

Individual Churches of The Catholic Communion

Patriarchal, Major Archiepiscopal, Metropolitan and other Sui Iuris Churches (cc 55 – 176)

An Eastern Church is hierarchically gathered under the leadership of a legitimately elected common head, Patriarch (or Major Archbishop, or Metropolitan) who is the Father and Head of that Church. He is in communion with the Roman Pontiff and through him with other sui iuris Churches. The Patriarch or the Major Archbishop with his Synod, is the highest forum for all the administrative, legislative and judicial affairs of the respective sui iuris Churches.

Today in the Catholic Communion there are twenty – three sui iuris Churches and all of them except the Roman Church follow Eastern traditions. The Churches of the East belong to five different traditions viz. Alexandrian, Antiochean, Armenian, East Syrian and Byzantine or Constantinopolitan. Among them six are Patriarchal, four are Major Archiepiscopal, two are Metropolitan Churches and the remaining ten belong to the canonical category of other sui iuris Churches. The sui iuris Churches within the Catholic Communion are listed below with their ecclesial tradition, status, liturgy.

<i>Tradition</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Liturgy</i>
A. Roman	Roman	Patriarchal	Roman
B. Alexandrian	1)Coptic	Patriarchal	Coptic
	2)Ethiopian	Metropolitan	Ethiopian
C. Antiochean	1)Syrian	Patriarchal	Antiochean
	2)Maronite	Patriarchal	Maronite
	3)Malankara	Major Archiepiscopal	Antiochene
D. Armenian	Armenian	Patriarchal	Armenian

E. East-Syrian	1)Chaldean	Patriarchal	East-Syrian
	2) Syro-Malabar	Major Archiepiscopal	East-Syrian
F. Byzantine	1)Greek – Melkite	Patriarchal	Byzantine
	2)Ukranian	MajorArchiepiscopal	Byzantine
	3)Romanian	MajorArchiepiscopal	Byzantine
	4)Ruthenian	Metropolitan	Byzantine
	5) Albenian	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	6)Byelorussian[Lithuenian]	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	7)Russian	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	8) Croatian-[Yugoslavian]	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	9)Bulgarian	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	10)Greek	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	11)Italo – Albanian,	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	12)Slovak	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	13)Hungarian	Other sui iuris	Byzantine
	14)Macedonian	Other sui iuris	Byzantine

Patriarchal Churches

A Patriarchal Church is a Church presided over by a Patriarch. Except those matters reserved by law to the Roman Pontiff, Patriarchal Churches are fully self governing in the Patriarchal territory. Of the seven Catholic Patriarchal Churches, one is the Latin Patriarchate of Rome presided over by the Pope himself and the remaining six Patriarchates are Eastern Catholic Patriarchates.

Major Archiepiscopal Churches

The major Archiepiscopal Churches are governed by the laws governing the Patriarchal Churches and canons 151 – 154 of CCEO. The major difference is that the election of the major Archbishop by the

synod of Bishops, which is done as per the canons governing the election of Patriarchs (cc. 63 – 74), needs the confirmation by the Pope. In matters of self governance the Major Archiepiscopal Churches enjoy the same rights as the Patriarchal Churches.

Metropolitan Churches

A Metropolitan *sui iuris* Church is presided over by a Metropolitan of a determined See. The Metropolitan is appointed by the Roman Pontiff and is assisted by a council of hierarchs according to the norms of the law. It is solely the right of the supreme authority of the Church to erect, modify, suppress and define territorial boundaries of Metropolitan *sui iuris* Churches (c.f.c. 155).

In Metropolitan Churches the Pope Exercises the Patriarchal authority and these Churches do not possess a synod of their own but a council of Hierarchs. The Metropolitan Churches are governed by cc. 155 – 173 of CCEO.

Other *sui iuris* Churches

The Eastern ***sui iuris*** Churches fall under the canonical category of other ***sui iuris*** Churches. All of them follow the Byzantine liturgical Tradition. The other ***sui iuris*** Churches means those Churches which are not Patriarchal, Major Archiepiscopal or Metropolitan, but those Churches entrusted to hierarch who presides over it according to the common law and particular law established by the Roman Pontiff. The pope himself exercise both the Metropolitan and Patriarchal authority in these Churches. The hierarch exercise the rights and obligations of a Metropolitan of the Metropolitan Churches mentioned in C. 159, nn.3-8 as a delegate of the Apostolic See.

Excerpts From The

**DECREE ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCHES
OF THE EASTERN RITE
ORIENTALIUM ECCLESJARUM
SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS
POPE PAUL VI
ON NOVEMBER 21, 1964**

PREAMBLE

1. The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and the established standards of the Christian life of the

Eastern Churches, for in them, distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers (1) and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church. This Sacred Ecumenical Council, therefore, in its care for the Eastern Churches which bear living witness to this tradition, in order that they may flourish and with new apostolic vigor execute the task entrusted to them, has determined to lay down a number of principles, in addition to those which refer to the universal Church; all else is remitted to the care of the Eastern synods and of the Holy See.

