Structure of the Orthodox Church

PART A

Adult Education Series 12/16

Outline

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Early Church Timeline

DATE	EVENT
33 AD	Pentecost event – Birth of the Church – Apostles as first presbyters (Acts 2)
33-313	The era of Christian persecutions
52-68	The Apostle Thomas brings Christianity to India and China
313 .	Constantine and Licinius issued the Edict of Milan making Christianity the state religion and ending the period of Roman persecution of Christians
319	Constantine the Great begins construction on St Peter's Basilica in Rome
330	Constantine moves imperial residence to Byzantium (renamed Constantinople)
325	The first of the seven (7) great Ecumenical Councils to formalize the dogma of the Christian faith

Byzantine Church Timeline

DATE	EVENT
404	The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom is finalized. This Liturgy is based on the previous liturgies of St James and St Basil
532	Emperor Justinian begins construction on Agia Sophia in Constantinople. Construction lasts 6 years
550	The Pentarchy was first tangibly expressed in the laws of Emperor Justinian particularly in *Novella* 131.
692.	The Quinisext Council gives formal recognition to the Pentarchy and ranks the 5 great Patriarchates
787	The era of Ecumenical Councils ends at Nicea; the Seventh Council restores the centuries-old use of icons to the Church.
988	Conversion of the Rus (Russia) by Greek missionaries from Constantinople, Saints Cyril and Saint Methodius. They developed the Cyrillic alphabet and translated parts of the Bible into Church Slavonic language.

Orthodox Church Timeline

DATE	EVENT
1054.	The Great Schism occurs in which the Eastern and Western Churches excommunicate one another. Two major issues include Rome's claim to a universal papal supremacy and her addition of the filioque clause to the Nicene Creed.
1095	The Crusades begun by the Roman Church. The Sack of Constantinople (1204) adds to the estrangement between East and West.
1453	Ottomans overrun Constantinople[1]. Byzantine Empire ends.
1453-1825	The Orthodox Church operates under the captivity of the Ottoman Empire.
1715	The first Orthodox mission in China was established in Beijing by the priestmonk Hilarion
1898-1900	The Boxer Rebellion in China targets Christian missionaries and Chinese converts slaughtering 222 Orthodox Chinese, including Chinese born Father Mitrophan. The Church celebrates this on June 24 as the Holy Martyrs of China.

Orthodox Church in America

DATE	EVENT
1794	Russian missionaries, including St. Herman of Alaska, arrive at Kodiak Island, bringing Orthodoxy to Russian Alaska..
1864	Holy Trinity Church established as the first Orthodox parish in America in New Orleans, Louisiana, by Greeks. Still active.
1895	Fr Raphael Hawaweeny is sent by Bishop Nicholas of Russia to establish the first Antiochian parish in America in Manhattan, NY to serve the Syrian Orthodox population
1904	Fr Raphael is consecrated “Bishop of Brooklyn” at St. Nicholas Church in NY becoming the first Orthodox bishop of any nationality to be consecrated in North America.
1908	Patriarch of Constantinople gives temporary care of American Greek parishes to the Archdiocese of Greece
1918	Bolshevik Revolution throws the Church of Russia into chaos, which leaves the fledgling Russian mission in America stranded which then organizes into the *Metropolia*.

Orthodox Church in America

DATE	EVENT
1922	Church of Greece transfers control of Greek parishes in America back to the Church of Constantinople, which then creates the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
1930	The Holy Synod and the Church of Romania proclaim the establishment of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America located in Ohio.
1931	Bishop Athenagoras becomes Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
1937	Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School founded in Pomfret, Connecticut;
1938	Founding of St. Vladimir's Russian Orthodox Theological Seminary (Crestwood, New York) and St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary (S Canaan, Pennsylvania).
1946	Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School moves to Brookline, MA

Orthodox Church in America

DATE	EVENT
1955	Orthodoxy officially recognized as major faith by U.S. government.
1959	Bishop Iakovos becomes Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America[1]. Longest standing Archbishop from 1959-1996.
1970	Church of Russia grants autocephaly to the Metropolia and the Metropolia approves the new name of *Orthodox Church in America* (OCA). Constantinople ceases all official contact with the OCA and declares it uncanonical.
2009	The 14 Autocephalous Orthodox Churches establish the **Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America** to allow the Orthodox Diaspora the authority to propose administrative structures for their respective regions.
2016	Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church is held in Crete to discuss six (6) important and relevant issues. This is the first time in 1200 years that 14 autocephalous Orthodox churches met in this forum, although some Churches did not attend.

