



Church History



Three Councils *Guardians of the Faith*

2025-11-01

audio.stmary-ottawa.org/sermons/2025/SMO-2025-11-01-Church-History.pdf

CHURCH HISTORY

and our faith

Why does **CHURCH HISTORY** *matter ?*



- So that we understand the foundation of our **faith** and how the Church protected Orthodox teaching
- The Church faced challenges from the outside (**persecution**) and from the inside (**heresies**)
- Heroes of faith kept the apostolic teachings pure from heresies
- Councils were gatherings of bishops to address threats, to correct doctrine and preserve apostolic teaching

heroes of the faith

1st Century

- **John** the Beloved
- **Clement** of Rome
- **Ignatius** of Antioch
- **Polycarp** of Smyrna



Early Church (4th - 5th Centuries)

- **Athanasius** the Apostolic
- **Basil** the Great
- **Gregory** the Theologian
- **Cyril** the Pillar of Faith

Early Councils

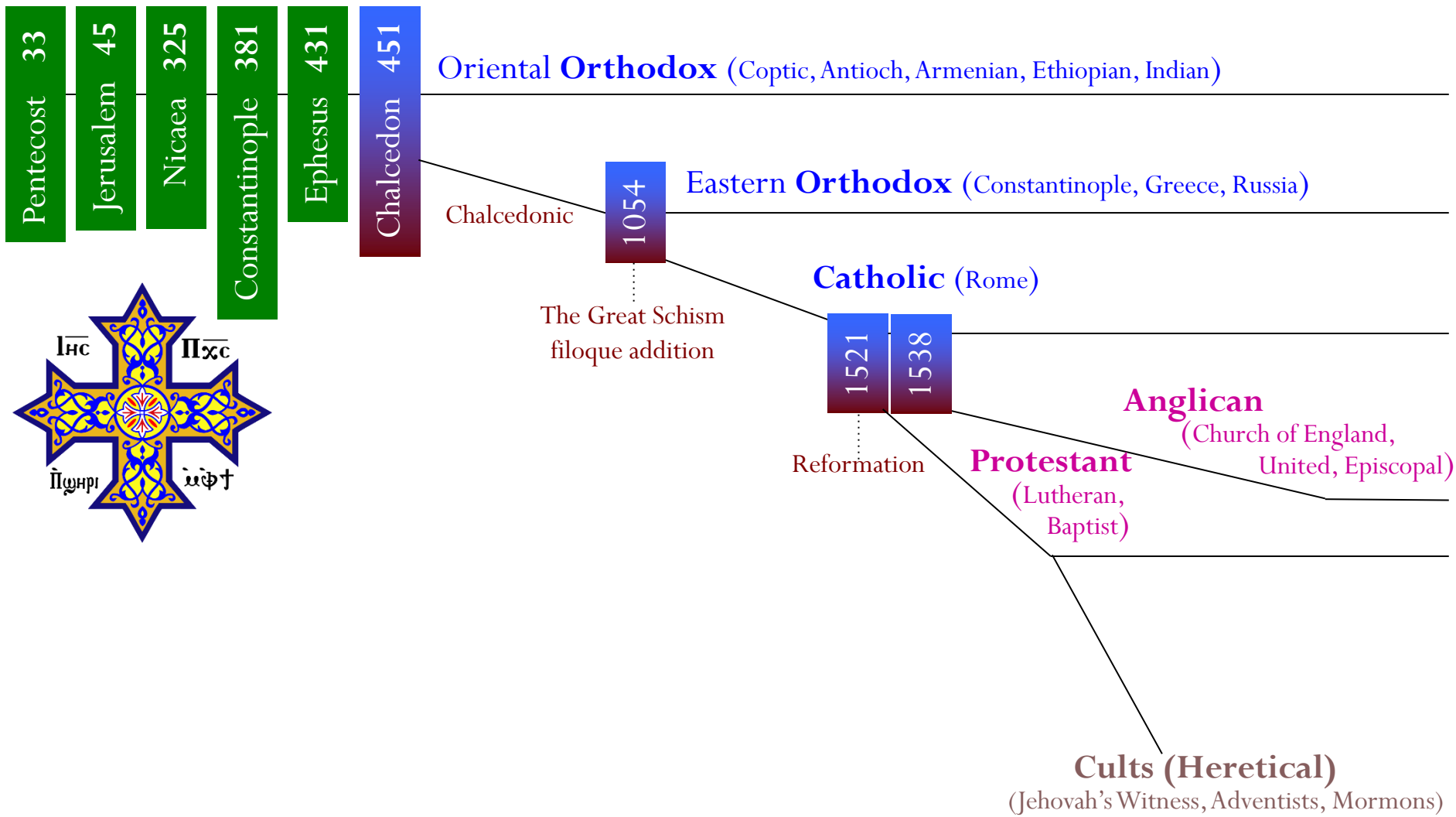
- **Nicaea** (325 AD)
- **Constantinople** (381 AD)
- **Ephesus** (431 AD)

