

case. In regard to what the Church does as a whole, e.g. issuing a regulation, the ordination or deposition of a bishop, etc., the metropolitan will lead the other bishops but will do nothing without their consent, nor they without his consent. This is done because no individual bishop has been promised infallibility. Rather, the Church as a whole has been promised always to abide in the right Faith and practice of it. One bishop may leave the Church and deviate from the Faith, but never all of them, according to the Lord's promise, "I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against Her" [Mt. 16:18]. Despite whatever tribulation may arise, the teaching of the apostolic Faith among the Church's faithful members always remains as it was received, although the Church's relative size, and whether or not a particular bishop is within the Church, may vary from time to time.

WHERE DOES THE ORTHODOX CHURCH EXIST IN THE WORLD TODAY?

FROM THE HISTORICAL standpoint, in the age of the Byzantine Empire, the religion of the civilized world was Orthodox Christianity. Since then, the Orthodox Church has existed in all its local parts throughout the world, with a continuous presence in North America among immigrants and Native Americans, beginning in 1792 with the arrival of Russian missionaries in Alaska and California. Recently, because of the appearance of major heresies and great persecutions of the Orthodox Church, many have fallen away. The most recent persecution under the Communists has destroyed or diminished the size of certain local Churches, such as those of Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and all the other communist satellite countries where the Orthodox Church existed. The Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople have been destroyed through the heresy of ecumenism. Today the total number of nominal Orthodox is well over 300

million. The True Orthodox Christians, however, can only be numbered as members following a relatively small group of bishops in Russia and Greece who have remained faithful to Christ.

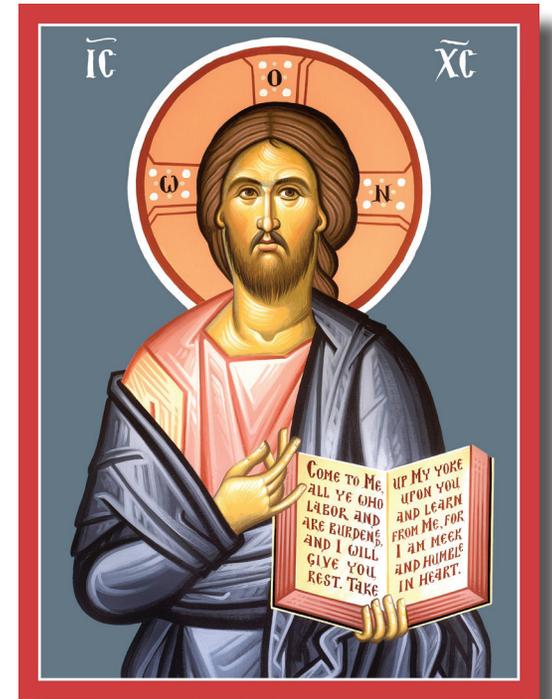
SO THEN SOME LOCAL CHURCHES HAVE FALLEN AWAY FROM THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND THE ORTHODOX FAITH?

IT IS A tragic fact that some have fallen away from the Faith into heresy. This is chiefly due to the heresy of the Ecumenical Movement, which in these last times has vigorously attacked the Orthodox Church over the last 40 years. This wicked heresy, under the guise of love for all religions, incorporates all the previous heresies against which the Orthodox Church had fought, and it denies the uniqueness of the One true Church of Christ. The ravages of this mother of all heresies — together with the attacks of other, equally evil belief systems such as Sergianism, Masonry, Modernism, and Phyletism — have left very few rightly confessing bishops in the world. To learn more detailed information about the Orthodox Church, Her members that are rightly teaching the word of truth, and the heresies that are now assailing Her, please visit our website at:

www.GOCAmerica.org

or contact His Eminence, Archbishop Gregory, head of the Genuine Orthodox Church of America, at:

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The Orthodox Church

WHAT IS THE ORTHODOX CHURCH?

