

# FIRST AMONG EQUALS

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE





## “Does the Orthodox Church have a Pope?”

If a curious friend asks you this question, your answer may trail off after “No, we don’t, but . . . hmm.” The worldwide Orthodox Christian Church is not led by one single bishop in the same way as the Roman Catholic Church is led by the pope. We look to the leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarch. He is the “first among equals”: the most senior bishop among all the Orthodox bishops in the world. We honor him as the leader of one large Orthodox Church family made up of many smaller Orthodox Churches throughout the world. The role of Ecumenical Patriarch has been defined over the centuries as the Church has grown and developed.



*Surveying New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, 2006.*

Since 1991, **His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew** has guided the Orthodox Christian Church from his home and seat—called a “see”—in historical Constantinople (modern Istanbul), Turkey. He brings together Orthodox bishops from around the world to address the issues facing the entire Church and to resolve conflicts. He oversees the Greek Orthodox communities in Turkey, Western Europe, North and South America, Australia, and Asia. He works for unity with other Christians, discusses peace among the religions of the world, and he is the “Green Patriarch”—a leader in environmental preservation.



*With President Truman, 1948.*

**Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras** (1948–1972) was an energetic and convincing leader. He revitalized the faith of Orthodox Christians around the world. In 1964, Athenagoras renewed contact with the Roman Catholic Church when he met with Pope Paul VI—the first time that a Pope and an Ecumenical Patriarch had met face to face in nearly 500 years. Before becoming Ecumenical Patriarch, Athenagoras was Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America (from 1930). As our Archbishop, he founded the Ladies Philoptochos Society, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and St. Basil’s Academy. When Athenagoras left the United States in 1948 to become Ecumenical Patriarch, President Truman offered to lend him Air Force One.





## SAINT ANDREW

The first person Jesus invited to become one of his disciples was St. Andrew (John 1:35–40). This “first called” Apostle was the brother of St. Peter. After Pentecost, St. Andrew traveled to many cities to preach the Gospel and establish churches. Tradition says he established the church in the city of Byzantium—which would be renamed Constantinople about 300 years later. As you can see in the icon on the cover, the Apostle passed the Gospel to his successor, St. Stachys, the first bishop of the church that became the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Tradition also says St. Andrew went to Thrace, to lands around the Dniepr River (in today’s Ukraine), and eventually to Epirus and Greece. He performed miracles in the city of Patras and brought many people to Christianity. The pagan governor of Patras became angry when his brother converted, too, and he ordered Andrew to be tortured and then crucified. Even from his X-shaped cross, Andrew continued preaching the Gospel until his last breath. He died in the year 62, and we celebrate his feast on November 30.



*Participants in the Ionian Village program visit the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Patras, Greece, to venerate the saint’s relics. The cathedral is one of the largest in Europe—it holds about 5,500 people.*

**Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios** (1972–1991) was elevated after Athenagoras died. Before becoming a bishop, he had served as a priest in Tehran, Iran. In 1989, he proclaimed September 1 as “the day of the environment,” beginning the Orthodox Church’s active involvement with environmental protection. In 1990, he visited the United States and Canada. It was the first time an Ecumenical Patriarch had traveled to North America. Tens of thousands of faithful Orthodox Christians welcomed him everywhere he went.



*On the campus of Saint Basil Academy, 1990.*





*His All Holiness consecrates St. Nicholas Church in Havana, Cuba, January 2004*

# THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH LEADS ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

## WHAT IS A BISHOP?

The Orthodox Church is comprised of the laity and three orders of clergy: deacons, priests, and bishops.

### Clergy

Search

The group of men who are ordained to serve the Church and celebrate the Sacraments.

Bishops are the leaders of the Church, given the responsibility of keeping the Church united, teaching the Orthodox Faith accurately, and overseeing the life of the parishes and its ministries in their regions. A bishop is named to be the leader of the Church in a particular city and area around it. The region could be a diocese, metropolis, archdiocese, or patriarchate, depending on the size of the region, the importance of the place, and the customs of a particular nation.

The tradition of following a bishop's leadership goes back to Jesus's Apostles. His Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and shared the most joyous news in the world: Jesus was the Son of God, who offered salvation and eternal life to anyone who believed in Him and joined His community of followers, the Church.

### Laity

Search

From the Greek word *laos*, people; God's faithful people who are not ordained to the clergy; an individual person is called a "lay person."

The Apostles responded to Christ's commandment to "go forth and baptize all nations" (Matthew 28:16–20) by traveling throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. They taught people to know and love Christ, and they established Churches wherever they went. Tradition says that St. Thomas went to India, St. Peter went to Rome, and St. Andrew went to Byzantium. The Apostles appointed bishops to guide these communities in their absence. For example, St. Andrew appointed Stachys to be the first bishop of Byzantium in the year 54. Over the years, whoever was bishop of this city came to be seen as a successor to the Apostle Andrew and the community he established. We can trace the history of each bishop chosen to succeed the Apostle in an unbroken line—a chain of teachers and leaders we call "Apostolic succession."

# SERVANTS/LEADERS



Not everyone is called—has a “vocation”—to be ordained to the clergy. But that doesn’t mean lay people have less work to do or that God expects any less of them.

Jesus gave the same orders and issued the same call to all of His followers: “go forth.” Matthew 28:16–20 is the Gospel lesson read during the Sacrament of Baptism:

the Great Commission applies to every Christian, clergy and laity. We are all members of the Church, and we are all God’s servants.

Many places in the Bible talk about leadership and service. Read John 12:26, Mark 9:35, Mark 10:43, and Romans 12:3-8 to learn more.



In Byzantine times, the emperor bestowed many titles and “offices” (*offikia*, duties, responsibilities) on those who served in the imperial court. These office-holders also promoted the Christian Faith.

In 1966, Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras created the Order of St. Andrew, the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Each year since then, about twenty lay leaders have had the honorary title of “Archon” and an *offikion* bestowed on them as a way of honoring their service on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church. Many times, the *offikion* they receive reflects their role as a philanthropist, teacher, or other type of service defending the Faith and supporting the Church.

As Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America blesses new Archons and bestows a cross on them.

*In 1936, the government of Turkey confiscated the Greek Orphanage on Prinkipos (Buyukuda) Island and hundreds of other properties owned by Christian and Jewish minorities. Here, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archon Theofanis Economidis, and Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco hold the deed to the property, which was returned in 2010. The European Court of Human Rights had ruled that Turkey return the land and building to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.*

*Earlier in 2010, the First International Archon Religious Freedom Conference was held in Brussels. Delegations of Archons continue to meet with European and American government leaders to promote religious freedom as well as the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.*

How can servants of the Church be first?

They are, first of all, followers of Christ.

The first to arrive in church.

The first to offer to help.

The first to financially support the Church's mission.

Archon

Search

Leader; from the Greek word *arche*, first, beginning.

Exarch

Search

Representative of a Patriarch, usually the leader of a Church in a country.

As Exarch, Archbishop Elpidophoros leads the Greek Orthodox Church of America, and he represents the Ecumenical Patriarchate in all its relations to civil authorities in the United States and to other Churches.



