

OUR EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES (as of August 2006)

The Catholic Church is composed of the Roman Catholic Church, and the numerous Eastern Catholic Churches, which are all in unity and communion to the See of Peter (ie Rome). Some Christian churches today call themselves “Catholic,” but without unity/communion with the See of Peter (Rome), they cannot be “Catholic”, for it was unheard of in the Early Church for anyone to refuse to be in unity/communion to the Pope of Rome, successor to St. Peter. Generally speaking, the date of separation of Eastern Churches from Rome is 1054 A.D., the year of the schism between Rome and Constantinople. The great Council of Florence (AD 1439-1445) reestablished unity of *all* Eastern Churches with Rome, but the unions did not last. It did, however, cause portions of each of the separated Eastern Churches to eventually decide to reenter unity with the Pope, successor of St. Peter. After reunion, however, many suffered terrible persecutions from Orthodox Churches or from ruling Muslim governments. Under the communists, Eastern Catholic Churches in east Europe were suppressed, and forced into Orthodox Churches, with many lives martyred. Below are the various Eastern Catholic Churches in unity to the Pope. Each has parishes in the USA, but if the parishes don’t have a bishop in the USA, then they fall under the jurisdiction of the nearest Roman Catholic bishop. Only eparchies (dioceses) for the USA and Canada are listed below, as these two countries are basically the extent of the English-speaking world in the Americas.

1. The Assyrian/Chaldean Tradition.

A. The Chaldean Catholic Church was reunited/established in 1553, out of the Assyrian Church of the East, after some years of favorable missionary work by Roman Catholic Franciscans and Dominicans. The catalyst that caused the reunion by some bishops & priests, was that the Assyrian Church at the time was employing a hereditary Patriarchal succession system, and many bishops rejected that. When a group of these bishops went to Rome to seek reunion, the then-Pope chose an abbot from a monastery to be their Patriarch. Today, there are officially approximately 400,000 members world-wide. However, some sources say the figure is closer to 800,000 with most in Iraq – but that the Church there deliberately downplays by half its membership so as to not inflame Muslim fanatics. Bishops/cathedrals are in Southfield (Detroit) Michigan, as well as in San Diego, California. The Patriarch of this Church resides in Baghdad, Iraq.

B. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. Portugese Roman Catholics came into contact with these Eastern Christians in India beginning 1498, and the Syro-Malabar Church of India, a daughter Church of the Assyrian Church of the East, favored complete reunion to Rome. However, the Portugese tried to “latinize” these Christians, which caused a total rupture of relations. By 1662, some of the schisms were repaired. Today there are 3.8 million members of this Church, almost all in India. The Major-Archbishop of this Church resides in Ernakulam, Kerala State, India. There is a bishop/cathedral located in Chicago. (NOTE: The position of Major-Archbishop is just below the position of Patriarch).

2. The Antiochian/Syriac Tradition.

A. The Syriac Catholic Church has approximately 133,000 members world-wide. Beginning in 1626, Capuchin and Jesuit Roman Catholics conducted favorable missionary work amongst the Syrian Orthodox. And thus, in 1662, a pro-reunion wing of this Church was able to elect a Patriarch, of the Syrian Orthodox Church, who immediately steered the Church to complete reunion to Rome. The minority who opposed, however, broke away and recreated a rival Syriac

Orthodox Church again. The Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church resides in Beirut, Lebanon. There's a bishop/cathedral in Newark, New Jersey.

B. The Syriac-Maronite Catholic Church, has approximately 3.2 million members worldwide. This is the only Church named after a saint, Maron of Syria, whose teachings influenced a movement amongst many Syrians to stay faithful to Catholicism, and called themselves Maronites, decades before the Council of Chalcedon. The mother Church for the Maronites was the Syriac Church of Antioch. However, after the Christological doctrines were declared by the Catholic Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), there was a split within the Syriac Church, resulting in the Syriac Orthodox Church (not in communion with Rome) and this Church. This Church never broke unity with Rome, but lost contact with Rome during the period 800's to 1200's, during their refuge/isolation in Lebanon's mountains due to persecutions. Their Patriarch still today resides in Bkerke (Beirut) Lebanon. There are two dioceses in USA, one in NYC/Brooklyn, and the other in Los Angeles. Also, the Los Angeles eparchy has a co-cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri. Further, there is a bishop/cathedral in Montreal Quebec, Canada.

C. The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. During the 1700's there were at least four attempts to reconcile the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India, a daughter Church of the Syrian Orthodox Church, to Rome. Finally, in 1926, a group of their bishops and priests reentered unity. There are an estimated 409,000 members, almost all in India. Their Major-Archbishop resides in Trivandrum, Kerala State, India.

