

DECREE ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCHES OF THE EASTERN RITE
ORIENTALIUM ECCLESiarUM

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The Great Schism of 1054 divided the Roman Church in the West from several Churches in the East, each of which had its own distinctive rites. In many of those separated Churches, a segment of the community later chose to re-establish full communion with the Roman Church, accepting the authority of the Pope. These are called Eastern Rite Catholic Churches. Those who remained separated are called the Orthodox Churches. The rites and traditions of the Eastern Rite Catholics are much more similar to those of their Orthodox cousins than to those of the Roman Catholic Church.

Prior to Vatican II, the Eastern churches were under constant pressure to abandon their traditions and become more like the Roman Church. The Council Fathers reaffirm:

- the distinctive liturgical traditions, laws and customs of the Eastern churches. (#2-5)
- the authority and autonomy of the Eastern Patriarchs (#9)
- the validity of the sacraments in both the Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches (#12)

They even permit Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians to receive sacraments in each other's churches when they do not have access to the sacraments in their own churches. (#27)

This document resulted in a new Code of Canon Law for the Eastern Catholic Churches, distinct from the Code of Canon Law for the Roman Church.