# IN IT TOGETHER

To explain how Orthodox Christian lay persons and clergy around the world are all connected, the Church uses some specific phrases that you may recognize:

The **Ecumenical Patriarch** is considered the **first among equals** of the patriarchs of our **one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church**.

If you play a sport like soccer or basketball, then you probably have a team captain. The captain is a player, just like you, who understands the team, the game, and the situation. Trusting someone who's in it together with you is much easier than following someone who thinks he or she is *above* the team.

This has always been the idea with our Church's leadership. Our bishops are "in it together" with us, in the struggle to live a Christian life. Jesus Christ—who was both human and God—promised to be *with us* always (Matthew 28:18–20). Our Church leadership is modeled on His example.

Bishops are the leaders of Church communities, from small dioceses to large nations. In the sixth century, the Archbishop of Constantinople began to be called the Ecumenical Patriarch. In Byzantine times, "ecumenical" described things that included all of God's inhabited world. The Ecumenical Patriarch is the first father of the Orthodox world.

All bishops have the same basic "job description." But some countries and cities are larger or clearly more important than others. Some have older Christian communities than others. Some were founded by the Apostles themselves, and others were established later. From the very beginnings of the Church, some sees have been given a rank of seniority or importance.

See

Search

The area under a bishop's guidance; a see can be a diocese, a metropolis, an archdiocese, or even the church of a whole country.

Patriarch

Search

Literally "first father"; one of the founding fathers of the people of Israel, namely Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; a bishop who heads any one of the Churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, or Georgia.

Rome, as the original imperial capital, was home to the most important Christian community for several centuries. But then St. Constantine the Great moved the capital eastward to Byzantium in 330 and then changed the name of the city to Constantinople. The Church that St. Andrew had established began to grow in significance.

In 381 AD, the Second Ecumenical Council ranked the Church of Constantinople and its leader, who was then called an Archbishop, second in honor, following Rome.



In 451, the Fourth Ecumenical Council gave the Patriarch of Constantinople equal status as the Pope in Rome and expanded the Patriarch's territories to lands beyond the empire.



In 587 or 588, St. John the Faster was the first Patriarch of Constantinople to use the title "Ecumenical Patriarch."



After the Great Schism of 1054, Constantinople became the first in seniority in the Orthodox Christian world.

# A CLOSER LOOK AT BISHOP'S VESTMENTS

What may appear to be merely expensive, flashy accessories are reminders of the expectation that bishops carry on the leadership of Christ's Apostles.



**SAKKOS:** All bishops today wear the sakkos. The garment was first worn by the emperor and then later by the Patriarch of Constantinople as well. The sakkos is another symbol of his leadership of the Church. Over it, a bishop wears an omophorion around his neck and shoulders, just as Christ the Good Shepherd carried the lost sheep.



**ENGOLPION:** During services, bishops usually wear a pectoral (from the Latin for "chest") cross and a medallion that is called a Panagia or engolpion (from the Greek for "chest"). A bishop who leads a Church may also wear a second engolpion with an icon of Christ. Outside of church services, bishops usually wear just the engolpion.

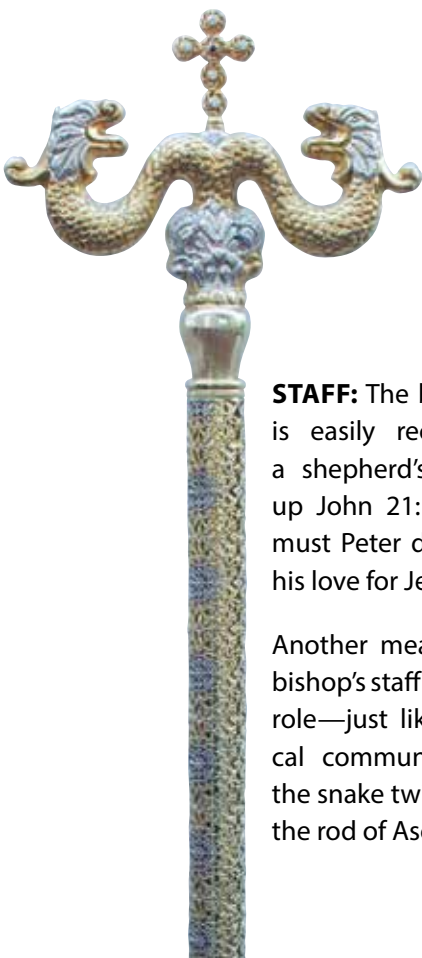
**CANDLES:** The dikerion (double candle) symbolizes the two natures of Christ and the trikerion (triple candle) symbolizes the Holy Trinity. They remind us of the bishop's role as our First Teacher of the Faith.



**MITRE:** The bishop's crown we see today was not used until after the fall of Constantinople (1453). The Ecumenical Patriarch was given the responsibility of leading the Orthodox Christian community within the Ottoman Empire. He wears the crown as a sign of his leadership of the community.

**STAFF:** The bishop's staff is easily recognized as a shepherd's staff. Look up John 21:15–18. What must Peter do to act out his love for Jesus?

Another meaning of the bishop's staff is his healing role—just like the medical community's use of the snake twining around the rod of Asclepius.





# THE PHANAR, THE WORLD

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople has always had an ecumenical mission and vision. Even so, the residents of the Phanar are Turkish citizens invested in the life of their city and country.

## Ecumenical

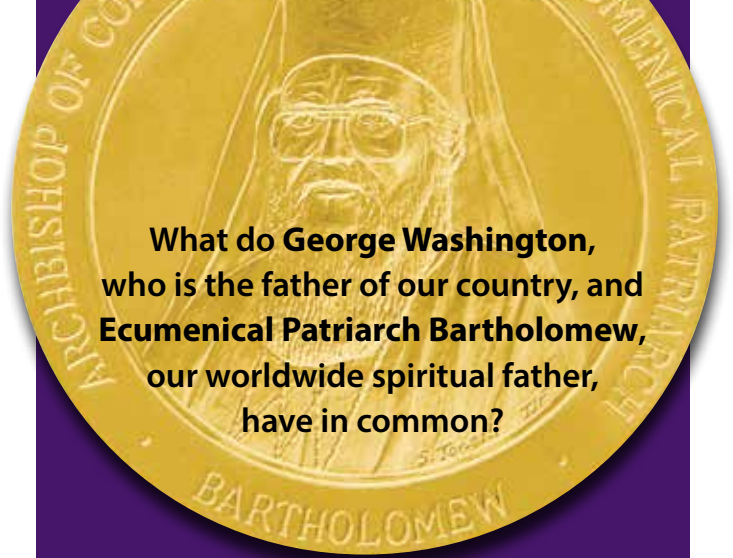
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A word with several meanings, all from the Greek word *oikumene*.

In Byzantine times, it referred to anything that involved all of God's inhabited world, and anything that affected the entire Orthodox Church.

Today, we use the word to describe interactions and conversations among different churches and religions.

