

Catholic Rites and Churches



Christ, having been lifted up from the earth has drawn all men to Himself. Rising from the dead He sent His life-giving Spirit upon His disciples and through Him has established His Body which is the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. Sitting at the right hand of the Father, He is continually active in the world that He might lead men to the Church and through it join them to Himself and that He might make them partakers of His glorious life by nourishing them with His own Body and Blood. [Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* 48]

Rites

A Rite represents an ecclesiastical, or church, tradition about how the sacraments are to be celebrated. Each of the sacraments has at its core an essential nature which must be satisfied for the sacrament to be conferred or realized. This essence - of matter, form and intention - derives from the divinely revealed nature of the particular sacrament. It cannot be changed by the Church. Scripture and Sacred Tradition, as interpreted by the Magisterium, tells us what is essential in each of the sacraments (2 Thes. 2:15).

When the apostles brought the Gospel to the major cultural centers of their day the essential elements of religious practice were inculturated into those cultures. This means that the essential elements were clothed in the symbols and trappings of the particular people, so that the rituals conveyed the desired spiritual meaning to that culture. In this way the Church becomes *all things to all men that some might be saved* (1 Cor. 9:22).

There are three major groupings of Rites based on this initial transmission of the faith, the **Roman**, the **Antiochian** (Syria) and the **Alexandrian** (Egypt). Later on the **Byzantine** derived as a major Rite from the Antiochian, under the influence of St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom. From these four derive the over 20 liturgical Rites present in the Church today.

Churches

A Church is an *assembly* of the faithful, hierarchically ordered, both in the entire world - the *Catholic Church*, or in a certain territory - a *particular Church*. To be a sacrament (a sign) of the Mystical Body of Christ in the world, a Church must have both a head and members (Col. 1:18). The sacramental sign of Christ the Head is the sacred hierarchy - the bishops, priests and deacons (Eph. 2:19-22). More specifically, it is the local bishop, with his priests and deacons gathered around and assisting him in his office of teaching, sanctifying and governing (Mt. 28:19-20; Titus 1:4-9). The sacramental sign of the Mystical Body is the Christian faithful. Thus the Church of Christ is fully present sacramentally (by way of a sign) wherever there is a sign of Christ the Head, a bishop and those who assist him, and a sign of Christ's Body, Christian faithful. Each diocese is therefore a *particular Church*.

The Church of Christ is also present sacramentally in *ritual Churches* that represent an ecclesiastical tradition of celebrating the sacraments. They are generally organized under a Patriarch, who together with the bishops and other clergy of that ritual Church represent Christ the Head to the people of that tradition. In some cases a Rite is completely coincident with a Church. For example, the Maronite Church with its Patriarch has a Rite not found in any other Church. In other cases, such as the

Byzantine Rite, several Churches use the same or a very similar liturgical Rite. For example, the Ukrainian Catholic Church uses the Byzantine Rite, but this Rite is also found in other Catholic Churches, as well as the Eastern Orthodox Churches not in union with Rome.

Finally, the Church of Christ is sacramentally present in the *Universal or Catholic Church* spread over the entire world. It is identified by the sign of Christ our Rock, the Bishop of Rome, Successor of St. Peter (Mt. 16:18). To be *Catholic* particular Churches and ritual Churches must be in communion with this Head, just as the other apostles, and the Churches they founded, were in communion with Peter (Gal. 1:18). Through this communion with Peter and his successors the Church becomes a *universal* sacrament of salvation in all times and places, *even to the end of the age* (Mt. 28:20).

Western Rites and Churches

Immediately subject to the Bishop of Rome, the Supreme Pontiff.

Roman (also called Latin)

The Church of Rome is the Primatial See of the world and one of the five Patriarchal Sees of the early Church (Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem). Founded by St. Peter in 42 AD it was consecrated by the blood of Sts. Peter and Paul during the persecution of Nero (63-67 AD). It has maintained a continual existence since then and is the source of a family of Rites in the West. Considerable scholarship (such as that of Fr. Louis Boyer in *Eucharist*) suggests the close affinity of the Roman Rite proper with the Jewish prayers of the synagogue, which also accompanied the Temple sacrifices. While the origin of the current Rite, even in the reform of Vatican II, can be traced directly only to the 4th century, these connections point to an ancient apostolic tradition brought to that city that was decidedly Jewish in origin.

After the Council of Trent it was necessary to consolidate liturgical doctrine and practice in the face of the Reformation. Thus, Pope St. Pius V imposed the Rite of Rome on the Latin Church (that subject to him in his capacity as Patriarch of the West), allowing only smaller Western Rites with hundreds of years of history to remain. Younger Rites of particular dioceses or regions ceased to exist.

