

# What's A Greek Orthodox? What Other Religions Are

By ARTHUR DOURPOULOS  
What is the Greek Orthodox Church?  
The Greek Orthodox Church considers itself to be the only, catholic and apostolic Church, founded by Jesus Christ in the year of his death, 33 A.D.  
It is holy because its founder, Jesus Christ, is holy. It is catholic because the whole world is considered its province, and because it is universal in time and place. It is apostolic because it was established on earth by the apostles of Christ.

"Orthodox" means "true belief," from the Greek words "ortho" and "doxa."  
Is the Greek Orthodox Church the same as the Eastern Orthodox Church?  
Yes. The term "Greek Orthodox" is historically correct; the early Scriptures were written in Greek, and Christianity originated and spread largely through Greek culture and traditions.

For centuries the various national bodies of the Orthodox Church retained the word "Greek" as part of their name, still do; but with the rise of nationalism, the tendency has been to use the national name, as in the Albanian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and so on.

As a group, the Orthodox Churches are now generally known as the Eastern Orthodox Church. All Eastern Orthodox bodies are in full communion with each other; they hold the same beliefs and observe the same rituals.

How were the various branches of the Eastern Orthodox Church established?  
In two ways: (1) by the apostles of Jesus Christ, and (2) by missionaries of the various churches. The four original Patriarchates of the Church are in Constantinople (Istanbul), Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. These churches were established by the apostles Andrew, Mark, Paul and Peter and James, respectively.

The Church of Cyprus, established by the apostle Paul and Barnabas, is also considered an original church.  
To the second class belong the national churches of Bulgaria, Poland, Rumania, Russia, and others.

Does the Eastern Orthodox Church as a whole have one head?  
No, not in the sense that the Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Each Orthodox Church is independent and administered by a Council of Bishops, called a synod.

The Patriarch of Constantinople, chief of the Patriarchates, is known as the "first among equals" and is generally regarded as the spiritual leader of world Orthodoxy. At present, His Holiness Athenagoras I, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch holds this position. (From 1963 to 1968 he served as Greek Orthodox Archbishop of the Americas.)

When the Papacy was first founded, the Pope was in effect another patriarch.  
Great Schism  
Was the Eastern Orthodox Church ever the same as the Roman Catholic Church?  
Yes, for over 1,000 years. In 1054 A.D. the united Church of Christ finally divided into Eastern and Western segments. This break, known as the great schism, had been building up for centuries; it contained both political and ecclesiastical roots.

Politically, the Eastern emperors had been building up for centuries; it contained both political and ecclesiastical differences also, as the Patriarchs of the East exercised a growing independence that denied the authority of the Pope.  
The Western Church of Rome became known as Roman Catholic. The Church of Constantinople, the site of ancient Byzantium, has since been known as the Greek or Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Eastern Church has always maintained that it was the Roman Catholic Church which drew apart from the original Christian Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church considers itself the continuation of the original and true Church of Christ—the Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, considers itself the Eastern Church separated from it. (Catholicism considers Orthodoxy as "separated," not "heretical.")

Main Doctrines  
What are the main doctrines of the Eastern Orthodox Church?  
Orthodoxy believes that God is one in substance and a Trinity in persons. Orthodoxy worships one God in His Trinity, neither

confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.  
Orthodoxy holds the creation to be the work of the blessed Trinity and believes the world was created out of nothing.

ARTHUR DOURPOULOS  
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Mr. Dourpoulos was the representative of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America to the first official pilgrimage of the Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul. He is the English editor of The Orthodox Observer, official publication of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America.

Is neither self-created nor has it existed from eternity; it is the product of the wisdom, the power and the will of one God in Trinity. God the Father is the prime cause of the creation, God the Son perfected the

creation, and God the Holy Spirit gives it life.  
The Orthodox believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, while truly God, begotten of the same substance as the Father and consubstantial with Him, is also truly man. The denial of His humanity would constitute a denial of His incarnation and of our salvation.

Basic Creed  
What is the basic creed of the Orthodox Church?  
The official creed accepted by Orthodoxy, formulated and adopted by the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) and the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.), is generally known as the Nicene Creed. It reads as follows:  
"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, and He shall come again with light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, whom all things were made through, who for men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he arose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with light to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end."

"And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.  
"I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead and for the life of the ages to come."

