The inherent subjectivity in the human person is recognized by practitioners and accepted at the human level, but it is considered necessary to be diminished in the professional practice, both for professional ethical reasons and for those of Christian morality. "We have a very high tendency to be subjective." (AS1).

[...] there are some people, including priests, who cannot discriminate. (AS1). Most priests do not discriminate and treat everyone equally, being aware that they are human beings, the same creature of God (AS2).

The social services offered by the Church have a strong empathetic and emotional burden. The aid offered goes beyond simple financial support. Although most beneficiaries request financial help, the counselling offered and the emotional investment make them feel heard and valued, their dignity and human value are recognized (AS1).

It is emphasized that the social workers who work in the framework of Faith-Based Organization established within Romanian Orthodox Church are aware of the Christian spiritual values and the mission that comes to them as members of the respective organization to promote those values: love, mercy, sacrifice, patience, gentleness. The manifestation of these values is triggered by the confessional and catechetical program of the Organization. It is not very clear whether, in the absence of this program, these social workers would manifest or not the Christian values, which are their own, the interviewee's speech emphasizing the importance of the Organization in the development of spiritual values, whose lack in the case of the beneficiaries is lamented in the interviewee's speech. (MON1).

The social workers, being aware of the mission for whom they were selected, highlight values such as: love, mercy, sacrifice, patience, gentleness. Their own charitable activity is based on these values that they promote. The intention is that by behaviour follow the Christian example. The confessional and catechetical program approved by the Foundation is a trigger for these values (MON1).

The activity of the theological social worker within the Faith-Based Organization is similar to the one carried out by the lay professional. The interviewee is aware of the need for cooperation within the interdisciplinary

team with other categories of specialists, psychologist, kinetotherapist, medical assistant, doctor, etc.

As a specific additional feature that the OBC in question had was the provision of spiritual support, so-called spiritual counselling, which in fact means in the interviewee's opinion the facilitation of communication between the beneficiary and the priest in the parish to which he belongs, especially in the situation described, being in the case of home care, the patient is impossible or difficult to transport.

From our point of view it is important that the person interviewed understands the need for modern practices of assisting the terminally ill patient, carried out in an interdisciplinary team, so the social activity is professionalized precisely through this dimension of cooperation with other specialists and of supporting in accordance with the good practices in domain, but it remains within the sphere of a philanthropic activity, charitable through the spiritual side of the practice.

Thus, we can speak of a professionalization of philanthropy, but not in the sense of a laicization of the practice (Sider & Unruh, 2004, Cojocaru et al., 2011) but in the one of its optimization, based on the modern methods of intervention, of spiritual counselling in broad sense, including from the point of view of practicing the functional dialogue between the beneficiary and the community (Frunză, 2018). Modern, professional practice, based on knowledge and social research, comes in this context to enhance philanthropic action, not diminishing its spiritual-sacrificial value.

And so as a particularity of our services offered within the Foundation was the fact that we also dealt with the spiritual side, we called it, more demanding, "Spiritual counselling", in fact it was a close collaboration with the priests in the parishes and offering somehow. (AS3).

The social work offered by the Church is organized in the form of social networks, which are constituted starting from the existing territorial organization, being involved the social services or the social work offices existing at the level of the dioceses, at the eparchial level. The most important human resource that the Church has in relation to the parish priest in his capacity as beneficiary of the social-philanthropic activity is considered to be the parish priest. He must collaborate with the social worker, not replace him, but he must be informed about the specifics of social work and the social or philanthropic activities carried out.

Coordination means everything related to the relationship with the social worker from the archdiocese, everything related to social cases. (AS1).

The social work and social-philanthropic activity in some cases imply that the Faith-based Organization acts in partnership with other Organizations (AS1, AS2, AS3), but also with public institutions in the field of social services.

Then we have close collaboration with the Social Work Directorate and the General Directorate of Social Work and Child Protection, with the General Directorate of Social Work and Child Protection less, because they are not specialists, they are not specialized in adults, but in the communication side, they are very well specialized, with the NGOs in the community as well, we work very well, especially related to cases management [...]. With Diaconia the collaboration is also close, but we already say that we are a common body; I never thought about it, I thought about the structures outside. The metropolis supports us financially every year (AS3).