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH is the Church of apostolic Tradition and apostolic succession, the faithful and true Church of Christ. The Orthodox Church is the Church which the Lord

through His Apostles founded (literally, physically, historically, etc.), and which has continued without ceasing to this very day. It began as one Faith and one Body in Jerusalem, spread throughout the world, and has continued without failing as such to this day. This unity and continuity, as it is from God and promised by Him, cannot be broken. The bishops of the Orthodox Church, who are shepherds of the flock under the Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, are the bearers and protectors of the Apostolic Faith.

The Apostles chose faithful, godly men, instructed them in the whole Faith, and, through the unique gift of divine grace, established these chosen men in the local parts of the Church to succeed them in their apostolic office and ministry. Through this manner of lawful succession within one confession of Faith and one Body, the episcopacy established by the Apostles has been maintained in the Orthodox Church through each successive generation down to our own. Thus is preserved the God-established order whereby, through faithful bishops, the grace from God is bestowed upon the presbyters and deacons, so that they in turn may be ministers of divine grace to the faithful people through the gift of the Holy Mysteries. In this manner, the Orthodox Church has maintained unchanged the whole teaching (the apostolic Tradition) and God-pleasing way of life Lord and all taught, and provides its members with the holy Mysteries instituted by the Lord for our salvation.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY APOSTOLIC TRADITION?

THIS IS THE teaching and the way of life and worship that the Apostles instituted, having received it from the Lord. The term denotes not only those things that the Apostles taught through writing, but also that which they preached and taught in person by their God-inspired words and the regulations of Church life decreed by them.

Through preserving the entire teaching and regulated order of the Apostles, the Church safeguards Herself from disobedience to God through innovation in regard to Faith, worship and way of life. Nothing of what the Apostles taught contradicts apostolic words found in their writings; but rather, they clarify both the Scriptures' meaning and the whole of the Apostles' teaching. Anarchy and innovation are the only possible results of eliminating any part of the apostolic Tradition. You may also hear the expression Holy or Sacred Tradition, which is a broader term denoting the same apostolic teaching but, in addition to this, chiefly the sacred expositions and defenses of that apostolic Faith composed by the Church as a whole at later times under the same divine inspiration under which the Apostles wrote and taught. An example of this Tradition is the Nicæan Creed. This is a brief affirmation of the Faith in the Holy Trinity made against certain heresies, which is read at every divine Liturgy and at Baptism. Other examples of Holy Tradition would include the further regulations or canons introduced at the Ecumenical Synods.

HOW IS THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ORGANIZED AND ADMINISTERED?

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH is governed locally by Her individual bishops, who are in turn guided by the episcopate as a whole, gathered in a synod or council. When deciding matters of common

concern, the Apostles met together in council and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, made, by common consent, decisions that were faithful to the Lord and His instruction. In like manner, the successors of the Apostles met together in council and, in a manner agreed upon by common consent, shepherded the flock of the Lord. The only case in which their decisions are not binding is when they contradict the truth and Tradition handed down by the Holy Apostles, Councils, and Fathers; for Christ is the Truth, and Truth is the Head and Ruler of the Church. This is the order which God established, and the Church will not deviate from it. The Orthodox Church is neither organized in the manner of a Protestant anarchy, nor on the model of a Papal dictatorship. We are not Protestants, who presume each person to be his own highest authority in matters of Faith and Church life, authorized to rewrite and reinterpret the Faith as he pleases. Neither is there any Pope in Orthodoxy, nor any other such person who claims a higher ordination than that of the episcopacy and bends all to his current whim. Orthodoxy is the Church of apostolic Truth, and not that of the current fashion; Orthodoxy is the Church of Holy Tradition, and not that of innovation.

DO BISHOPS DIFFER FROM ONE ANOTHER?

ALTHOUGH ALL BISHOPS are equal in ordination, there are distinctions among bishops in the role they play with regard to each other. For instance, in a diocese or province, the archbishop or the metropolitan will take the leadership role of president of the provincial council. In similar fashion, over a larger area of several provinces, ancient custom may dictate that in a gathering of the bishops of these provinces, a certain bishop, called the Patriarch, assume the leadership role as president of the council. In administering his diocese, ordaining presbyters and deacons, or giving a penance, the bishop acts on his own in nearly every