The Ecumenical Patriarch leads the Orthodox Church from a neighborhood of Istanbul called the Phanar, which means the "lighthouse" or "beacon." Although the lighthouse is long gone, the district's name still reminds us of Matthew 5:14-16.



What do **George Washington**, who is the father of our country, and **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew**, our worldwide spiritual father, have in common?

They have both been awarded the Congressional Gold Medal: Washington in 1776 and Bartholomew in 1997.

The United States Congress honored the Ecumenical Patriarch for his leadership in the search for world peace, respect for the environment, and greater religious understanding among the people of the world.



*His All-Holiness joined Pope Benedict XVI, Rabbi David Rosen, Wande Abimbola of Nigeria, and hundreds of other religious and spiritual leaders at the Day of Reflection and Prayer for Peace in Assisi, 2011.*



*Turkish schoolchildren on a field trip to the Church of St. George at the Phanar, which has been the Patriarchal Church since 1601.*





# THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH AS THE LEADER OF GLOBAL ORTHODOXY

**H**ow is the authority of an Ecumenical Patriarch different from the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope? Unlike the Pope, an Ecumenical Patriarch does not have “absolute authority” over the entire Orthodox Church. He does not decide what other bishops and their faithful are and are not permitted to do.

Instead, the Ecumenical Patriarch—as “chairman of the board”—brings the bishops together in meetings called “councils” or “synods” to discuss and decide important issues. He does this at two levels:

- For the churches that are part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate—such as the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.
- For the entire Orthodox Church, which is composed of independent (autocephalous, “self-ruling”) Churches, such as the Antiochian Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Churches,



which have their own patriarchs. The Ecumenical Patriarch relates to the other patriarchs as brothers. He has arranged meetings of all the heads of the Orthodox Churches to meet and discuss common matters. In fact, he is working toward holding a great synod of Orthodox bishops from all over the world.

The Ecumenical Patriarch is often asked to resolve disagreements in other patriarchates, to help bishops in other countries, and to assist with the growth of another Orthodox Church. For example, in 1992, the Ecumenical Patriarchate helped restore the Orthodox Church of Albania, which had been almost totally destroyed by the Communist government that had ruled from 1945 to 1991.

## The Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, in order of seniority:

- The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
- The Patriarchate of Alexandria
- The Patriarchate of Antioch
- The Patriarchate of Jerusalem
- The Patriarchate of Russia
- The Patriarchate of Serbia
- The Patriarchate of Romania
- The Patriarchate of Bulgaria
- The Patriarchate of Georgia
- The Church of Cyprus (headed by an archbishop)
- The Church of Greece (headed by an archbishop)
- The Church of Poland (headed by an archbishop)
- The Church of Albania (headed by an archbishop)
- The Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia (headed by an archbishop)

## In addition to the Greek Orthodox Churches in Turkey, the Ecumenical Patriarchate is comprised of:

- The Archdiocese of America
- The Archdiocese of Australia
- The Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain
- The Metropolis of France
- The Metropolis of Germany
- The Metropolis of Austria
- The Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia
- The Metropolis of Belgium
- The Metropolis of New Zealand
- The Metropolis of Switzerland
- The Metropolis of Italy
- The Metropolis of Toronto (Canada)
- The Metropolis of Buenos Aires (South America)
- The Metropolis of Mexico (Central America)
- The Metropolis of Hong Kong
- The Metropolis of Spain and Portugal
- The Metropolis of Korea
- The Metropolis of Singapore



*Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew opens a synaxis (gathering) of the heads of the ancient Patriarchates at the Phanar, 2011. Above, the heads of the Churches celebrate the Divine Liturgy, 2010.*



# THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH GATHERS BISHOPS TO COUNCILS

**St. Gregory the Theologian** was Patriarch of Constantinople in the fourth century, and he is one of the three saints in the Orthodox Church who has the honor of the title “theologian”—one who speaks about God in a true way. St. Gregory was from the area of Cappadocia in Asia Minor. As Patriarch of Constantinople, he confronted confusion about the Holy Spirit. St. Gregory taught that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. At the Second Ecumenical Council, which St. Gregory called in 381, this teaching was agreed upon and added to the Creed. The statement of faith that the First Ecumenical Council had started was then complete.



**St. John Chrysostom** was born in 347 in Antioch. He was trained to be a lawyer, but he chose to serve the Church instead with his talents and passion. When he became Patriarch of Constantinople at age 49, he criticized the extravagant wealth that the empress and other wealthy people displayed. He made many enemies with his boldness, and he was exiled and allowed to return almost immediately. But he was soon banished again, this time to Armenia, because he continued to criticize people who were honoring the empress to the point of almost worshipping her.

We remember St. John for his fearless and skillful preaching and way of compelling people to reflect and think. One of the most meaningful sermons that we hear each year is his Paschal sermon, announcing the victory of life over death through Christ’s resurrection. For St. John, teaching truth was more important than keeping peace with powerful people.



*Pope John Paul II returned the relics of St. Gregory and St. John to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2004. The relics had been stolen during the Fourth Crusade. On the right, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sits to the side of the throne during the Divine Liturgy on the feast day of St. John Chrysostom (November 13).*



## THE HARD QUESTIONS

**H**ave you ever tried to explain something that just can’t be put into words? As you stumble along trying to get it right, to get the truth out, you may put too much emphasis on some parts and overlook others.

For the early Christians, finding the words to describe Jesus Christ’s identity was just this kind of problem: Was Jesus fully God or was He just human? How is Jesus both human and divine? When disagreements and confusion arose around questions like these, the bishops throughout the empire

met in councils (also called “synods,” or meetings). They prayed for guidance from God and studied the issues. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, they worked through the questions, defining and agreeing on the teachings of the Church.

The Orthodox Church calls seven of these councils “ecumenical,” which means their decisions affected the entire Church. In various ways, these seven councils were trying to answer the big question: What is the right way to understand God?

The bishops of the councils knew that the Christian faith is real and life-changing. Like the rock of St. Peter’s faith (Matthew 16:13–19), they wanted to lay a solid foundation for future generations to build on. Even though the Ecumenical Councils took place more than a thousand years ago, they shape our faith and practices to this day.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate continues to call meetings of bishops and theologians to deal with questions facing the Church. In 1923, bishops



Two other Ecumenical Patriarchs who battled controversial ideas in the Church were **St. Methodios** and **St. Tarasios**, both of whom defended the use of icons during the iconoclast controversies, when people destroyed icons and misunderstood their importance and meaning.

In the eighth century, before he was ordained, St. Tarasios actually agreed with the iconoclasts. When he changed his mind, he stepped down from his post as the emperor's secretary and retired to a monastery. Later, when Empress Irene requested that Tarasios take the position of Ecumenical Patriarch, he would not do so until the icons were returned to their rightful place in the Church. He presided over the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787, where icons were restored as a central part of the Church.