VI. Priest - social worker collaboration in social-philanthropic services offered within the Romanian Orthodox Church

The interviewees draw attention to the potential of developing the social services offered by the Church. The institutional capacity of the Church to provide social-philanthropic services is based on its administrative structure, which allows the social worker to reach any person in need through the priests, who generally know the members of the social community who are part of the parish.

"The administrative structure of the Romanian Orthodox Church, not even the Romanian state has it. The social worker employed in a church institution can very quickly reach the poor on the top of the mountain, and this with the help of the priest."(AS1)

The social and trust capital that the Church enjoys can be the basis of highly useful and efficient professionalized social services. The importance of the priest's involvement in the social activity in the parish is emphasized, not by substituting the social worker, but by collaborating with him in mobilizing community resources, in favour of those in need. The priest would be a binder of the community, an agent of change at the local level, acting as a facilitator of mobilizing self-help resources and social solidarity at the local community level.

The respondent shows that with the involvement of the priest, the community mobilizes to solve the social problems that have arisen within it. The priest maintains in the rural community at least one power of

empowerment for the members of the community, presenting a moral guarantee, but also a huge influence on the community.

"If the priest were to be involved, he would be the binder or the one who sets the tone and would know how to mobilize people, [...] I tell you that I would not need to give 1000 call to the Center, [...] They would have resources in the community to raise their house."(AS1)

In order to be able to carry out the serving of the poor in the parish, social work is required, which should result from the collaboration of priests with social workers (PR1), the same need to inform the priests about the specifics of the care activities being carried out and the possible dimensions of the collaboration between the priest and the social worker being mirrored also in the answers of the interviewed social workers.

The need to strengthen the status of the social worker in the Romanian society in general, and in the Church in particular, is also considered. The priest's call is the serving in the church, but his pastoral role extends to caring for members of the spiritual community. The understanding by him of the specific of the welfare activity does not replace the social worker, but it provides him with a mechanism for the efficient social-charitable activity, through the social workers who work within the parishes and dioceses.

"The courses we did through the Patriarchate were not meant for the priest to be the one who works, but to make him understand that it is not his job, it is the job of the social worker, that he must look for it, he must tell him, to report his cases, but he, as a priest, must have an idea of what social work is."(AS1)

The collaboration between the Faith-based Organization and the priests in the parishes is essential, not only in terms of providing spiritual services to the beneficiaries, but also in facilitating the access of the Faith-based Organization to the resources available in the community (AS 3).

As regards the collaboration between the Faith-Based Organization (FBO) and the priests in the parishes, it is mainly focused on providing spiritual services to the beneficiaries, such as the officiating of religious services, confession, the holy communion offered to the sick person (the elder) in the centre and or at home. Another side of the collaboration between the FBO and the parish priests is to facilitate the access of social workers or FBO members involved in philanthropic activities to people in difficulty and their identification and referral of cases from parishes to the FBO (AS 3).

VII. Significance of professional success in the level of philanthropic and social work services offered by Romanian Orthodox Church within the Archdiocese of Iasi

Spiritual communion between believers is the ultimate goal of the Church's social-philanthropic activity. The recovery of the community of faith is considered to be the greatest social work of the Church, which is actually accomplished through the priest and the believers alike. Spiritual familiarity and spiritual work together are a gathering of believers as part of a community.

"The most important (achievement in the social-philanthropic mission n.n.) was to find that family dimension of the parish community [...]" (PR1)

For those involved in the social-philanthropic and social work activity of the Church, success is defined in terms of personal involvement and the achievement of a soul communion with the persons to whom the aid is granted.

The interviewees show the need to move beyond the client-centred intervention model, in the sense of building a spiritual relationship with the person in need. Its beneficiary status must be preceded by spiritual and spiritual fraternity.

[...] "there are a few cases where I got involved, perhaps exceeding my professional limit, cases where I resonated with my soul and not only and there were happy cases." (AS1)

The personal involvement in the case management, completed despite the lack of resources, even if own contributions were needed to complete the support process, is considered to be "professional satisfaction". The "professional activity" represents for the persons involved in the social work offered by the Church an action of "serving of the neighbour", an affirmation of humanity and the fulfilment of the personal mission towards those currently in need (AS 1).