CHURCH HISTORY

The robe of Christ is not to be torn!

TODAY'S FOCUS

- **The first 450 years of Christianity, the Church was united**
 - There were heresies that tried to divide & disrupt the church
 - Church fathers fought against the heresies, defending the faith
- **In 451**, the Western (Roman **Catholic**) & **Eastern Orthodox Churches** incorrectly accused the **Oriental Orthodox Church** of being **Monophysite** (believing in only one nature of Christ)
 - The Oriental Churches are **Miaphysite** (united nature of Christ)
 - Eastern & Oriental Orthodox Churches reconciled in modern time
- **In 1054**, the **Western** (Roman Catholic) & **Eastern Orthodox Churches** were split, in what is known as “**the Great Schism**”
 - **Rome** had wanted to exercise **authority** over all other Churches
- **In 1500's, Protestant & Anglican** split off from Catholicism



Timeline of Christian Denominations

Do you know your Agpeya?



Do you know your Agpeya?

Coptic Reader

Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



< Agpeya



1st Hour



3rd Hour



6th Hour



9th Hour



11th Hour



12th Hour



Veil



Midnight



Prayers

THE AGPEYA



The Coptic Prayer Book
of the Seven Hours

From our Agpeya prayers ...

● Pauline Epistle (Ephesians 4:1-5)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism.

● The **Faith** of the Church

One is God the Father of everyone. One is His Son, Jesus Christ the Word, who took flesh and died and rose from the dead on the third day, and raised us with Him. One is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, one in His hypostasis, proceeding from the Father, purifying the whole creation, and teaching us to worship the Holy Trinity, one in divinity and one in essence. We praise Him and bless Him forever. Amen.

Do you know the Liturgy?



Which part of the Liturgy is this?



youtube.com/watch?v=ke_DeHVdT40&t=9731s

Commemoration of the Saints

Priest:

As this, O Lord, is the command of
Your only-begotten Son, that we
share in the commemoration of
Your saints,

graciously accord, O Lord, to
remember all the saints who have
pleased You since the beginning:

our holy fathers the patriarchs, the
prophets, the apostles, the
preachers, the evangelists, the
martyrs, the confessors, and all the
spirits of the righteous perfected in
the faith.

Most of all, the pure, full-of-glory,
ever-virgin, holy Theotokos, Saint
Mary, who truly gave birth to God
the Logos.

ΠΙΟΥΗΒ:

ΕΠΙΔΗ ΠΒΟΙC ΟΥΔΕΑΖΝΙ ΠΕ ΝΤΕ
ΠΕΚΜΟΝΟΣΕΝΗC ΝΨΗΡΙ:
ΕΘΡΕΝΕΡΨΗΡ ΕΠΙΕΡΨΜΕΥΙ ΝΤΕ
ΝΗΕΘΟΥΑΒ ΝΤΑΚ.

ΔΡΙΚΑΤΑΞΙΟΙΝ ΠΒΟΙC ΝΤΕΚΕΡΨΜΕΥΙ
ΝΗΕΘΟΥΑΒ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΕΤΑΥΡΑΝΑΚ
ΙCΧΕΝ ΠΕΝΕΖ.