Seven Sacraments  
What are the sacraments of the Orthodox Church?  
Orthodoxy recognizes seven sacraments: baptism, chrismation, holy eucharist (or communion), confession, ordination, marriage and holy unction. All are obligatory.  
Christians are the anointment of the baptized with holy oils. It symbolizes a confirmation in the faith. In the Orthodox Church, chrismation is administered immediately following

of Christ, they were still united. What, then, are the main differences today between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church?  
There are differences of doctrine and of practice. Most important is the Holy Communion. The Holy Eucharist of the Eastern Orthodox Church to accept the concentration of the Church in one person—a personal holiness considered infallible, as Roman Catholics consider the Pope. The Orthodox Church holds that the holy spirit proceeds "from the Father," while Roman Catholics consider it proceeds "from the Son" (a doctrine known as the "filioque" doctrine). The Holy Eucharist of the Eastern Orthodox Church does not accept the idea of purgatory, though it does believe in salvation through heaven and hell where souls experience a foretaste of the bliss or the punishment that will eventually be theirs.

3. The Roman Catholic Church believes in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, a doctrine which Eastern Orthodoxy does not accept. The Orthodox hold that only Christ was conceived and born without original sin, that the Virgin Mary was cleansed of it at Annunciation Day.  
4. The Roman Catholic dogma that the body of the Virgin Mary "was taken up into heaven" (declared by Pope Pius XII) is not subscribed to by Eastern Orthodoxy, which does not believe in such a physical assumption.

5. Orthodoxy does not recognize the saints canonized by the Catholic Church after the Schism of 1054, unless saints have been proclaimed by Eastern Orthodox synods.  
In ritual and practices, the following differences exist between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches:  
1. The Eastern Orthodox Church does not subscribe to the custom, traditionally practiced by the pope, of granting indulgences on the grounds that the head of the church has authority to transfer to others the surplus good works of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

2. Roman Catholicism does not grant divorce; it considers the sacrament of marriage as indissoluble.  
3. Roman Catholicism does not consider the Eastern Orthodox Church as "separated," but "heretical."

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not grant divorce. Eastern Orthodoxy uses ecclesiastical divorces under certain circumstances.

3. In the Roman Catholic Church, Holy Communion is not given until the age of 12. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, chrismation (the anointment with holy oil) is practiced from the ages of 7 to 11. The Eastern Orthodox Church gives chrismation at the baptismal ceremony, usually of infants.

5. Celibacy is obligatory for Roman Catholic deacons, priests and bishops (though there are certain exceptions), among bishops only.

6. Roman Catholics celebrate the sacrament of baptism by pouring water on the head of the baptized person. In the Orthodox Church, the baptism is performed by a triple immersion into water.

7. The Roman Catholic Church uses unleavened bread in Holy Communion. The Holy Eucharist of the Eastern Orthodox Church is given with a leavened bread, considered the body and blood of Christ, to clergy only. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Holy Eucharist is given to the laity.

8. The Roman Catholic priest may receive permission to celebrate several Masses on the same day and on the same altar. An Eastern Orthodox

priest may celebrate only one liturgy (which is the equivalent, in Orthodoxy, of a Mass) on one day.

Editor's Note: Next week in this column part two of the three-part series "What is a Greek Orthodox?" written by Arthur Dourpoulos.

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SPONSORED KINDERGARTEN—Several area churches and church organizations are sponsoring kindergartens for 5-year-olds to prepare them for the first grade. Pictured above is one such class sponsored by the Holy Rosary Altar Society of St. Pius X Catholic Church, held Monday through Friday in the classroom building of the church. Other churches offering kindergartens are the First Baptist Church and the Bible Baptist Church.

Both qualified to handle and teach children, and the special activities of this particular group have been the preparation and presentation to parents of a Christmas program, which included short memory verses and songs. Since most of the kindergartens are sponsored by local churches, the St. Pius kindergarten is an individual or group.

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# In Our Churches

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Basic Creed  
What is the basic creed of the Orthodox Church?  
The official creed accepted by Orthodoxy, formulated and adopted by the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) and the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.), is generally known as the Nicene Creed. It reads as follows:  
"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, and He shall come again with light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, whom all things were made through, who for men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he arose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with light to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end."

"And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.  
"I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead and for the life of the ages to come."

Seven Sacraments  
What are the sacraments of the Orthodox Church?<