

The Meaning of Rite

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH possesses many colourful Rites, among which the Byzantine in the East and the Latin in the West are the two most widespread.

Rite is the external form of worshipping God. It is a crystallized method or collection of religious ceremonies, liturgical functions, prayers, hymns, differently bodily motions, benedictions, the manner of celebrating the Liturgy, of administering the Sacraments, Canon Law, local customs, liturgical vestments and vessels, the styles of the Church, its own spirit and history. In its derivative sense, Rite means a group of persons within the (Catholic) Church with its peculiar way of worshipping God and separate ecclesiastical government composed usually of their particular Patriarch, Metropolitans, Archbishops, and Bishops with diocesan priests, who are always subject to the Pope as supreme head and Vicar of Christ on earth.



We have a particular Rite, which we call Ukrainian. It is the Rite of the Great Byzantine Empire brought into the land of our forefathers by the Greek and Bulgarian missionaries after its conversion to the Catholic faith in the year 988 by St. Volodymyr the Great, prince of the ancient Rus'-Ukraine. With the passing of time, the Byzantine Rite was modified and adapted to the new customs of our people, and thus it became Ukrainian. Our immigrants coming to Canada and the U.S.A. brought their Rite, and after innumerable struggles succeeded to plant it in these countries of the new world.

The Holy See of Rome watches that no injury be done to one Catholic Rite by another, which in certain places may be more prevalent. The Catholic Church wishes "that all peoples be brought together in possession of the same rights whatever may be their race, language or Liturgy. The Roman Church has always respected and maintained the various rites, and has at all times insisted on their preservation," says Pope Pius XI in his Encyclical "Ecclesiam Dei."

ОБРЯД ЦЕ ЗБІР РЕЛІГІЙНИХ ЗВИЧАЇВ, богослужб, законодавства й інших чинностей, якими священики вділяють святі тайни і благословення. Кожний народ має свої звичаї, традиції й історію. Все те витворило відмінні обряди, якими люди служать Богу.

В канонічній праві обряд означає групу людей у Христовій Церкві, яка має власний спосіб богослужіння, окрему церковну дисципліну та єпархію, що звичайно складається з патріярха, митрополитів, єпископів і священиків, Єпархія виконує свій пастирський уряд під наглядом Христового Намісника, Папи Римського.

Українські греко-католики є членами всесвітньої католицької церкви, але вони не є членами римо-католицької церкви, яка використовує латинські богослужбові обряди, серед яких найпоширеніший римський обряд. Натомість Східні католицькі церкви є окремими конкретними церквами, хоча вони підтримують повний і рівний взаємний обмін сакраментами з членами Римської Церкви.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish ~ November 2017

Celebrating Our Faith

Byzantine Catholic Worship: Our Church, Its Customs and Rich Heritage

St. Josaphat Kuntsevych ~ Martyr for the Faith



ST. JOSAPHAT was not only a great Saint and zealous Apostle of Christ but was also a Martyr. In iconography, he is frequently seen holding in his hands the palm of martyrdom for the holy faith and for the union of our Church with the Apostolic See of Peter (Rome). Where there is true holiness and apostolic zeal, there is also readiness for total self-sacrifice, for suffering and death for the holy faith. Proof of this is given by thousands and hundreds of thousands

of holy Martyrs, from the beginning of Christianity up to our own times. In martyrdom, all the virtues manifest themselves in a heroic degree, especially those of unshakeable faith, firm hope, love full of dedication, and fortitude worthy of praise. We find all of these manifested in the life of the priest-martyr, St. Josaphat.

His martyrdom did not take him by surprise. He had desired it for a long time; he had spoken about it and prepared for it. While still living, he was making ready his tomb in his cathedral of Polotsk. The witness of his death, Father Dorotheus Letsykovich, testified in 1628 before the Beatification Commission: "In his sermons, conversations, letters, he always made known his desire for death, and whenever possible, he would say that he desired nothing more than to die for God." To his enemies who threatened him with death, he said, "You threaten me with death, but I tell you: nothing would make me happier than to die by your hands for the Catholic and apostolic faith."

May the words of Archbishop Major Cardinal Joseph Slipyj, spoken at the tomb of St. Josaphat on the 25th day of November 1969, be an inspiration to all of us to venerate and imitate him in the love of our holy faith: "May St. Josaphat, a faithful son of the Church and nation, lead our nation to victory. He defended the union of the Church and nation all his life. Even in Polotsk, in White Russia (now Belarus), he regarded himself as a Ukrainian, and had also convinced the monks of the Kievan Lavra about the need for Church union. His strong character and heroic holiness of life must also encourage and inspire us to follow in his footsteps, even if we should be required to sacrifice our life for God, the Church and the nation."