ΠΕΝΙΟ† ΕΘΟΥΑΒ: ΝΙΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗC
ΝΙΠΡΟΨΗΤΗC ΝΙΔΠΟCΤΟΛΟC
ΝΙΡΕΨΖΙΩΨ ΝΙΕΥΑΣΤΕΛΙCΤΗC
ΝΙΜΑΡΤΥΡΟC ΝΙΟΜΟΛΟΓΙΤΗC: ΝΕΜ
ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΝΙΒΕΝ ΝΘΜΗ ΕΤΑΥΧΩΚ
ΕΒΟΛ ΞΕΝ ΦΝΑΖ†.

ΠΖΟΥΟ ΔΕ ΘΗΕΘΟΥΑΒ ΘΜΕΖ ΝΨΟΥ
ΕΤΟΙ ΑΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC ΝCΗΟΥ ΝΙΒΕΝ:
†ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟC ΕΘΟΥΑΒ: †ΑΣΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ:
ΘΗΕΤΑCΧΨΕ ΦΝΟΥ† ΠΙΛΟCΤΟC ΞΕΝ
ΟΥΜΕΘΜΗ.

*Who are the ...
 318 assembled at Nicaea,
 the 150 at Constantinople, and the 200 at Ephesus*



the three hundred and eighteen
 assembled at Nicea; the one
 hundred and fifty at Constantinople;
 and the two hundred at Ephesus;

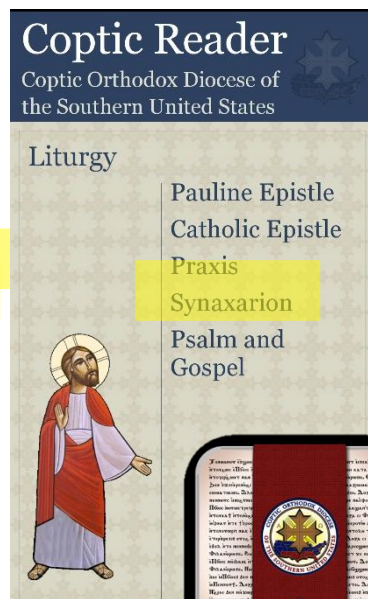
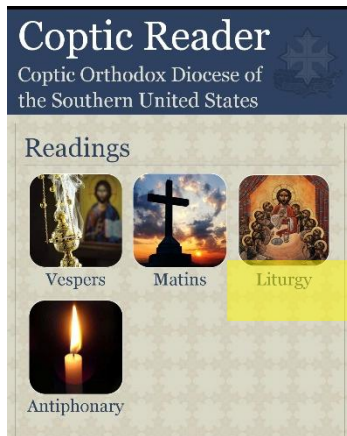
Νεμ πιτῖη (πιωουτ πε μητῶμην)
 ἐταρωοντ̄ ζεν Νικεᾶ: νεμ πιρῆ
 (πιπε τεβι) ἵτε
 Κωσταντινοπολις: νεμ πῖς
 (πῖςναρ πε) ἵτε Εφεσος.

Do you know the Synaxarion?