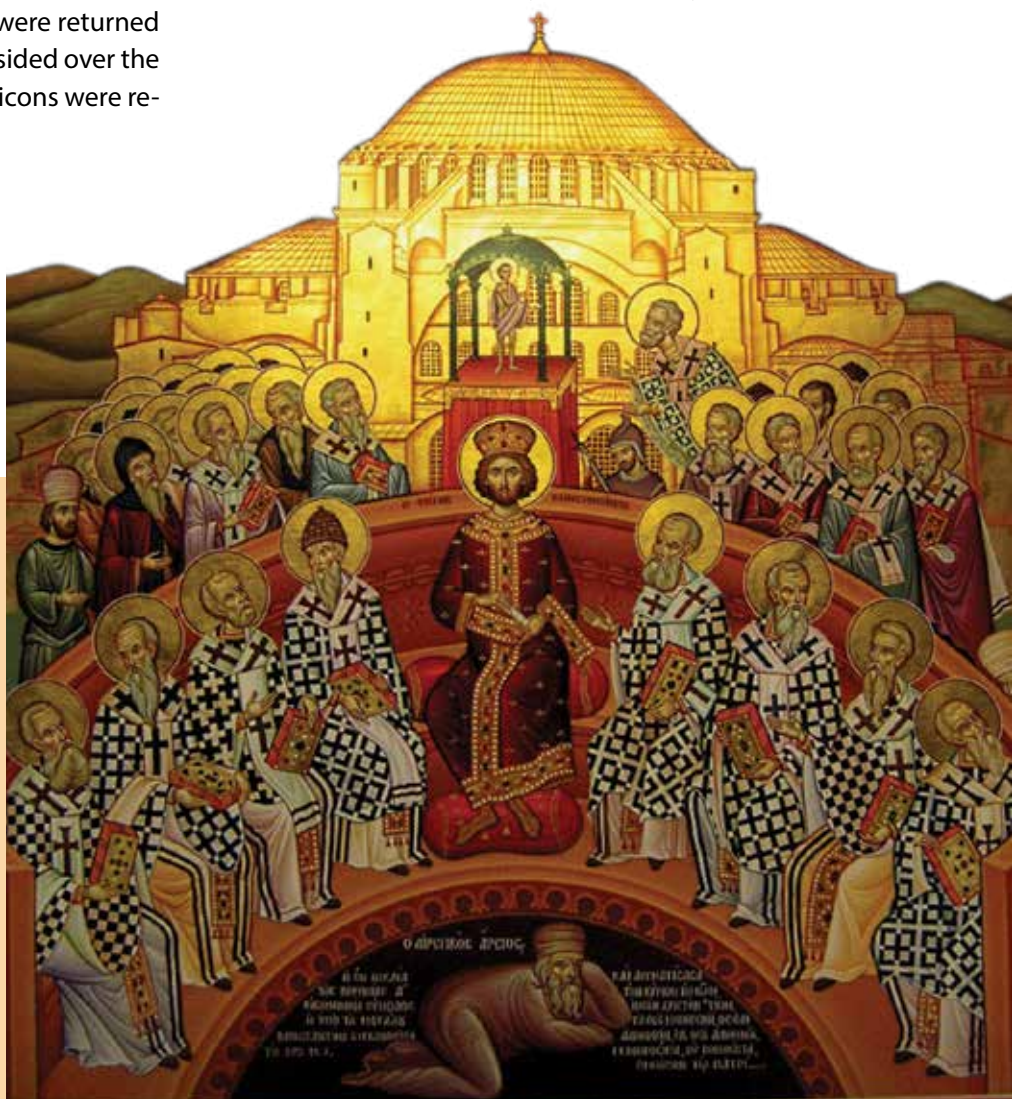


The issue of iconoclasm arose again in the ninth century. St. Methodios, an iconophile (literally, "icon-lover") was imprisoned for a time before he became Ecumenical Patriarch. Surprisingly, an iconoclast emperor set Methodios free, which is a clue that Methodios was the kind of person who could find a moderate middle ground between opposite extreme positions. When iconoclasm was resolved for the last time, Ecumenical

Patriarch Methodios led a triumphant procession in 843 celebrating the return of icons to the Church. We continue celebrating this victory with a procession every year during Lent on the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

from across the Orthodox world met to discuss issues caused by the end of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution. Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras organized meetings in the 1960s to work on the relationships among the Orthodox Churches and among other Christian Churches.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered the leaders of the Orthodox Churches in 1992, 1995, 2000, and 2008 to discuss issues such as greater Orthodox cooperation, the environment, and the fall of Communism.



*St. Constantine gathered bishops to the First Ecumenical Council in 325.*



# THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH WORKS FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

## RECONCILING THE BODY OF CHRIST

**D**ivisions among Christians have happened many times in history, usually over matters of belief. For example, the Armenian, Coptic, and Ethiopian Churches did not accept the decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in 451. The parting of Rome and the other four Patriarchates (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem) in 1054 is known as the "Great Schism." In 1521, Martin Luther's calls for reform within the Roman Catholic Church ended up leading to the creation of the Lutheran Church. Around the same time, King Henry VIII in England separated himself from the Roman Catholic Church, creating the Church of England. Since those days, even more divisions among Christians have occurred.

Since the earliest days of the Church, the Ecumenical Patriarch has always worked to maintain the unity of the Christian Church. For example, after the Fourth Ecumenical Council in 451, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople tried to restore relations with the Christians who rejected its teachings. In 1438, repre-

sentatives of the Ecumenical Patriarch traveled to Italy to try to resolve the division with the Pope. In the sixteenth century, Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II corresponded with Lutheran leaders.

Today, the Ecumenical Patriarch is actively involved in conversations with other Christians, and he coordinates these activities. The Ecumenical Patriarch's representatives join other Christians throughout the world in meetings called "dialogues" to study their differences and try to solve the divisions. Three dialogues have a high priority. The first is with the Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches, such as the Armenian Church, the Coptic Church, and the Ethiopian Church. The second dialogue is with the Roman Catholic Church. The Orthodox Church also participates in many dialogues with Protestant Christians, such as the Anglicans and Lutherans, and through large bodies with many Christians participating, such as the World Council of Churches. All of these efforts are aimed at reconciling all Christians.

*Pope Benedict XVI visiting the Phanar, 2006.*







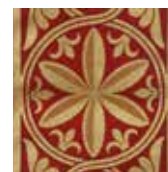
*With Archon Myrepsos (Perfumer) George Savvits, who, along with his colleagues, assisted in preparing the Holy Chrism, 2012.*

## SHARING THE GIFT OF HOLY CHRISM

If you have been baptized and chrismated in the Orthodox Church, then the hands of the Ecumenical Patriarch have extended to bless you and to bring you into the Christian Church. In the Sacrament of Chrismation, you were anointed with Holy Chrism. With this anointing, the gifts (*charismata*) of the Holy Spirit were bestowed on you.

Holy Chrism is oil to which many different essences have been added, such as rose oil. The mixture represents the variety of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. About every ten years, Holy Chrism is blessed by the Ecumenical Patriarch in a four-day process during Holy Week. It is then distributed to the other Orthodox Churches as well as those that are part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, such

as the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto.