THE INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES OR RITES

2. The Holy Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government and who, combining together into various groups which are held together by a hierarchy, form separate Churches or Rites. Between these there exists an admirable bond of union, such that the variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place.(2)

3. These individual Churches, whether of the East or the West, although they differ somewhat among themselves in rite (to use the current phrase), that is, in liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and spiritual heritage, are, nevertheless, each as much as the others, entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman Pontiff, the divinely appointed successor of St. Peter in primacy over the universal Church. They are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others as

regards rite and they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, also in respect of preaching the Gospel to the whole world (cf. Mark 16, 15) under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff.

4. Means should be taken therefore in every part of the world for the protection and advancement of all the individual Churches and, to this end, there should be established parishes and a special hierarchy where the spiritual good of the faithful demands it. The hierarchs of the different individual Churches with jurisdiction in one and the same territory should, by taking common counsel in regular meetings, strive to promote unity of action and with common endeavor to sustain common tasks, so as better to further the good of religion and to safeguard more effectively the ordered way of life of the clergy.(3)

All clerics and those aspiring to sacred Orders should be instructed in the rites and especially in the practical norms that must be applied in interritual questions. The laity, too, should be taught as part of its catechetical education about rites and their rules.

Finally, each and every Catholic, as also the baptized of every non-Catholic church or denomination who enters into the fullness of the Catholic communion, must retain his own rite wherever he is, must cherish it and observe it to the best of his ability (4), without prejudice to the right in special cases of persons, communities or areas, to have recourse to the Apostolic See, which, as the supreme judge of interchurch relations, will, acting itself or through other authorities, meet the needs of the occasion in an ecumenical spirit, by the issuance of opportune directives, decrees or rescripts.

PRESERVATION OF THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES

5. History, tradition and abundant ecclesiastical institutions bear outstanding witness to the great merit owing to the Eastern Churches by the universal Church.(5) The Sacred Council, therefore, not only accords to this ecclesiastical and spiritual heritage the high regard which is its due and rightful praise, but also unhesitatingly looks on it as the heritage of the universal Church. For this reason it solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, have a full right and are in duty bound to rule themselves, each in accordance with its own established disciplines, since all these are praiseworthy by reason of their venerable antiquity, more harmonious with the character of their faithful and more suited to the promotion of the good of souls.

6. All members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement. All these, then, must be observed by the members of the Eastern rites themselves. Besides, they should attain to an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them, and, if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions.

Those who, by reason of their office or apostolic ministries, are in frequent communication with the Eastern Churches or their faithful should be instructed according as their office demands in the knowledge and veneration of the rites, discipline, doctrine, history and character of the members of the Eastern rites.(6) To enhance the efficacy of their apostolate, Religious and associations of the Latin Rite working in Eastern countries or among Eastern faithful are earnestly counseled to found houses or even provinces of the Eastern rite, as far as this can be done.(7)

NOTES

(1) Leo XIII, Litt. Ap. Orientalium dignitas, 30 nov. 1894, in Leonis XIII Acta, vol. XIV, pp. 201-202.

(2) S. Leo IX, Litt. In terra pax, an. 1053: Ut enim; Innocentius III, Synodus Lateranensis IV, an. 1215, cap. IV: . Licet Graccos; Litt. Inter quatuor, 2 aug. 1206: Postulasti postmodum; Innocentius IV, Ep. Cum de cetero, 27 aug. 1247; Ep. Sub catholicae, 6 mart. 1254, proem.; Nicolaus III, Instructio Istud est memoriale, 9 oct. 1278; Leo X, Litt. Ap. Accepimus nuper, 18 maii 1521; Paulus III, Litt. Ap. Dudum, 23 dec. 1534; Pius IV, Const. Romanus Pontifex, 16 febr. 1564, 5; Clemens VIII, Const. Magnus Dominus, 23 dec. 1595, 10; Paulus V, Const. Solet circumspeta, 10 dec. 1615, 3; Benedictus XIV, Ep. Enc. Demandatam, 24 dec. 1743, 3; Ep. Enc. Allatae sunt, 26 iun. 1755, 3, 6-19, 32; Pius VI, Litt. Enc. Catholicae communionis, 24 maii 1787; Pius IX, Litt. In suprema, 6 ian. 1848, 3; Litt. Ap. Ecclesiam Christ., 26 nov. 1853; Const. Romani Pontificis, 6 ian. 1862; Leo XIII, Litt. Ap. Praeclara, 20 iun. 1894, n. 7; Litt. Ap. Orientalium dignitas, 30 nov. 1894, proem.; etc.

(3) Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun. 1957, can. 4.

(4) Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun. 1957, can. 8: sine licentia Sedis Apostolicae, sequendo praxim saeculorum praecedentium; item quoad baptizatos acatholicos in can. 11 habetur: ritum quem maluerint amplecti possunt; in textu proposito disponitur modo positivo observantia ritus pro omnibus et ubique terrarum.

(5) Cfr. Leo XIII, Litt. Ap. Orientalium dignitas, 30 nov. 1894; Ep. Ap. Praeclara gratulationis, 20 iun. 1894, et documenta in nota 2 allata.

(6) Cfr. Benedictus XV, Motu proprio Orientis catholici, 15 oct. 1917, Pius XI, Litt. Enc. Rerum orientalium, 8 sept. 1928, etc.

(7) Praxis Ecclesiae catholicae temporibus Pii XI, Pii XII, Ioannis XXIII motum hunc abunde demonstrat.