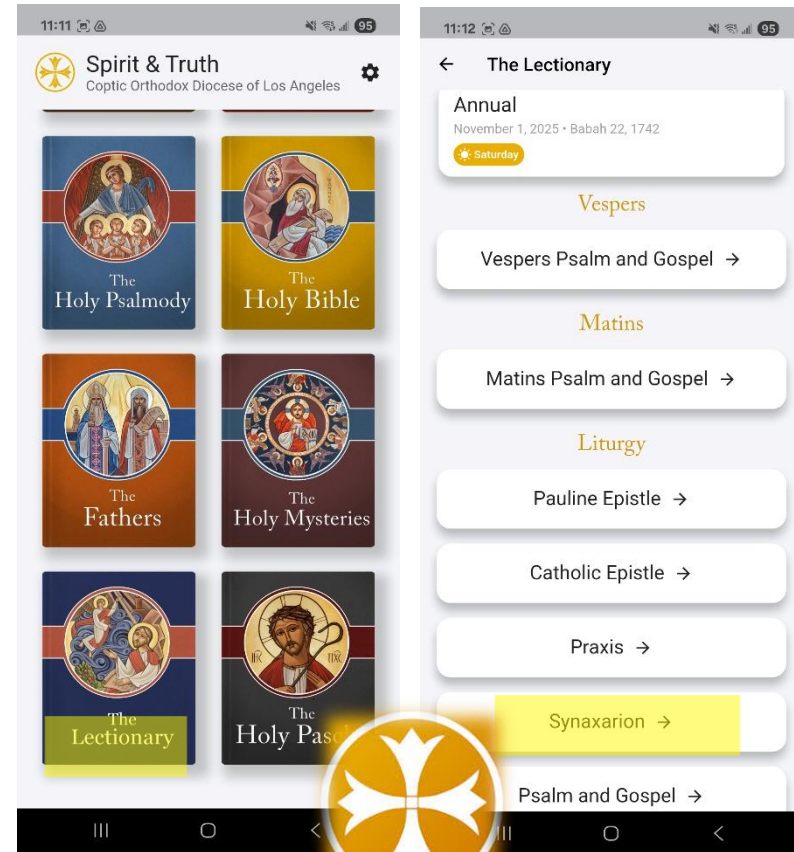


CHURCH HISTORY

Our *Synaxarion* continues the Book of Acts!



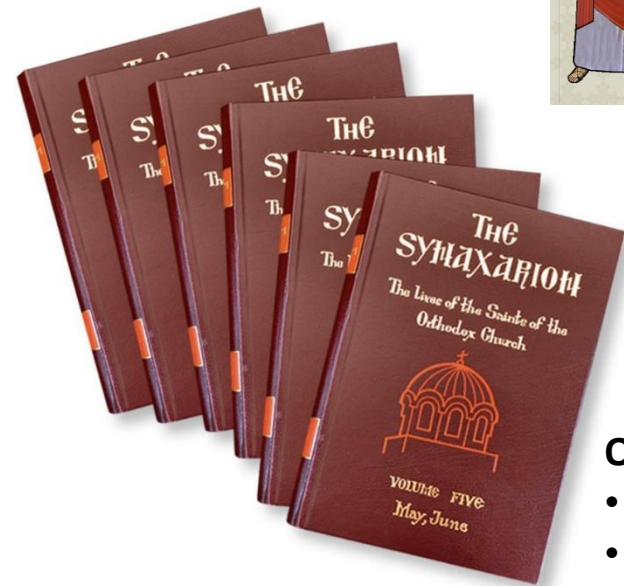
Coptic Reader



Spirit and Truth

Online Resources:

- abanoub.org.au/Synaxarium.html
- copticchurch.net/synaxarium/all/en

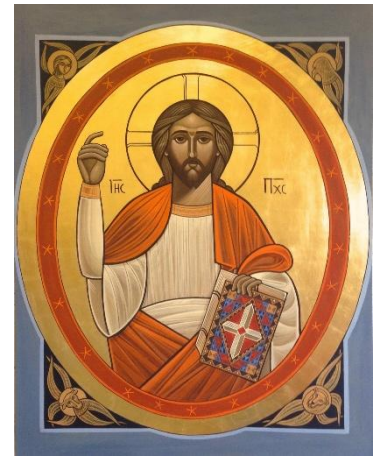


Saint	Timeframe	Titles	Reference
The Virgin Mary	First Christian Century	Holy Theotokos	Tobe 21
John the Baptist	First Christian Century	Forerunner, Baptist, Martyr	Thoout 2
Saint Stephen	First Christian Century	Archdeacon & Protomartyr	Tobe 1
Saint Mark	12 AD – 68 AD	1 st Patriarch of Alexandria, Holy Apostle & Martyr	Parmoute 30
Severus	Departed 538 AD	Patriarch of Antioch	Meshir 14
Dioscorus	Departed 451 AD	25 th Patriarch of Alexandria	Thoout 7
Athanasius	296 AD – 373 AD	20 th Patriarch of Alexandria, The Apostolic	Pashons 7
Pope Peter	Departed 311 AD	17 th Patriarch of Alexandria, Holy Seal of the Martyrs	Hathor 29
John Chrysostom	347 AD – 407 AD	Patriarch of Constantinople	Hathor 17
Theodosius	Departed 567 AD	33 rd Patriarch of Alexandria	Paone 28
Theophilus	Departed 404 AD	23 rd Patriarch of Alexandria	Paope 18
Demetrius	Departed 224 AD	12 th Patriarch of Alexandria	Paope 12
Cyril	376 AD – 444 AD	24 th Patriarch of Alexandria, Theologian	Epip 3
Basil	335 AD – 379 AD	The Great, Bishop of Caesarea, of the Cappadocian Fathers	Tobe 6
Gregory	329 AD – 390 AD	Theologian, Gregory Nazianzen, of the Cappadocian Fathers	Online
Gregory	330 AD – 396 AD	Bishop of Nyssa, brother of Basil, of the Cappadocians	Tobe 21
Gregory	Departed 270 AD	Wonderworker	Hathor 21
Gregory	257 AD – 331 AD	Armenian Patriarch	Koiahk 15
318 Fathers	325 AD	1st Universal Council at Nicaea	★ Hathor 9
150 Fathers	381 AD	2nd Universal Council at Constantinople	Meshir 1
200 Fathers	431 AD	3rd Universal Council at Ephesus	Thoout 12