3. The Byzantine/Greek Tradition.

A. The Melkite Greek-Catholic Church was reestablished by the vote in 1724, for complete reunion to Rome, of the Patriarch and the Synod of Bishops of the Antiochian Greek Orthodox Church. However, the minority who disagreed with the vote went into schism again, and recreated the Antiochian Orthodox Church. There are approximately 1.4 million members worldwide. The Patriarch of the Melkite Greek-Catholic Church resides in Damascus, Syria. There's a bishop/cathedral in Newton (Boston) MA, and also one in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

B. The Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church has its roots in the Transcarpathian Mountains of extreme western Ukraine. Ending of the Eastern Orthodox schism for this group of people, commonly called Rusyns, is dated to the 1646 Union of Uzhorod, when 64 priests declared reunion to Rome. There is one diocese in Uzhorod. In the USA, there is one Metropolitan Archbishop (arch-cathedral in Pittsburgh PA) and three subordinate dioceses (Passaic NJ, Parma/Cleveland OH, Van Nuys CA). Membership today is approximately 600,000. The Church in USA, and to a lesser degree the Ukrainian Catholics, lost a couple of hundred thousand members to Orthodox Churches during the time-frame 1890 – 1935, after Roman Catholic bishops and even the then-Pope tried to "latinize" our customs & disciplines, and even outlawed married priests in the Americas. Thankfully, since Vatican II Council, we've been urged to retrieve and maintain our own customs. Since Vatican II, this Church in America has quietly dropped the "Ruthenian" from its official title.

C. The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. With the Union of Brest in 1596, the then Metropolitan-Archbishop of Kiev, and eight of his ten bishops, declared reunion to Rome, along with many laity. This Church has approximately 5 million members. Today, in USA, the Metropolitan-Archbishop resides in Philadelphia PA, with other bishops/cathedrals in Parma/Cleveland Ohio, in Chicago Illinois, and in Stamford Connecticut. In Canada, the Metropolitan-Archbishop and his cathedral is in Winnipeg Manitoba with four other

bishops/cathedrals: Edmonton, Alberta; New Westminster, British Columbia; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; and Toronto, Ontario. The Major-Archbishop of this Church resides in Kiev, Ukraine. Ukrainians rightfully hope this position will soon be elevated to Patriarch by the Pope.

D. The Greek Byzantine Catholic Church. In the mid to late 1800s, small numbers of Greek Orthodox in Athens and Constantinople entered unity with Rome due to Roman Catholic missionary priests. In 1911, Rome appointed the first bishop/diocese for these people. Today they are still small in numbers – only some 2,500. The bishop/cathedral is located in Athens.

E. The Slovak Byzantine Catholic Church. This group, originally ethnic Rusyns, was closely tied to the Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church and the Union of Uzhorod of 1646. Today, the Slovak Byzantine Church has a bishop/cathedral in Presov, eastern Slovakia, and also a bishop/cathedral in Toronto Canada. Total membership is approximately 220,000.

F. The Romanian Greek-Catholic Church. As of 1693, Jesuit Roman Catholic missionaries conducted favorable work amongst the Romanian Orthodox populace. And thus, beginning in 1698, a flow of Romanian Orthodox began reentering unity to Rome. The Metropolitan-Archbishop of Transylvania and his subordinate bishops declared reunion in 1700. By the end of World War I, there were an estimated 1.5 million in this Church. Today there are approximately 800,000 members of this Church, with their Major-Archbishop located in Blaj, Romania. In USA, there is one bishop/cathedral in Canton Ohio.

G. The Hungarian Byzantine Catholic Church. In the 15th and 16th centuries, population shifts due to Turkish Muslim invasions created communities of Orthodox Serbs, Slovaks, Greeks, and Rusyns living in eastern Hungary, who eventually became united to Rome. Finally in 1912, Rome established a bishop/diocese for these now-assimilated "Hungarian" Byzantine Catholics, which is today located in Nyireghaza, eastern Hungary, with cathedral there. There are approximately 290,000 members of this Church.

H. The Bulgarian Byzantine Catholic Church. In 1861, some wealthy and influential Bulgarian Orthodox sought unity with Rome, and the-then Pope appointed an archimandrite amongst them as bishop. Their membership peaked at approximately 60,000. Today their Apostolic Exarchate resides in Sofia, Bulgaria - the Church has approximately 10,000 members.