- **Roman** - The overwhelming majority of Latin Catholics and of Catholics in general. Head of this and the other Roman Rites is the Bishop of Rome. The current Roman Rite is that of the 1969 *Missale Romanum*, published in a third edition in 2002. The vernacular editions of the Missal used for Holy Mass are translated from this Latin "editio typica tertia" or "third typical edition."

- **Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Mass)** - Some institutes within the Roman Rite, such as the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, have the faculty to celebrate the sacramental rites according to the forms in use prior to the Second Vatican Council. This faculty can also be obtained by individual priests from their bishop or from the Pontifical Council *Ecclesia Dei*. The Church is currently awaiting the promulgation of a *Motu Proprio* ("by his own hand" - an instruction on the initiative of the Pope himself) which is expected to extend this permission to priests generally.
- **Anglican Use** - Since the 1980s the Holy See has granted some former Anglican and Episcopal clergy converting with their parishes the faculty of celebrating the sacramental rites according to Anglican forms, doctrinally corrected.
- **Mozarabic** - The Rite of the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal) known from at least the 6th century, but probably with roots to the original evangelization. Beginning in the 11th century it was generally replaced by the Roman Rite, although it has remained the Rite of the Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Toledo, Spain, and six parishes which sought permission to adhere to it. Its celebration today is generally semi-private.
- **Ambrosian** - The Rite of the Archdiocese of Milan, Italy, thought to be of early origin and probably consolidated, but not originated, by St. Ambrose. Pope Paul VI was from this Roman Rite. It continues to be celebrated in Milan, though not by all parishes.
- **Bragan** - Rite of the Archdiocese of Braga, the Primatial See of Portugal, it derives from the 12th century or earlier. It continues to be of occasional use.
- **Dominican** - Rite of the Order of Friars Preacher (OP), founded by St. Dominic in 1215.
- **Carmelite** - Rite of the Order of Carmel, whose modern foundation was by St. Berthold c.1154.
- **Carthusian** - Rite of the Carthusian Order founded by St. Bruno in 1084.

Eastern Rites and Churches

They have their own hierarchy distinct from the Latin Rite, system of governance (synods) and general law, the *Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches*. The Supreme Pontiff exercises his primacy over them through the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

Antiochian

The Church of Antioch in Syria (the ancient Roman Province of Syria) is considered an apostolic See by virtue of having been founded by St. Peter. It was one of the ancient centers of the Church, as the New Testament attests, and is the source of a family of similar Rites using the ancient Syriac language (the Semitic dialect used in Jesus' time and better known as Aramaic). Its Liturgy is attributed to St. James and the Church of Jerusalem.

1. West Syriac

- **Maronite** - Never separated from Rome. Maronite Patriarch of Antioch. The liturgical language is Aramaic. The 3 million Maronites are found in Lebanon (origin), Cyprus, Egypt, Syria, Israel, Canada, US, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Australia.
- **Syriac** - Syriac Catholics who returned to Rome in 1781 from the monophysite heresy. Syriac Patriarch of Antioch. The 110,000 Syriac Catholics are found in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Canada and the US.
- **Malankarese** - Catholics from the South of India evangelized by St. Thomas, uses the West Syriac liturgy. Reunited with Rome in 1930. Liturgical languages today are West Syriac and Malayalam. The 350,000 Malankarese Catholics are found in India and North America.

2. East Syriac

- **Chaldean** - Babylonian Catholics returned to Rome in 1692 from the Nestorian heresy. Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans. Liturgical languages are Syriac and Arabic. The 310,000 Chaldean Catholics are found in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and the US.
- **Syro-Malabarese** - Catholics from Southern India using the East Syriac liturgy. Returned to Rome in the 16th century from the Nestorian heresy. Liturgical languages are Syriac and Malayalam. Over 3 million Syro-Malabarese Catholics can be found in the state of Kerala, in SW India.

Byzantine

The Church of Constantinople became the political and religious center of the eastern Roman Empire after the Emperor Constantine built a new capital there (324-330) on the site of the ancient town of Byzantium. Constantinople developed its own liturgical rite from the Liturgy of St. James, in one form as modified by St. Basil, and in a more commonly used form, as modified by St. John Chrysostom. After 1054, except for brief periods of reunion, most Byzantine Christians have not been in communion with Rome. They make up the Orthodox Churches of the East, whose

titular head is the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Orthodox Churches are mostly auto-cephalous, meaning self-headed, united to each other by communion with Constantinople, which exercises no real authority over them. They are typically divided into Churches along nation lines. Those that have returned to communion with the Holy See are represented among the Eastern Churches and Rites of the Catholic Church.