Nicaea



Council of Nicaea (325 AD)



Against Heresy of Arianism

- Arias, a priest from Alexandria, taught that Christ was created and not eternal with the Father
- Arias claimed “there was a time when the Son was not”
- This heresy denied Christ's full divinity and our salvation (only God can save us; if Christ is not God, we cannot be saved!)

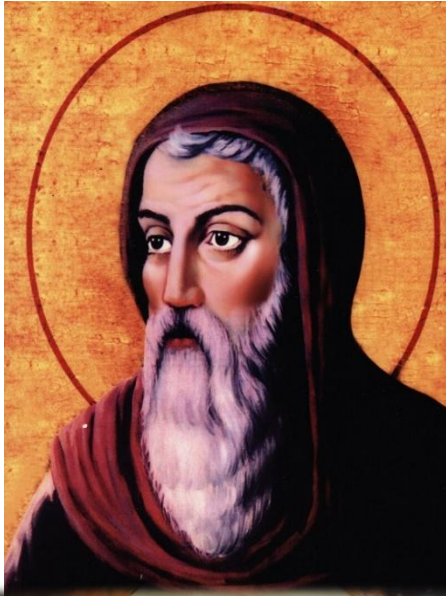
Heroes of Faith

- Pope Alexander of Alexandria:
First to confront Arius and defend the faith
- Saint Athanasius the Apostolic (his deacon, later Pope):
Chief defender of Orthodoxy, exiled five times for the faith
- Saint Nicholas of Myra and other bishops who stood firm in the faith

Orthodox Teaching

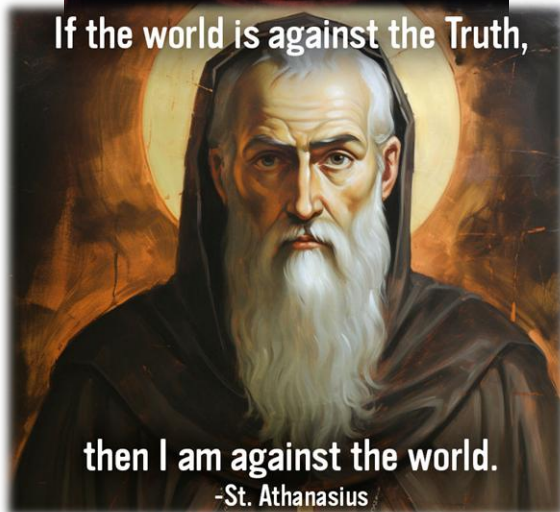
- Christ is “homousios” (consubstantial, of one essence) with the Father
- The Son is eternally begotten, not created
- The Nicene Creed was formulated to express this truth

Saint Athanasius *the Apostolic*



- **297** Born
- **312** Reader
- **318** Deacon & Papal Secretary
- **325** Went with Pope Alexander to Nicaea
- **328** Becomes Pope after Pope Alexander
- **338** Visited by Saint Anthony
- **373** Reposed in the Lord

If the world is against the Truth,



then I am against the world.

