

THE EASTERN & WESTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES/RITES

The University of St. Francis

By definition, a RITE is “a religious custom usage or ceremony,” and are in reference to “the geographical, cultural and political diversity that accompanied the spread and development of the Church” (The Catholic Encyclopedia).

Of all the Churches that are in full communion with the pope, the most recognized is *The Roman (or the Western) Rite/Church*. For the most part, every Catholic taking this course is part of the Roman Rite. The most obvious association with the Roman Rite is that priests are not allowed to marry, which became a general practice since the twelfth century.

The other Rites that are in full communion with the pope are often categorized as *The Oriental (or Eastern) Rites*.

Of these Churches, Pope Paul VI wrote of their importance in the life of Catholic Church in his decree, “*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*” (On the Oriental Churches), promulgated on November 21, 1964. He writes,

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.

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.

➤ **Eastern Catholic Churches:**

- Albanian Greek-Catholic Church
- Bielorussian Greek-Catholic Church
- Bulgarian Greek-Catholic Church
- Croatian Greek-Catholic Church
- Georgian Greek-Catholic Church
- Greek Byzantine Catholic Church
- Hungarian Greek-Catholic Church
- Italo-Graeco-Albanian Byzantine Catholic Church
- Melkite Greek-Catholic Church
- Romanian Greek-Catholic Church
- Russian Greek-Catholic Church
- Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church
- Slovak Greek-Catholic Church
- Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

➤ **Oriental Catholic Churches:**

- Armenian Catholic Church
- Coptic Catholic Church
- Ethiopian (& Eritrean) Catholic Church
- Syriac Catholic Church
- Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

➤ **Other Non-Latin Catholic Churches:**

- Chaldean Catholic Church
- Maronite Catholic Church
- Syro-Malabar Catholic Church

Many of these rights are connected to directly to the mission of the apostles. All of them are united with the Church of Rome. In respect to their traditions, the faithful of these Rites are allowed to keep culture and customs.