The tradition of blessing the oil dates to the time of the Apostles. When the Church was very young and small, it grew with every person who joined through baptism and receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles themselves—who were the bishops—performed “the laying on of hands” for each person. Yet as the Church grew, it became impossible to lay hands on every newly baptized person, so the bishops began to bless and distribute holy oil for this sacrament.

## OTHER FAITHS

The Ecumenical Patriarchate is also in conversation with people of non-Christian faiths, especially Judaism and Islam. The Ecumenical Patriarch encourages other Orthodox bishops and leaders to cooperate with leaders of other faiths, striving toward peace, religious freedom, and respect throughout the world. He experiences firsthand what happens when people from one religious tradition discriminate against those of another. He also helps people of all faiths to focus on universal issues.



*With Rabbi Arthur Schneier in New York, 2009.*



*Speaking on a panel at the Istanbul World Political Forum, 2011.*

For example, leaders of Islam and other faiths join in the work for the environment with the guidance of His All-Holiness. After September 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew convened a historic conference of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders in Brussels, Belgium. The conference issued a very clear statement: “A war in the name of religion is a war against religion.”





# THE ENVIRONMENT

## BRINGING RELIGION AND SCIENCE TOGETHER

September 1 was declared the Day for the Protection of the Environment by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios. He called on Orthodox Christians to thank God for the gift of Creation and to pray for its preservation. Following in his footsteps, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew cares about the entire world—everyone and the earth itself. He teaches that all people must care for the environment.

**To harm the environment is a sin.**

**All people must repent for the damage they have caused to the planet.**

**Even the poorest and weakest persons can take steps to heal the planet.**



He once said, "In former centuries the Church prayed for the protection of all people against natural disasters. We now face the need to pray for the protection of nature against human destruction." Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's care for the environment has led him to be called the "Green Patriarch." For his environmental work, he was named one of the world's "100 Most Influential People" by *Time* magazine in 2008.

In 1995, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew created the Religion, Science, and the Environment (RSE) group, which brought together religious leaders of all faiths, scientists, and political leaders. The group used two ways of looking at the world—from our religious beliefs and our scientific knowledge—to understand the environmental problems of several major rivers and seas and to consider solutions. RSE focused on water because of its importance for the world's health and its spiritual significance.

**Christ calls Himself "the living water."**

**Every human being is made up of 70% water.**

**Our planet itself also is made up of 70% water.**



*Photos top to bottom:*

*In Greece, 2008.*

*Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's home island, Imvros.*

*At the RSE symposium on the Arctic, 2007.*



# CONSTANTINOPLE and the Byzantine Empire

## THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL



St. Constantine the Great.

The Ecumenical Patriarch today leads the Orthodox Christian Church from the same city where St. Andrew established a community of Christians. At the time of St. Andrew, it was called Byzantium. In 330, Emperor Constantine transferred the imperial capital from Rome to Byzantium and renamed

the city New Rome, but many also called it “Constantine’s city”: Constantinople.

As the capital, Constantinople grew in power and wealth. Although we call it the Byzantine Empire, the people at that time saw themselves as continuing the Roman Empire. They called themselves Romans—and are even now called *Rum* in Turkey—although their ancestry, culture, and language were Greek.



Map of Constantinople in 1422.

For centuries, the empire filled the lands around the Mediterranean Sea and stretched as far as Britain to the north and what is today’s Iraq to the east. The emperor ruled all this from Constantinople, and the Ecumenical Patriarch was the leader of the Church. It was the imperial capital for more than one thousand years. When the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople in 1453, the city became the capital of the Ottoman Empire, until 1923.



These scenes of the history of Constantinople are from a famous chronicle written by John Skylitzes in the 11th century. Above, Emperor Theophilos outlawed the veneration of icons in 832 and executed those who disobeyed.



Due to political struggles, St. Ignatios was twice banished to a monastery and later brought back as Ecumenical Patriarch, from 847–858 and 867–877.



# HAGIA SOPHIA



The Church of Christ as Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia, is one of the most important buildings in the life and story of the Orthodox Church. Many of the Christian emperors who followed Constantine built churches to show their support of the Faith. Emperor Constantius, son of St. Constantine, built the largest church in the world in the 360. Sadly, this first building was destroyed by angry mobs in 404.

In 415, Emperor Theodosius rebuilt the church, and again it was destroyed by angry mobs in 532.

For the third and last time, the Emperor Justinian ordered construction of a new church, which took five years to complete. It was the centerpiece of a large complex of buildings, a stadium, and the Cathedral of the Patriarchate, which was dedicated to Hagia Irene (Holy Peace).

In 537, the Hagia Sophia—or the Great Church, as it was also called—was complete. For more than 500 years, the new church was the largest building in Europe. Thousands of people could attend Divine Liturgy or other services there at one time. Its dome was the largest ever built at that time. The church's many windows fill it with

light. Its center doors were called the Royal Doors because only the emperor and the patriarch could use them. Inside, the faithful could see the emperor, in his crown and purple and gold robes, offer his gifts to the Church, surrounded by his court and other officials.



During its time as Christianity's center of worship, the church was served by 80 priests, 150 deacons, 60 subdeacons, 160 readers, 25 chanters, and 75 doorkeepers—all at one time! The way liturgy was celebrated there influenced how the liturgy was celebrated throughout the Orthodox world.

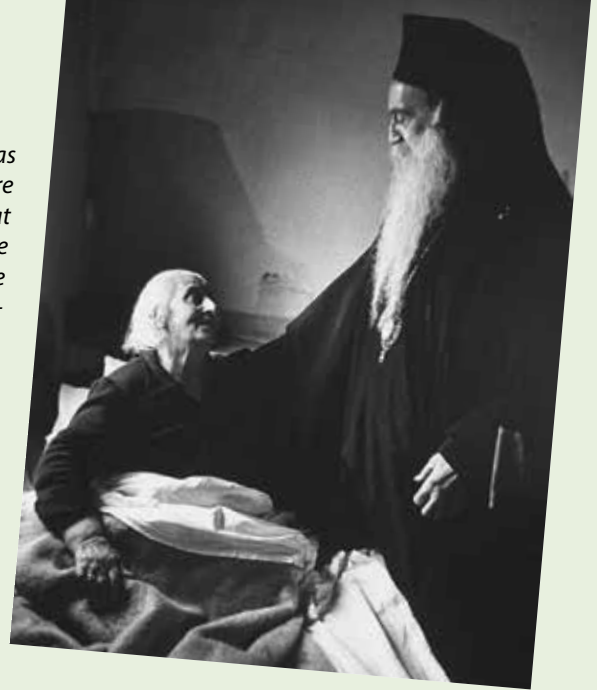
When Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the Hagia Sophia was immediately converted into a mosque, called *Ayasofya*. Minarets (tall towers) were added to the building for Islamic worship. Many of the icons in the church were plastered over or damaged (above, right), and Islamic calligraphy and symbols were added. Even so, the Hagia Sophia's architecture has influenced the way mosques are built throughout the Islamic world to this day.

In 1935, the Hagia Sophia became a museum. Since then, restorers have been uncovering and repairing some of the icons and mosaics in the building. For example, the mosaic above on the left is more than 600 years old, and it was discovered under plaster in 1938. The full mosaic shows the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist praying to Christ (a type of icon known as a deisis).





*Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras often visited the faithful who were elderly or sick in their homes or at the Baloukli Hospital in Istanbul. The hospital was founded in 1753 by the city's Greek community. Today, Baloukli is part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and it is primarily a nursing home and psychiatric clinic. It serves all the people of Turkey, especially those who need treatment for drug or alcohol abuse.*



## "FEED MY SHEEP"

As the Byzantine Empire's borders were expanding, its society thrived. One of the most important elements of this civilization was that the Patriarch of Constantinople and the emperor worked together to care for all people, especially those in need. (There was no "separation of church and state" as we understand it today.)

### Philanthropy

Search

Activities that promote human well-being; charity; from the Greek words *philos* (to love as a friend) and *anthropos* (humanity).

Philanthropy was more than a nice idea in Byzantine society; helping the poor, the orphans, the sick, and the old was ingrained in the minds of the Byzantine Christians. Caring for the needy was

at the top of the to-do list—St. John Chrysostom insisted on giving even when his own church in Antioch was having trouble making ends meet. No matter how much or how little the Church or society had, there was always enough to give.

But why? Because Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, sacrificed everything to heal and save us. This is a model for how we need to care for others—going much further than the "Golden Rule." We love one another because we are all created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26).

The Byzantine people were carrying on an ancient Greek tradition of philanthropy. Through their temples, the ancient Greeks had established institutions for the needy. The father of medicine, Hippocrates, advised doctors to work without monetary pay. In the third century, Sts. Cosmas and Damian continued this example in the name of Christ. These saints are called "unmercenary," meaning that they served without pay.

As the Church grew, parishes and monasteries established poorhouses, orphanages with schools, hospitals, hospices, and "foundling homes" for deserted infants. Bishops guided many of these institutions. Monks, nuns, and others worked in them. The orphanage of St. Paul in Constantinople, founded in 565, was so large that it would take a person a full day to walk through it.



Who is Jesus talking about in John 21:15–18 and Matthew 25:33–46?

Saints Cosmas and Damian hold medicine boxes and spoons.





# 1054: The Great SCHISM

Like any empire, Byzantium had enemies, and it defended its territories with its army. In its thousand-year history, the empire expanded, shrank, and expanded again. Over time, the large empire began to show signs of disunity. Emperors had trouble protecting the western portion of the empire from enemies, and they lost control of the situation. In 800, Pope Leo crowned Charlemagne as emperor of the Romans, rejecting the authority of the (Byzantine) Roman emperor in the east.

Communication was another problem. In the west, the people spoke Latin, and in the east, they spoke Greek. There were also many different practices in the liturgy, such as the kind of bread to be used for Holy Communion.

Over the years, the bishops of Rome and Constantinople began to disagree on questions of authority, church organization, and beliefs. The Pope wanted to be recognized as the supreme head of the Church. Although the other Patriarchs honored Rome as the city of Sts. Peter and Paul, they did not believe that the Pope should govern the entire Church.

These conflicts reached boiling point in the year 1054. At a meeting in Constantinople to discuss the problem, the representative of Pope Leo IX, Cardinal Humbert, excommunicated Ecumenical Patriarch Michael Keroularios. In turn, the Patriarch excommunicated the Cardinal. This was a serious injury to the body of Christ—the Great Schism of 1054.

After this split, the Roman bishop held authority over Christians in Rome and the west, while the other four bishops in the east continued to lead their Churches throughout the Orthodox World. To this day, the Pope leads the Roman Catholic Church, and the Ecumenical Patriarch is the first among equals, the leading bishop of the Orthodox Church.

Right and true teachings can pass from teacher to student, through the years and centuries. Another Ecumenical Patriarch, **St. Photios**, was born into a family that defended the use of icons—he was the nephew of St. Tarasios. He became Ecumenical Patriarch in the ninth century, and we remember him most for his defense of the Orthodox faith on points of difference with Western Christians.

He was also a teacher of Sts. Cyril and Methodios, the brothers who went to Bulgaria and other Slavic lands, converting many people to Christianity. They translated the Bible into Slavonic, opening the Christian message to all the people who spoke Slavic languages.



Before he was Ecumenical Patriarch, the iconoclast John VII was reportedly an ambassador of Emperor Theophilos. Here, he gives gifts to the caliph on a mission to Baghdad around 829.



Khan Boris of Bulgaria invited the Christianization of his country. He took the name Michael when he was baptized around 865.





*In Orthodox Christian tradition, the Holy Mandylion is a cloth relic showing the face of Christ. It is said that Jesus sent the cloth to King Abgar of Edessa to heal the king's leprosy. This illumination shows the people of Edessa surrendering it to the conquering Byzantines on August 19, 944; we still commemorate this "icon-made-without-hands" on that day. Some historians report that Crusaders took it back to France after they sacked Constantinople. Above, on the left is a Russian icon of the Mandylion from the 12th century.*

## The CRUSADES

In the eleventh century, the Roman Catholic Church and Western European rulers organized armies to recapture the Holy Lands from the Islamic armies that had conquered them centuries earlier. From 1095 to 1292, nine crusades were launched. The Fourth Crusade, which began in 1202, had a disastrous effect on Constantinople and the Orthodox Church. Instead of proceeding to Jerusalem, the crusaders attacked Constantinople, which was called "the city of the world's desire." In 1204, they sacked the city, including the Church of Hagia Sophia. Many religious treasures were stolen. Today, many of them are in museums throughout Europe, especially in Venice.

For nearly sixty years, crusaders controlled Constantinople, establishing their own emperor. In 1261, the Byzantine emperor, who had moved to Nicaea, was finally able to reconquer Constantinople. The Fourth Crusade damaged the relationship between Christians of the east and of the west, in many ways far worse than the events of 1054 had. It would be hundreds of years before they would try to repair the relationship.

In 2001 and again in 2004, Pope John Paul II asked for forgiveness for the Roman Church's sins against the Eastern Churches, expressing his "pain and disgust" at the events. In 2004—the 800th anniversary of the Fourth Crusade—Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew accepted this apology for the Sack of Constantinople. He then asked the Pope to take another step forward: returning the relics of two Ecumenical Patriarchs, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom, which had been stolen from their rightful place in Constantinople in 1204. The Pope gladly agreed, and the Ecumenical Patriarch accompanied the relics home on November 27, 2004, which we now celebrate as a feast day.

*Crusaders brought these huge bronze horses from Constantinople to Venice's Cathedral of St. Mark.*





# 1453!

## Ottoman Takeover

In the late Middle Ages, another power was steadily advancing on the Byzantine world, this time from the east: the Turks. After 1261, the Byzantine Empire steadily lost territory to the Turks. Over the next two centuries, Constantinople's population dwindled from a high of about 400,000 to only about 50,000 inhabitants.