-St. Athanasius

- **46** years as Patriarch
- **17 years** in exile for defending the faith
- Famous quote: *Athanasius contra mundum*
- Wrote Biography of Saint Anthony
- Champion of the faith at Council of Nicaea
- Credited with the Nicene Creed

Arius *versus* Athanasius

Arius

- “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way” (Proverbs 8:22)

Saint Athanasius

- The Hebrew translation is “The Lord begot Me”
- “I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth” (Proverbs 8:23)

Arius *versus* Athanasius

Arius

- “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28)

Saint Athanasius

- The Son in the flesh is less than the Father as He is carrying the human nature in a mission to redeem the human being, but He is always in the bosom of the Father.
- “I am in My Father and My Father is in Me” (John 14:10)

Arius *versus* Athanasius

Arius

- “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18)

Saint Athanasius

- The Son, as He is born from the Father before all ages, has gained all authority because He told His disciples, “Go and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)

Arius *versus* Athanasius

Arius

- “But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matthew 24:36)

Saint Athanasius

- Our Lord said this as He was in the flesh, the Son of Man. However, Saint Peter said to Him, “Lord, you know all things” (John 21:17)

Arius *versus* Athanasius

Arius

- “I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30)

Saint Athanasius

- “He who has seen Me has seen My Father” (John 14:9)
- “I am in My Father and My Father is in Me” (John 14:10)

Statement of Anathema

“As for them who say
concerning the Son of God,

- there was a time when He was not,
- **OR** He was not before He was produced,
- **OR** He was produced from things that are not,
- **OR** He is of another substance or essence, or created, or subject to conversion or mutation,

the Universal Apostolic Church
says let them be **anathema**”

In Nicaea . . .

1. **Truly we believe in one God**, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Creator of heaven and earth, and all things seen and unseen.
2. **We believe in one Lord**, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages.
3. Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made.
4. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
5. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.
6. Ascended into the heavens;
He sits at the right hand of His Father,
7. and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

In Nicaea ...

1. Truly we believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Creator of heaven and earth, and all things seen and unseen.
We believe in God, the Father.

2. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages.
We believe in Jesus Christ our God, the Son.
3. Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made.

4. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
**Christ's work for our Salvation
(His First Coming is to Save)**
5. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered, and was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.
Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension
6. Ascended into the heavens;
He sits at the right hand of His Father.
Christ is coming again
7. and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.
(His Second Coming is to Judge)

NOV. 8TH
2025

CELEBRATING
**1700 YEARS
OF NICAEEA**
REMEMBERING OUR PAST TO
INFORM OUR FUTURE

Location

St George and St Joseph
Coptic Orthodox Church
Pierrefonds, Montreal

Who?

Open to Young adults from CEGEP
& University, Graduates & Young
Professionals, and all Servants
and faithful in the diocese

Cost?

FREE

Free to attend. All attendees must
register ahead of time.

Scan QR below for
more info:



Our Speakers



HG BISHOP BOULOS
Bishop of Ottawa, Montreal, and
Eastern Canada



DCN MIHRET MELAKU
Dcn in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Harvard Graduate - Neuroscience



YUSEF SAWIRES
Master of Theological Studies
(MTS) Candidate, Ottawa ON.



FR ANTHONY MOURAD
Priest of St George & St Anthony
Coptic Orthodox Church, Ottawa ON.

About the Program

Join us as we deep-dive into the history and the
theological contribution of the first ecumenical
council of Nicaea in 325 AD: "Remembering our
Past to inform our Future"



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF
OTTAWA, MONTREAL, AND EASTERN CANADA
DIOCESE COPTIC ORTHODOXE
D'OTTAWA, DE MONTRÉAL ET DE L'EST DU CANADA



1700 Year Anniversary!
(from 325 to 2025)

*Truly we believe in one God, God the Father, the
Pantocrator, Creator of heaven and earth, and all
things seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-
begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father
before all ages. Light of Light, true God of true
God; begotten, not created; of one essence with
the Father; by whom all things were made.*

*Who for us men and for our salvation came down
from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and
of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*

*And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
suffered and was buried, and on the third day
He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.
Ascended into the heavens; He sits at the right
hand of His Father, and He is coming again in His
glory to judge the living and the dead, whose
kingdom shall have no end.*

stgeorgestjoseph.ca

St George & St Joseph, Montréal

unityapp.ca/e/27663

registration for Nov 8, 2025 celebration

Constantinople



Council of **Constantinople** (381 AD)

Heresy of Macedonius

- Macedonius denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit



Heroes of Faith

- Pope Timothy of Alexandria
- Gregory the Theologian (Gregory Nazianzen)
- Gregory of Nyssa (brother of Saint Basil the Great)

Orthodox Teaching

- The Holy Spirit is “the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father”
- The Spirit is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son.
- Completion of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed that we pray today.