The definition of a "successful case" is expressed in terms of a "happy case". The happiness and subjective well-being of the person in need, the positive emotions expressed by it, are the source of professional satisfaction for those involved in the charitable activity of the Church.

"I still have a happy case, [...] that I have supported from the third class. Now, when I see him painting and what icons come out of his hand and I see his smile, he overwhelms me ... " (AS1)

Measuring the efficiency of social work services should first of all refer to the beneficiary's joy and the human solidarity felt by him. The services offered should be efficient in the sense of their purpose, manifested in the form of a favourable and long-term solution to the social problem. Labour market placement or school and vocational training are such measures that allow the beneficiary to emerge completely from the state of vulnerability in which he is.

"It gives me hope that it will have a future effect on the beneficiary's life... Supporting a child to become a seminarian student and being able to attend the theological school courses, even if the family from which he comes ... support at home or make available the necessary manuals. "(PR2)

VIII. Model of functioning of social-charitable services and of professionalization of charity within Romanian Orthodox Church

The professionalization of charity, by offering it within the Romanian Orthodox Church of professionalized social services, recognized as such by the Romanian state, through accreditation and licensing, is based on the understanding by the Church of the complexity of the social vulnerabilities in which the parishioners are, vulnerabilities generated by the particularities of the present society, in which the traditional social solidarity is in a process of dissolution.

The social services offered by the Church are a response to these vulnerabilities, which have come to express the communitarian vocation of the Church of Christ, in the form of caring for one's neighbour as a form of confession of the Christian faith.

The professionalization of the social services brings more efficiency in the service of the neighbour, but the foundation of the practice remains anchored in Christian values, such as the love of the neighbour, of the mercy as a basis for social action. The secularizing pressure that appears in the process of adapting the welfare practices offered within the social services performed by the Church is countered by the faith and passion of the ministry, which motivates most of those involved in the social-philanthropic activity of the Church.

The church does not intend to turn its philanthropic activity into a fully professionalized one, on the one hand due to the operating costs of professionalized social services, which not all parishes or dioceses allow, but most importantly, because *social services are not necessary* in all existing social situations.

Moreover, mobilizing community resources at the request of priests is often sufficient to solving the situations that have arisen. The mobilization of community resources under the sign of Christian mercy is in some cases more efficient than the specialized social services, from the perspective of the social integration of the beneficiary.

Caring in the community – for the elderly, for children from families with problems, for people without incomes – reduces the risks of marginalization of beneficiaries, but at the same time reinvigorates the social solidarity existing at the community level.

In this sense, by appealing to Christian solidarity – an expression of the unity of the community of believers gathered in the Church – it can be an important welfare resource, if it will be integrated into a social work system including through partnerships with public social welfare institutions, in this sense, however, the state should provide support to the Church in the exercise of its social-philanthropic mission, but also in providing primary or even specialized social services by the social work bureaus in addition to the parishes.

The professionalization of philanthropic activities, through the partial shift towards providing primary or specialized social services, does not minimize the charitable vocation, but on the contrary, the values of love and mercy are expressed in a plenary and appropriate manner to the social needs of the community of believers.

The professionalization of charity is done by assuming the specific values of social work by the professionals from Romanian Orthodox Church but expressing them in a higher moral level in which the dominant values are the *love of neighbour* and *Christian mercy*. This route of professionalization of the social services offered by the Church can be achieved through the communication between the priest and the social worker within the parish or other structures of the Church.

The dialogue between the social work offices set up at Romanian Orthodox Church level and of the state proves to be particularly important and constructive, as long as the state does not exclude representatives of the Church from the on-going dialogue, occasioned by the need to provide the best social services in the interests of the beneficiaries.

The professionalization of social work services within the Church must be built around an extremely well-defined value nucleus that will synthesise the Christian values. This core is cover up in the knowledge, techniques and skills specific to the social worker and, the following step is the factual practicing of those, until professionalization.

The social-philanthropic activity of the Church is correlated with the liturgical one, forming a continuum of the serving of the Divine and the Human. The social-philanthropic activity of the Church can be understood starting from the specificity of faith-based organizations, according to the model formulated by Sider and Unruh (2004), but there are a number of particularities related to the specificity of Orthodoxy.