In April 1453, Sultan Mehmet II attacked and surrounded the city with his army of about 150,000 troops. The city was defended by only about 8,000 soldiers. After more than a month of siege and cannon bombardment, Constantinople fell on May 29. The last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI Palaeologos, was killed in the battle for the city. The sultan's army raided Constantinople, destroying many churches and buildings, and killing many people. The sultan made Constantinople his new capital.



*Sultan Mehmet enters the gates of Constantinople.*

The Ottoman Turks had ultimate authority, and the sultans could and did take advantage of their power over the Patriarchs and the people. The Christians were second-class citizens in the Muslim world, and they suffered in many ways. For example, whenever a new sultan took power, he required a "gift" from the Ecumenical Patriarch. This "gift" was a kind of tax that the sultan imposed at any rate he decided, and eventually it put the Ecumenical Patriarch into deep debt. Christians were also required to pay higher taxes than Muslims. Christian boys were taken away from their families, forced to convert to Islam, and made to serve in the Ottoman army—this unit was known as the Janissaries.

The sultan also assumed the right to depose (kick out) the Ecumenical Patriarch from his position, and then place him back in power whenever he felt like it. For example, Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril Lucaris was removed and placed back in his seat of authority seven times! This was very challenging to the Christian people, and their faith had to be strong to remain loyal to Jesus Christ, to their Church, and to their leader.



*Constantine XI Palaeologos.*



# Ecumenical Patriarch Gennadios Scholarios



**We** remember Ecumenical Patriarch **Gennadios Scholarios** as a representative of the ancient Christian tradition at the time when Byzantium was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, in the fifteenth century. He refused to leave the city. The sultan allowed the Ecumenical Patriarch to remain as the leader of the Greek Orthodox people. Scholarios would represent the people to the sultan and would be responsible for keeping the Orthodox people loyal to the empire. The sultan granted him authority both as the religious leader and the "ethnarch," which means that he had political control over all Orthodox people in Ottoman territories. Scholarios had authority over a separate court system that operated independently of Islamic law, and he preserved Orthodox ceremonies in these courts.

## Ethnarch

Search X

The ruler of a *millet* (a people or a religious community that had been conquered by the Ottoman Empire) appointed by the sultan or government of Turkey.

His arrangements with the sultan are mainly responsible for the rulings on how Christians would live under the Ottomans for centuries thereafter. For this reason, he was very influential in the lives of Christians under his authority, and Christians over the course of history. His dealings with the Islamic authorities are important as an example of how a person of faith may need to interact with people of other faiths, especially when questions of power are at play.



*Sultan Mehmet granting privileges to Ecumenical Patriarch Gennadios Scholarios. This mosaic and the one on the cover hang in the entrance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.*



# TOURKOKRATIA-

## Greeks under Turkish Rule

For almost 400 years, the Ottoman Turks ruled all of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Greece, the Balkans, and the Middle East (including today's Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Israel). Some Greek Orthodox Christians prospered in the Ottoman Empire. They were good merchants, knew how to run institutions well, and believed in the power of education. However, they were always subject to the power of the Ottoman rulers. And because most Greeks had fewer opportunities, they fled to more distant areas of the empire. Eventually, many left to find religious freedom in democratic countries, such as the United States. The Greek Christians of the diaspora no longer had an emperor to rule them politically, but they continued to look to the guidance of their Church leader, the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Since the final end of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, when the modern nation of Turkey was proclaimed, a new government has ruled from a new capital city, Ankara. Constantinople was soon renamed Istanbul. A treaty was written to protect the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Orthodox Christian people remaining in Istanbul. However, under Turkish rule, the Ecumenical Patriarch and many Christians still live as second-class citizens. They sometimes fear for their safety. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew works hard to change these conditions.

### Diaspora

Search

The scattering of a people from their homeland.



## Saint Gregory V

Many Greek Orthodox people remember March 25, 1821, as the day when Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the Greek flag in a declaration of Greek independence from Turkish rule. Yet not as many of us are aware of what happened a little more than two

weeks later at the Ecumenical Patriarchate. There, the Turkish sultan reminded the Greek people living in Constantinople that the freedom they wanted would come at a high price. April 10, 1821, was Pascha. Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V had just concluded the Liturgy celebrating Christ's Resurrection when he was grabbed from the altar of the Patriarchal Church of St. George and hanged outside the main doors of the patriarchate.

This Ecumenical Patriarch was a martyr for the Orthodox Christian faith and for the freedom of his people; at his violent death, he was still wearing his vestments. As a gesture of reverence for his sacrifice, the doors in front of which he was hanged were welded shut and have not

been reopened since that day. His relics are enshrined in the Cathedral of Athens, where they were taken for safe-keeping.

*Each year, the Ecumenical Patriarch lights a candle at the gate where St. Gregory V was hanged.*





# 1955: The Istanbul Pogrom

Even today, many minority populations such as Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and Kurds, live in Turkey. Their lives have not been easy under Turkish rule. September 6, 1955, was a tragic day. A false rumor had spread among the Turkish majority that the birthplace of their president, Mustafa Kemal "Ataturk," had been bombed in the city of Thessaloniki the day before. Many Turkish citizens were enraged and took out their anger on the minority populations living in Istanbul and along the Bosphorus. For twenty-four hours, looters raided Greek-owned businesses, homes, and even cemeteries. About 4,500 homes, 3,500 businesses, 90 religious institutions, and 36 schools were destroyed. This tragic and frightening day is known as the Istanbul Pogrom. The violence was mostly aimed at Greeks, but Jews and Armenians were also targets of the anger. After the pogrom, many of the Greeks of Istanbul began to leave the city, moving to Greece, the United States, or other parts of the world.

## Pogrom

Search

A riot directed at a specific ethnic or religious group.



*The 19th century chapel at Holy Transfiguration Monastery on Halki (Heybeliada) Island was destroyed in the pogrom of 1955. The Archons, with a gift from Dr. Stephen and Dr. Anna Yallourakis, undertook to rebuild the chapel. However, in 2007, after work was nearly complete, Turkish forestry officials vandalized the site. Today they are in court seeking compensation to restore the chapel.*



*Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras prays at the overturned altar of the Panagia church in Veligradion after the pogrom.*



*During a Real Break mission trip, a college student helps clean up a cemetery that was desecrated during the Istanbul Pogrom.*





## The Ecumenical Patriarchate TODAY

As we learn about the lives and struggles of the Ecumenical Patriarchs, it is helpful to keep our Faith and the history of the Church in mind. In the early days, Christians were a small minority among believers of another religion who held political power. From a Christ-centered perspective, we can see a similar struggle in the situation of the Ecumenical Patriarch.



For 400 years under the Ottomans, and now for almost 100 years under the modern Turkish government, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has had limited freedom to fulfill its role. Some problems that the Ecumenical Patriarch faces today:

- Only a Turkish citizen may become Ecumenical Patriarch. Turkey is now allowing non-Turkish bishops to apply for Turkish citizenship. Once they are granted citizenship, they will be eligible to become Ecumenical Patriarch.

Even so, the government still has the power to block candidates from becoming Patriarch. This means that the government tightly controls who will be allowed to lead the Orthodox Church, and it allows only a few people to be part of the decision.