(Blahovisnyk, V, 1-4, 1969)

ADVENT IN THE EASTERN CHURCH

Not the same as in the West

ST. PHILIP'S FAST is a period of abstinence and penance practiced by the Eastern Church in preparation for the Nativity of Christ (December 25). Like the Western Advent, St. Philip's Fast (*Pylypiwka* in Ukrainian), or the Nativity Fast, prepares Eastern Christians for the celebration of Christmas. However, it differs in two significant respects: the Eastern Fast runs for 40 days instead of four weeks, from November 15 to December 24 inclusively, and thematically focuses on proclamation and glorification of the Incarnation of God, whereas the Western Advent focuses on the two comings (or advents) of Jesus Christ: his birth and his Second Coming.

So, why does the Eastern Church typically start earlier? Let's go back to the fact that the fast runs for 40 days. We all know that Lent, or the Great Fast, is the 40-day period of preparation before the Feast of Feasts, the Resurrection of Our Lord. Advent has traditionally been known as a "little Lent." As in Lent, Advent should be marked by increased prayer, fasting, and good works.



During the course of the fast, a number of feast days celebrate the Old Testament prophets who prophesied the Incarnation; for instance: Obadiah (November 19), Nahum (December 1), Habakkuk (December 2), Zephaniah (December 3), Haggai (December 16), and Daniel and the Three Holy Youths (December 17). These last are significant not only because of their perseverance in fasting, but also because their preservation unharmed in the midst of the fiery furnace is interpreted as being symbolic of the Incarnation — the

Virgin Mary conceived God the Word in her womb without being consumed by the fire of the Godhead.

Traditionally, all great feasts have been preceded by a time of fasting, which makes the feast itself more joyful. Sadly in today's world, the "Christmas shopping season" has overshadowed the Nativity Fast, so that by Christmas Day, many people no longer enjoy the feast. However, we can better enjoy Christmas — all 12 days of it, from Christmas Day to Theophany (Epiphany) — if we revive Advent as a period of preparation. Abstaining from meat on Fridays, or not eating at all between meals, is a good way to start. Not eating Christmas cookies or listening to Christmas music before Christmas is another. Holding off on putting up the Christmas tree and other decorations is another way to remind ourselves that the feast is not here yet. Traditionally, such decorations were put up on Christmas Eve, but they would not be taken down until after Theophany, in order to celebrate the Christmas season to its fullest. Will you be fully prepared?

Frequently (and Not-so Frequently) Asked Questions about Byzantine Catholics and How to Answer Them

Are Byzantine Catholics really Catholic?

Unequivocally, **YES**. We are Catholics in union with the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) whom we recognize as the visible Head of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is a communion of churches. It is composed of churches from the Eastern Tradition and Western Tradition, also known as Roman Catholic. The Eastern churches, also called Eastern rites, help to complete the fullness of the Catholic Church, both historically as the customs developed over centuries and theologically.

As Catholics, Eastern and Roman Catholics share the same faith and same sacraments; the way of expressing them differs. The difference is that we Eastern Catholics have a distinctive way or rite of expressing our faith in regards to Liturgy and customs.

Can Catholics attend a Byzantine Church to fulfill their Sunday obligation?

Sunday obligation is fulfilled by attending the Divine Liturgy in any Catholic Church of any tradition.

Do Byzantine Catholics genuflect?

No. When we enter our pew, we bow before our Lord (rather than genuflecting as in the Western tradition), ever present in His holy temple and on the Holy Table (altar).

Can Catholics receive communion in a Byzantine Church?

All Catholics who are properly disposed and in the state of Grace are welcome to receive the Divine Eucharist.

How is communion given in a Byzantine Church?

In the Byzantine Catholic rite, the Holy Gifts are given under both forms of bread and wine by means of a golden spoon. When approaching to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, fold your hands right over left on the breast in the form of Saint Andrew's cross; if unknown to the priest, in a low voice state your first name. As each communicant receives the sacred species the priest says: "(Name) servant of God receives the precious and all holy and most pure Body and Blood of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins and for life everlasting."

Tilt your head fully back and open your mouth (without extending the tongue). The priest then places the precious Body and Blood of Jesus into your mouth. Do not touch the spoon with your mouth or tongue, but close the mouth only after the spoon has been withdrawn. There is no response to the words of the priest as is the practice in the Roman Catholic Church. Afterward, return to your pew and say a prayer in thanksgiving — there are several that begin on page in the missals used during the service

(More FAQs in the next issue of *Celebrating Our Faith*.)