Completion of the Creed in Constantinople ...

8. **Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit**, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.
9. And in one holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church.
10. We confess one baptism, for the remission of sins.
11. We look for the resurrection of the dead,
12. and the life of the age to come. Amen.

In Constantinople ...

8. Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,
We believe in God, the Holy Spirit.
Who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the
Son, is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

9. And in one holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church.
10. We confess one baptism, for the remission of sins.
We believe in the Holy Church.
11. We look for the resurrection of the dead,
12. and the life of the age to come. Amen.

●The Orthodox Creed

We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages.

Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.

Ascended into the heavens; He sits at the right hand of His Father, and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son, is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

And in one holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism, for the remission of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

Ephesus



Theotokos
Θεοτόκος

Council of Ephesus (431 AD)

Heresy of Nestorianism

- Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, refused to call Saint Mary “Theotokos” (Mother of God)
- He preferred to only use the term, “Christotokos” (Mother of Christ)
- Taught Christ was two separate persons (divine and human) loosely joined
- This divided Christ's unity and threatened our salvation

Hero of Faith

Saint Cyril, Pope of Alexandria

- The pillar of faith who defended Christology
- Wrote letters and treatises explaining the Hypostatic Union
- Led the council with wisdom and firmness

Orthodox Teaching

- Christ is one Person with two complete natures (divine and human) united without confusion
- The Virgin Saint Mary is truly the “Theotokos” because she gave birth to Christ who is God incarnate
- The Hypostatic Union: one nature of God the Word Incarnate



● Introduction to the Creed

We exalt you, the Mother of the true Light. We glorify you, O saint, the Theotokos, for you have brought forth unto us the Savior of the whole world; He came and saved our souls.

Glory be to You, our Master, our King, Christ, the pride of the apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the joy of the righteous, the firmness of the churches, the forgiveness of sins.

We proclaim the Holy Trinity in one Godhead. We worship Him. We glorify Him. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord bless us. Amen.

Church Councils

Council	Date	Why? To defend against a heresy?	Reference
Jerusalem	49 AD	Against the Judaizers Heresy (see Acts chapter 15)	Acts 15:1-24
In Rome	Around 200 AD	Not because of heresies. To establish the Feast of Theophany and Lent	Hathor 10
In Alexandria	243 AD	Against a Heresy that claimed that the human spirit dies with the body, and it (the spirit) rises again with the body.	Thoout 3
In Rome	249 AD	Against Novatus who said that those who deny Christ cannot be forgiven even if they repent!	Koiahk 12
In Antioch	280 AD	Against Paul of Samosata who claimed that Christ was an ordinary man	Paope 19
<u>Nicaea</u> (1 st Ecumenical)	325 AD	318 assembled to protect against the Heresy of Arias who blasphemed against the Son of God.	Hathor 9
<u>Constantinople</u> (2 nd Ecumenical)	381 AD	150 assembled to judge Macedonius (heresy against the Holy Spirt) and Apollinaris (heresy against the Holy Trinity).	Meshir 1
<u>Ephesus</u> (3 rd Ecumenical)	431 AD	200 assembled to protect against the Heresy of Nestorius who refused to refer to Saint Mary as the Theotokos (Mother of God).	Thoout 12