We are talking about an atypical situation in the case of the Orthodox Church as a faith-based organization, which calls on the beneficiaries to participate in the religious services, but does not condition the provision of social and philanthropic services for the participation in these services. In the case of the particular model of Sider and Unruh, the participation in these religious rituals and practices represented, in the case of the organization penetrated by faith, a condition of the success of the social intervention, the catechetical activity being strictly correlated with the social one.

The professionalization of the social-philanthropic services of the Church, where this process takes place, is achieved by adding a spiritual dimension to the secular values of the care profession, being an appropriate model for the post-secular society. The social-philanthropic activity and the social work activity are seen as a continuum of the social practice in the Church, the distinction being made by the degree of involvement of the participants.

Some of the participants in the qualitative research place social work in a position inferior to philanthropy, due to the lower emotional involvement given by the professionalization of the care services. There is no perceived risk of laicizing the social activity of the Church that may arise as a result of the professionalization of social services, although there is a reservation towards professionalization and especially with the bureaucratic hyper-professionalization of the social work activity carried out within the Church.

The beneficiaries perceive the added value that Christian social work has to the secular one, and which is given precisely by the spiritual values that motivate the professionals, making them closer to the beneficiaries, more empathetic to them and more loving towards the beneficiaries.

This opinion of the beneficiaries includes the interpretation we can give, making this link between the opinions, the opinions of the people who work within the welfare services offered by the Romanian Orthodox Church, who express their distrust in the post-secular society as a model of society that combines the values of humanistic professionalism with the Christian deeply spiritual values, identifying with the latter as ways to

increase qualitatively the pronounced utilitarian way in which lay social work seems to be offered to beneficiaries.

All these support, finally, the conclusion that there is a positive relationship between the satisfaction of the beneficiaries and the human and spiritual quality of the people involved in the social-philanthropic activities of the Church.

This is why I opined that obtaining positive results (even if the beneficiaries are invited to participate in worship activities) is not necessarily conditioned by this participation, but rather by the trust that the beneficiaries have in the services providers, in their capacity as representatives of the Church, more precisely in their capacity as representatives of an alternative social system to the state one, but which brings to the fore, within its activity, a series of values with which the beneficiaries, in turn they are identified and considered insufficiently manifested in the state welfare services, so as to satisfy the spiritual and deeply human side of those in need, beyond their objective, concrete needs.

From this results, we appreciate, the distrust we have noticed that a part of the beneficiaries in the secular social services, although as beneficiaries, a significant percentage do not make a clear distinction between philanthropy and the professional social services offered by the Romanian Orthodox Church, considering equally as philanthropic services, both the occasional support and the specialized social services they benefit from.

Conclusions

Philanthropy in the Orthodox Church is a constant activity of it, since the Middle Ages, being a necessary consequence of the Christian teaching of the love of one's neighbour. The practice of helping the persons in need is considered a necessity in the life of any Christian community and a duty of every Christian. Studies regarding the philanthropic and social work activity carried out by Romanian Orthodox Church after 1989, it shows a good collaboration between the state and the Church, for the benefit of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Statistical data, both at the national level and at the level of the Diocese of Iasi, show a continuous increase in both the volume of philanthropic activity and the social work offered by the Church, and the budgets that the Church makes available, most often from own funds.

The term "*professionalization of charity*", in the sense in which it is used in this work, concerns the existence of professionalized social services,

offered within the Church or of organizations affiliated spiritually with it, which are based on the vision of a social Christianity, and at the same time are offered respecting the quality standards required for professional social services.

Of course, not all social services offered by the Church or its affiliated organizations are truly professionalized, but it could be said that these services are still in a stage of professionalization and identifying the specificity of the practice. Precisely identifying the specificity of these practices is also the central objective of the present research.

The professionalization of charity does not represent giving up charity, but raising it where possible, at the level of professionalism required for the accreditation and licensing of social services. The philanthropic/charitable spirit does not completely disappear within these initiatives of professionalizing the social-missionary activity, but on the contrary, it infuses the care practice, which adds a series of additional axiological dimensions, such as self-giving, involvement, refusal of axiological neutrality, loving the Other as himself, etc.

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