- The Turkish government will not call our Church's leader the "Ecumenical Patriarch," a title that has been used for 1,500 years. The government claims that the Ecumenical Patriarch is the leader of Orthodox Christians only

in Turkey, and not throughout the world. No matter how much work the Ecumenical Patriarch does with other churches, religions, and groups in the world, the government in his own country will not recognize his global role and influence.

- In Turkey, minority religious institutions (which also include those of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews) do not have their own religious buildings or other property. And they cannot go to the courts in Turkey to claim or defend their rights.
- In 1971, Turkish authorities closed the Orthodox Theological School on the island of Halki. This was the school where future priests were educated and trained to serve the Church.
- The government has confiscated numerous properties such as orphanages, schools, churches, and land. Remember how central these types of institutions were to the culture of philanthropy and love in Byzantium, built for the service of all people.

The worldwide leader of our Orthodox Faith and our Orthodox brothers and sisters in Turkey share our Creed, our Liturgy, our Scripture, and our Tradition, but they do not share our religious freedom.





# SIGNS OF HOPE

Ninety percent of the people of Turkey are Muslim. Orthodox Christians are not alone in being unable to freely practice the Faith—religious freedom does not exist for other religious minorities there, either.

Facing so many obstacles, it must seem just as easy for the Ecumenical Patriarchate to find a new home. But for His All-Holiness and the Orthodox Christian people there, Turkey *is* home. But there are other, more important reasons for them to stay. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew remembers what Patriarch Athenagoras said: “Although our population is diminished, we are still countless be-

cause of the saints, the prophets, and the martyrs who lived here.” Constantinople and Turkey are the home of the Ecumenical Councils, the place where our Liturgy was formed—where Christians have lived and made history for centuries.

There have been breakthroughs and there is hope that a new era has begun. Through the leadership of His All-Holiness and the efforts of the Archons and other friends of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the government of Turkey has begun to allow the Ecumenical Patriarchate to fulfill its mission.

## where our Liturgy was formed



*The historic orphanage that Turkey returned to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2010 will now become the Center for Peace and the Environment. The government has also agreed to return other properties it had seized. However, the orphanage will need to be completely restored at an unknown cost.*



For decades, Ecumenical Patriarchs rarely left Turkey because they were afraid they would not be able to return. Today, His All-Holiness travels throughout the world, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Orthodox Church. He holds conferences about the environment, lectures at universities, and attends gatherings of religious leaders of all faiths. Yet the Turkish government will not honor his title as “ecumenical.”

*Above with Iranian president Mohammad Khatami in Tehran, 2004, and top photo with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in New York, 2009.*



## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

states that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion” and “to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.”



*In 2011, the National Young Adult Pilgrimage visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate and sites throughout Turkey. They took a hot air balloon ride in Cappadocia, a region that is filled with Orthodox Christian history. Back on the ground, at the Goreme open-air museum, the participants could climb the pillar where St. Simeon lived.*

In the United States, religious people are free to live without threat from the government because of their faith. The First Amendment of the Constitution does not allow the government to make laws that would “establish a religion” or “prohibit the free exercise” of religion by the people. Today, people in the United States practice many religions, and they live peacefully alongside one another. This is not the situation in many other countries, where people of faith may live in fear of those from other religions.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Religious freedom is just the beginning. Religious tolerance and peace among the religions requires learning and working to develop good and peaceful relations with people of other faiths, even when we disagree with their beliefs.
- Support the Ecumenical Patriarchate by working on behalf of religious freedom for all people throughout the world. Ask your elected government officials—city, state, and national—to pass resolutions supporting religious freedom for the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Visit [www.archons.org](http://www.archons.org) to see which states have already passed resolutions.
- Get involved by caring for the environment and tell people you are doing this because the Orthodox Church, under the leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, teaches us to care for the natural world.
- You can even go to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. And, if he is there, you can visit the Ecumenical Patriarch and receive his blessing.
- You can also see the many historic Orthodox Christian sites throughout Turkey. They are famous for their icons, their churches, and other buildings. More importantly, these are places where the great saints of our Church lived and taught, where Orthodox Christianity was established, and where Orthodox Christians lived for centuries.



*Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visiting the Phanar, 2011.*





As Greek Orthodox Christians in the United States, we honor the leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Learning his story is a part of learning our own story, and it reminds us of our connection to history and to the worldwide community of Orthodox Christians. The 1,700-year history of the Orthodox Christian Church, the Byzantine Empire, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate fills many books. We have barely scratched the surface.

Christ tells us that we are “the light of the world” and that we must let our light shine (Matthew 5:14–16). This is the way the Ecumenical Patriarch and Christians have lived as light. When the Ottomans took over Constantinople, many Greek Orthodox Christians gathered in an area of the city called the Phanar (*Fener* in Turkish). Literally the “lantern” or “light,” the Phanar has been the site of the Ecumenical Patriarchate since 1601. This was the place from which the Christians of Istanbul have shone as beacons of faith in the midst of the dark challenges they have endured for centuries.



Meeting with President Barack Obama in the Oval Office, 2009.

# we are “the light of the world”



First among Equals:  
The Ecumenical Patriarchate  
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## Text

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## Icons and Art

Front cover: Mosaic from the Ecumenical Patriarchate

p. 5: St. Andrew icon by St. Andrei Rublev

p. 9: Sakkos (17th c., Iveron)

p. 12: Sts. Gregory and John icons by St. Andrei Rublev and his student

p. 13: Icon from Megalo Meteoro, Greece

pp. 17, 20, 21: Illuminations from the *Madrid Skylitzes*, Biblioteca Nacional de España (12th c., John Skylitzes)

p. 17: Bust of Constantine; *Map of Constantinople* – Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (1422, Cristoforo Buondelmonti)

p. 19: Icon of St. Andrew by Theologic

p. 21: Icon of the Holy Mandylion (12th c.); 1980s replica of the ~4th c. BC Quadriga (displayed inside San Marco, Venice)

p. 22: *Mehmed II enters the Gates of Constantinople* (Fausto Zonaro, 1854–1929); Statue of Constantine XI Palaeologos (Athens)

p. 23: Mosaic from the Ecumenical Patriarchate

p. 24: *Execution of Patriarch Gregory V* (Nikiphoros Lytras, 1832–1904)

## Photos

C. Coman: 20

T. Efthimiadis: 22

Errabee: 21

D. Kaloumenos: 25

N. Manginas: 1, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29

C. Meares: 28

J. Mindala: 1, 7

J. Moore: 13

Éamonn O’Brien-Strain: 18

D. Panagos: 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16, 27, 29

S. Ramson: 15

S. Roll, courtesy of Ionian Village: 5

B. Roller, Catholic News Service: 10

I. Scott: 18

D. Spender: 1, 18

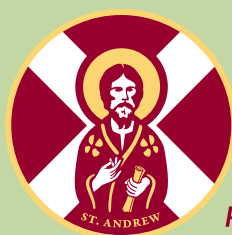
P. Thorp: 25

J. Treviño: 14

N. Tzetzis: 9

S. Vlasov / K. Novotarsky: 6, 29





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