1. Armenian

Considered either its own Rite or an older version of the Byzantine. Its exact form is not used by any other Byzantine Rite. It is composed of Catholics from the first people to convert as a nation, the Armenians (N.E. of Turkey), and who returned to Rome at the time of the Crusades. Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians. The liturgical language is classical Armenian. The 350,000 Armenian Catholics are found in Armenia, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Ukraine, France, Romania, United States and Argentina. Most Armenians are Orthodox, not in union with Rome.

2. Byzantine

- **Albanian** - Albanian Christians, numbering only 1400 today, who resumed communion with Rome in 1628. Liturgical language is Albanian. Most Albanian Christians are Albanian Orthodox.
- **Belarussian/Byelorussian** - Unknown number of Belarussians who returned to Rome in the 17th century. The liturgical language is Old Slavonic. The faithful can be found in Belarus, as well as Europe, the Americas and Australia.
- **Bulgarian** - Bulgarians who returned to Rome in 1861. Liturgical language is Old Slavonic. The 20,000 faithful can be found in Bulgaria. Most Bulgarian Christians are Bulgarian Orthodox.
- **Czech** - Czech Catholics of Byzantine Rite organized into a jurisdiction in 1996.
- **Krizevci** - Croatian Catholics of Byzantine Rite who resumed communion with Rome in 1611. The liturgical language is Old Slavonic. The 50,000 faithful can be found in Croatia and the Americas. Most Croatians are Roman (Rite) Catholics.
- **Greek** - Greek Christians who returned to Rome in 1829. The liturgical language is Greek. Only 2500 faithful in Greece, Asia Minor (Turkey) and Europe. Greek Christians are almost all Orthodox, whose Patriarch is the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople.

- **Hungarian** - Descendants of Ruthenians who returned to Rome in 1646. The liturgical languages are Greek, Hungarian and English. The 300,000 faithful are found in Hungary, Europe and the Americas.
- **Italo-Albanian** - Never separated from Rome, these 60,000 Byzantine Rite Catholics are found in Italy, Sicily and the Americas. The liturgical languages are Greek and Italo-Albanian.
- **Melkite** - Catholics from among those separated from Rome in Syria and Egypt who resumed Communion with Rome at the time of the Crusades. However, definitive union only came in the 18th century. Melkite Greek Patriarch of Damascus. Liturgical languages are Greek, Arabic, English, Portuguese and Spanish. The over 1 million Melkite Catholics can be found in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Canada, US, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina and Australia.
- **Romanian** - Romanians who returned to Rome in 1697. The liturgical language is Romanian. There are over 1 million Romanian Catholics in Romania, Europe and the Americas. Most Romanian Christians are Romanian Orthodox.
- **Russian** - Russians who returned to communion with Rome in 1905. The liturgical language is Old Slavonic. An unknown number of the faithful in Russia, China, the Americas and Australia. Most Russian Christians are Russian Orthodox, whose Patriarch is the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow.
- **Ruthenian** - Catholics from among those separated from Rome in Russia, Hungary and Croatia who reunited with Rome in 1596 (Brest-Litovsk) and 1646 (Uzhorod).
- **Slovak** - Byzantine Rite Catholics of Slovakian origin numbering 225,000 and found in Slovakia and Canada.
- **Ukrainian** - Catholics from among those separated from Rome by the Greek Schism and reunited about 1595. Patriarch or Metropolitan of Lviv. Liturgical languages are Old Slavonic and the vernacular. The 5.5 million Ukrainian Catholics can be found in Ukraine, Poland, England, Germany, France, Canada, US, Brazil, Argentina and Australia. During the Soviet era Ukrainian Catholics were violently forced to join the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Their hierarchy, which continued to exist outside the homeland, has since been re-established in Ukraine.

Alexandrian

The Church of Alexandria in Egypt was one of the original centers of Christianity, since like Rome and Antioch it had a large Jewish population which was the initial object of apostolic evangelization. Its Liturgy is attributed to St. Mark the Evangelist,

and shows the later influence of the Byzantine Liturgy, in addition to its unique elements.

- **Coptic** - Egyptian Catholics who returned to communion with Rome in 1741. The Patriarch of Alexandria leads the 200,000 faithful of this ritual Church spread throughout Egypt and the Near East. The liturgical languages are Coptic (Egyptian) and Arabic. Most Copts are not Catholics.

- **Ethiopian/Abyssinian** - Ethiopian Coptic Christians who returned to Rome in 1846. The liturgical language is Geez. The 200,000 faithful are found in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Jerusalem.

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