I. The Croatian Byzantine Catholic Church. Serbian Orthodox, long living in Croatia, and under the influence of the Hungarian Roman Catholics who controlled the area, began seeking reunion in very late 1500's and early 1600's. In 1611, these-now Byzantine Catholics of Croatia were given a bishop who served as vicar to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Zagreb. In 1777, the Byzantine Catholics were formally given a full bishop with his own diocese. Today, the bishop resides in Zagreb, and the Church has approximately 50,000 members.

J. The Serbian Byzantine Catholic Church. Long tied to the Byzantine Catholics of Croatia, it was only after the split of Croatia and Serbia (former Yugoslavia) that the Pope of Rome appointed, in 2003, an Apostolic Exarchate for Serbia's Byzantine Catholics, who resides in Belgrade. There are approximately 25,000 members of this Church. (And another 12,000 in Macedonia – now separate from Serbia – with its own Apostolic Exarchate).

K. The Italo-Albanian Byzantine Catholic Church has never have broken unity to the Pope of Rome. There are approximately 64,000 members of this Church, centered in Lungro, Calabria, south Italy, and in Piana degli Albanesi, Sicily. This group, originally ethnic Greek, has been alternately under the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople, before the 1054 schism,

but remained loyal to Rome after the split. Once referred to as the "Italo-Greek Catholic Church", it today has the "Albanian" addition to the title, due a significant group of Albanian Orthodox Christians who fled Turkish Muslim conquerors of Albania in the 15th century, and joined this Church.

L. The Albanian Byzantine Catholic Church. Before the Turkish Muslim conquest of the 15th century, almost all Albanians were Christians; Latin-rite Catholics in the north, Byzantine-rite Orthodox in the south. An Orthodox priest with a handful of laity reentered unity to Rome in 1900. By 1912, his community had 120 persons. Monks from the Italo-Albanian Byzantine Catholic monastery, at Grottaferrata (near Rome), came to assist him. By 1939, an Apostolic Administration was set up for southern Albania by Rome, and by 1945, there were an estimated 400 members. Sadly, also by 1945, only 1/3 of population was Christian, the rest was Muslim. Under Albania's atheist communists, churches and mosques were destroyed, and all religions were outlawed. Today, there's approximately 3,500 Byzantine Catholics, and they have an Apostolic Administrator.

4. The Alexandrian/Coptic Tradition.

A. The Coptic Catholic Church of Egypt has approximately 265,000 members world-wide. In the 1600's, Franciscans, Capuchins, and Jesuit missionaries worked favorably amongst Coptic Orthodox Christians. In 1741, a Coptic Orthodox bishop in Jerusalem entered unity to Rome to shepherd the then-approximately 2,000 Coptic Catholics. In 1899, the then-Pope appointed the senior bishop of the Coptic Catholics as their Patriarch. The Patriarch of the Coptic Catholic Church resides today in Cairo Egypt.

B. The Ethiopian/Eritrean Catholic Church. A 1622 reunion declared by the then-Ethiopian Emperor for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to the Catholic Church and Pope of Rome came about due to favorable Jesuit Roman Catholic missionary work amongst the people. But it did not last due to Portugese attempts to "latinize" the Ethiopians which caused antagonisms. In 1889, Capuchin Roman Catholic missionary work contributed to a slow flow of Orthodox seeking reunion to Rome. Finally in 1961, Rome declared the existence of the Ethiopian Catholic Church, and established a Metropolitan-Archdiocese in Addis Ababa along with two other dioceses in the country. Today, the Metropolitan-Archbishop resides in Addis-Ababa; this Church has approximately 216,000 members. With the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia, the name "Eritrean" was added to the official Church title.

5. The Armenian Tradition. From the Crusades of the 1100's, through the Council of Florence's Act of Reunion with Armenians in 1439, many Armenian Orthodox, especially of Cilicia, had a favorable view of the Popes of Rome and the Catholic Church. However, the reunions did not last. At the same time, beginning in 1320, a group of Armenian Orthodox, called the Friars of Union (aligned to the Dominican Roman Catholic Order) helped form small communities of Armenian Orthodox "united-to-Rome." By 1742, the then-Pope appointed an Armenian Orthodox bishop from amongst those seeking union to be the Patriarch of the-now Armenian Catholic Church. After the Turkish Muslim Ottoman Empire lost World War I, Turkey turned on Armenians, and some 100,000 of Armenian Catholics died in the persecution, including seven bishops, 130 priests, and 47 nuns. In 1928, the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate settled in Beirut Lebanon, due to this Turkish persecution, where it remains today. (The Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church also lost some 1.5 million in the persecution by the Turks.) Today, there are approximately 375,000 Armenian Catholics world-wide, with a cathedral/diocese in New York City.