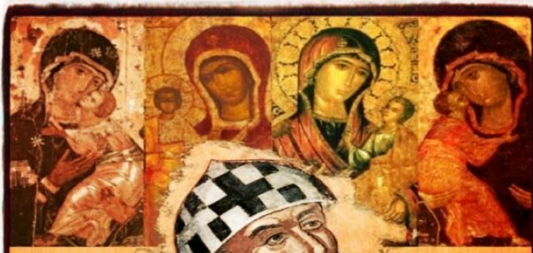
The Coptic Holy Synod



The Coptic Holy Synod



Concluding Thoughts

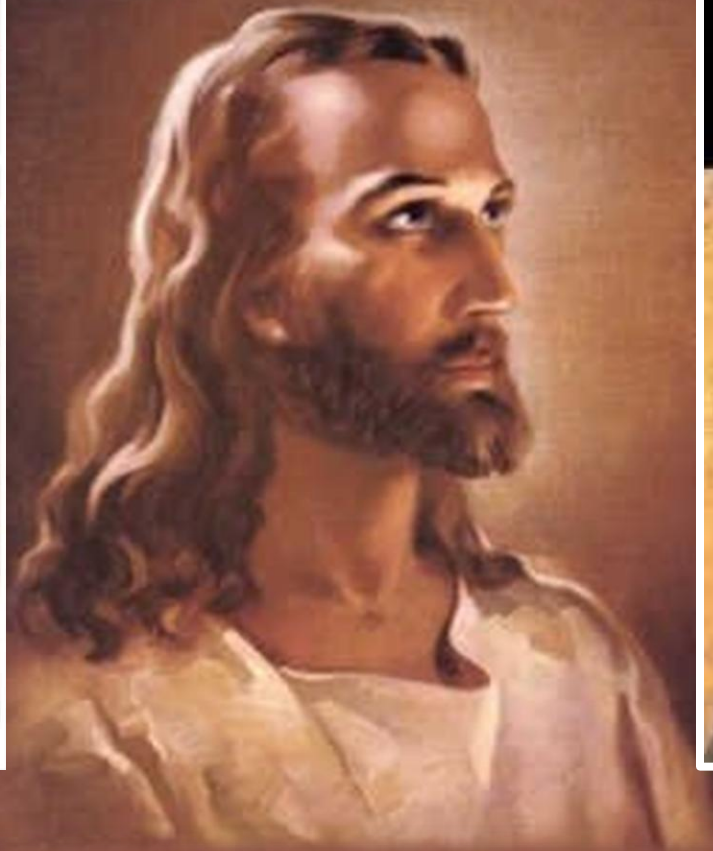


St. Cyril of Alexandria
(376-444 A.D.)

✧ On Mary, the Mother of God ✧


"This expression, 'the Word was made flesh' [John 1:14], can mean nothing else but that he partook of flesh and blood like to us; he made our body his own, and came forth man from a woman, not casting off his existence as God, or his generation of God the Father, but even in taking to himself flesh remaining what he was. The declaration of the correct faith proclaims this everywhere. This was the sentiment of the holy Fathers; therefore they ventured to call the holy Virgin 'the Mother of God,' not as if the nature of the Word or his divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word, being personally united, is said to be born according to the flesh"

-First Letter to Nestorius (Written 430 A.D.)
-marksofthechurch.com-



"The Word who became all things for us, is close to us, our Lord Jesus Christ who promises to remain with us always. He cries out, saying: 'See, I am with you all the days of this age.' He is himself the shepherd, the high priest, the way and the door and has become all things at once for us."

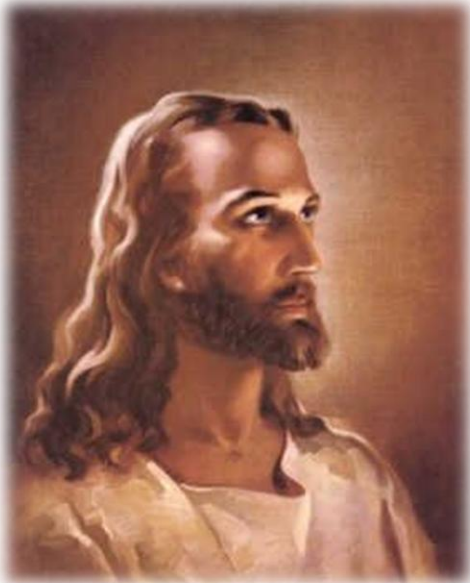
St Athanasius (297-373) Father and Doctor



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus

- The 3 councils show the Church as a *guardian of faith*
- Through these critical moments of Christian History, the Coptic Church stood as a *pillar of Orthodoxy*
- **We** have a role to continue to be *guardians of faith*
- Our Church is **rich** in history & tradition
- We *are* the Church, the Body of Christ



- *We must **know** our faith to defend it and teach it to the next generation*
- *Our faith heroes **suffered** for truth; we value what they preserved for us*
- *The same faith they **defended** is what we confess every Liturgy in the **Creed***

Thank you!



Questions or Comments?