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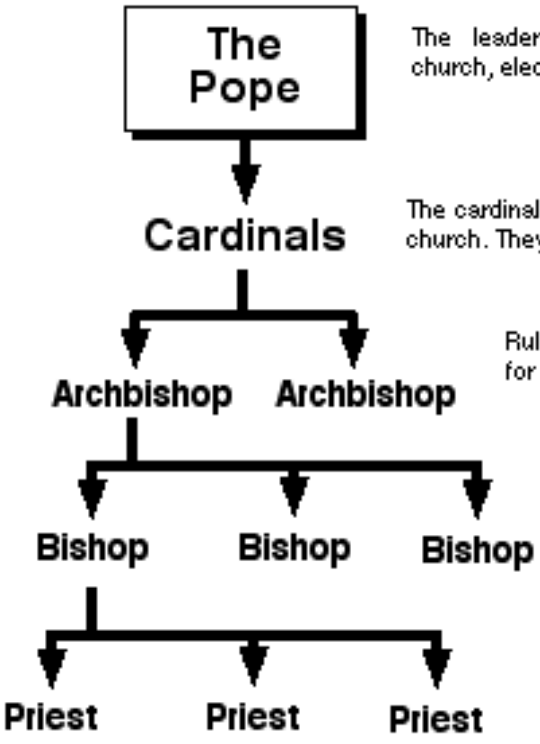
Synodal Governance

- During the time of the Byzantine Empire the mode of government was synodal. (συν-οδος – together on a single path)
- These councils, led by the Emperor and attended by the bishops of various jurisdictions, decided theological and liturgical matters. The published results of these councils, not the patriarch, were binding on all canonical jurisdictions.
- Each council or holy synod was appointed by the Emperor, where the Patriarch acted as the moderator of the synod. A Council was considered ecumenical *only* when all represented bishoprics were in agreement.
- Except for the presence of an Emperor this same situation exists today. In this respect the Archdiocese does not have any dogmatic or doctrinal authority over a Metropolitan but acts only in an administrative sense.

Catholic Church Hierarchy



The leader of the Roman Catholic church, elected by the cardinals for life.

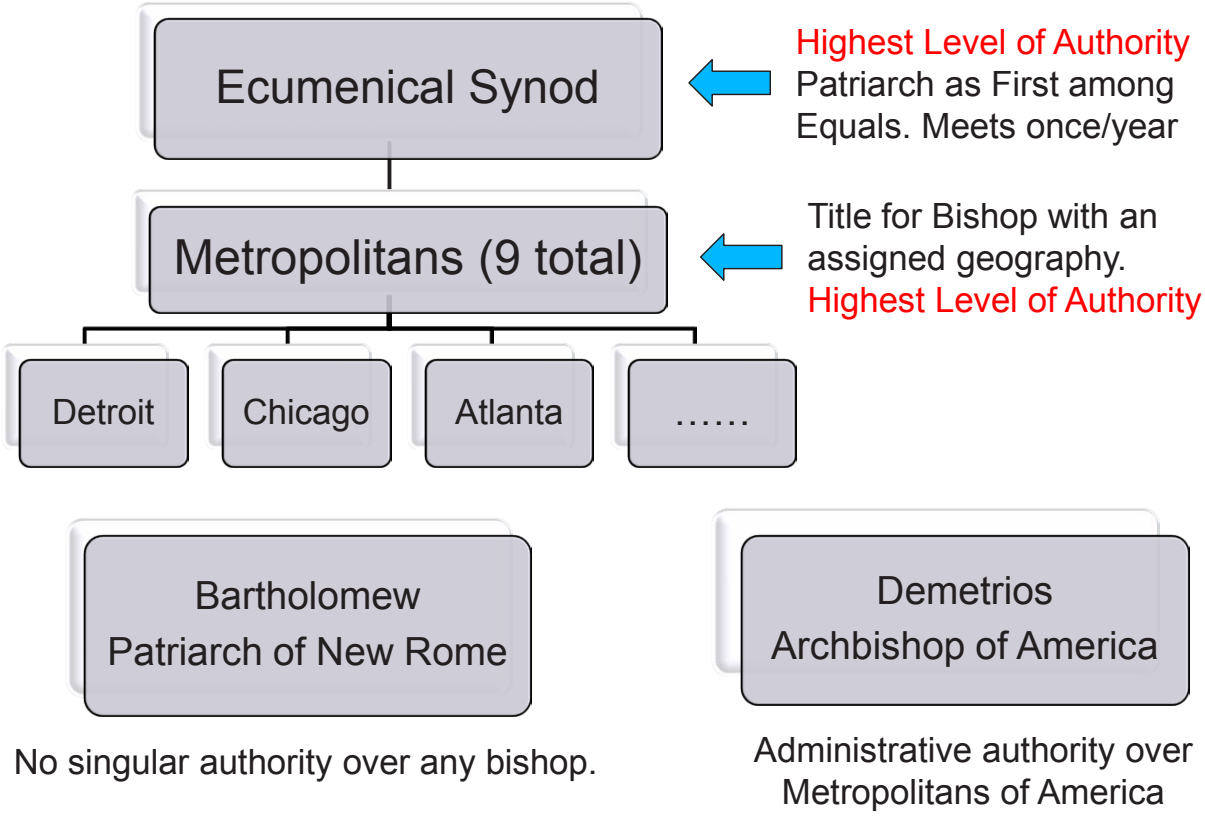
The cardinals are the elected "government" of the RC church. They elect the Pope from among their number.

Rule over a large area called an archdiocese responsible for making sure that the bishops follow the church "rules"

The Bishop is responsible for a **diocese**. The **diocese** is the main administrative unit of the church. The bishop supervises all the activities of his church, visits all religious institutions at regular intervals and is responsible for teaching the Christian faith in his diocese. Bishops also have a responsibility to arrange works of charity in their areas and to speak up for the poor. Each diocese is divided into a number of **parishes** each of which is run by a priest who has the same responsibilities in the parish as the bishop has in the diocese.

Orthodox Church Hierarchy

~ America ~



Terms and Definitions

- **Autocephaly** (αυτο - κεφάλι self-headed)

- A church is **autocephalous** when an ecumenical council, patriarch or other primate, releases an ecclesiastical province from the authority of that bishop while the newly independent church remains in full communion with the patriarchate from which it once belonged.

- For example, the Cypriot Orthodox Church was granted autocephaly by the Council of Ephesus and is ruled by the Archbishop of Cyprus, who is not subject to any higher ecclesiastical authority, although his church remains in full communion with the other Eastern Orthodox churches.

Terms and Definitions

- **Autonomy** (Αυτο - Νόμος self-legislated)
- One step short of autocephaly.
- A church that is autonomous has its highest-ranking bishop, such as an archbishop or metropolitan, appointed by the patriarch of the parent church, but is self-governing in all other respects.
- Examples include:
  - Greek Archdiocese of America

Terms and Definitions

- **Diocese** - The district or churches under the jurisdiction of a bishop. *This term has been replaced in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America by the term* ***Metropolis***.

- **Metropolitan** – A bishop who has been granted authority, both and doctrinally and semi-administratively over a specific geographic area.

- Proper title for a Metropolitan is “Your Eminence”
- All other bishops addressed as “Your Grace”

Holy Tradition

[Holy] Tradition is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Vladimir Lossky

We know this from Christ's own words to His apostles:

But truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

John 16:7

Holy Tradition includes:

1. Apostolic Succession
2. Holy Scripture
3. Symbols of Faith
4. Sacraments
5. Ecumenical Councils
6. Liturgical Services and Practices
7. The Church Fathers
8. Canons
9. Icons

Relationship of Pope Francis & Patriarch Bartholomew

On the occasion of their meeting in Jerusalem in May of 2014 both the Pope and Patriarch signed a joint declaration in which they:

…remembered the historical embrace of our venerable predecessors Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras as we signed this joint declaration. Today on the happy occasion of this further fraternal encounter, we wish to re–affirm together our shared intentions and concerns.

We express our sincere and firm resolution, in obedience to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to intensify our efforts to promote the full unity of all Christians, and above all between Catholics and Orthodox.

Portion of the actual text

Removal from Memory and from the Midst of the Church the excommunication of 1054

In Dec. 1965, both the Pope and Patriarch, in common agreement, declared that:

They regret the offensive words, the reproaches without foundation, and the reprehensible gestures which, on both sides, have marked or accompanied the sad events of this period.

Orthodox-Catholic

Practical Similarities and Differences

Catholic - Papal Infallibility

The Catholic Church recognizes that the position of Peter is the visible expression in the Bishop of Rome who exercises those prerogatives and that primacy in the church depends on the consent of the Church

Orthodox – Ecumenical Infallibility:

The grace of the Holy Spirit the Church is infallible when it meets in synods to clarify the Church's understanding of the central truths of salvation.

Each Patriarch must exercise his ministry not in isolation but in collegial association with his brother bishops of each of the 5 ancient patriarchates.

The dogma of Papal Infallibility is rejected by Eastern Orthodoxy.

Orthodox-Catholic

Practical Similarities and Differences

- The Orthodox do not fast on Saturday (except Holy Saturday) or Sunday. Roman Catholics experience no such restriction.
- Many Orthodox do not kneel on Sunday; Roman Catholics do.
- Orthodox deacons and priests may marry *before* ordination; Roman Catholic deacons can marry, priests remain celibate. Both Orthodox and Catholic Bishops must remain celibate.
- During worship services Orthodox clergy face towards the East; Roman Catholics, not necessarily.
- In the Orthodox Liturgy, the "bread" of the Eucharist is *leavened* (ζύμη); in the Roman Catholic Mass it is "*unleavened*" (άζυμη).
- The Orthodox faithful receive both species of Christ in Holy Communion; Roman Catholics are permitted to receive only one species.
- Cremation is *conditionally* accepted by the Catholic Church while fully rejected by the Orthodox Church.