

WHAT IS A RITE?

*Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy.
All nations shall come and worship thee. ~ Revelation 15:4*

THE WORD “rite” can mean any religious custom or ceremony. It refers to the words and actions used in liturgical acts, such as the Mass, the sacraments, and other feasts. Many people believe that all Catholics everywhere in the world celebrate the Mass in the same way. However, this assumption is incorrect. Not all Catholics are Roman Catholics. The Latin (Roman) rite is just one of several rites in the Church. The Catholic Church, in

its richness of traditions, has unity in diversity. We all celebrate the same mystery in the liturgy, but the forms of the celebration are varied. The Second Vatican Council declared in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy that all lawfully recognized rites (those in union with the Pope) are of equal rights and dignity, and that the Church greatly desires to preserve and foster each of them.

These rites developed in history as Christians in given geographical and cultural areas came to celebrate their faith in such a way that reflected their traditions and customs. All of these rites are united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments, and the same leadership of the Pope. Therefore, they all equally belong to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church established by Christ: *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit”* (1 Cor 12:12-13).

All liturgical rites are to be highly valued. Their tradition comes from the apostles and the early Fathers of the Church. All are equally part of the universal Church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ. These diverse traditions are not a source of division in the Church, but rather express the one faith through authentic and varied cultures. The Church embraces these traditions, integrates them into her unity, and recognizes them as authentic expressions of the mystery of Christ.

(CCC 1200-1206)



Metropole Cathedral in Athens, Greece, perhaps dating from as early as the 8th century

Rites of the Catholic Church Currently in Use

Rite	Origin
Alexandrian (Liturgy of St. Mark)	Alexandria, Egypt
Ambrosian (Milanese)	Milan, Italy
Armenian	Cappadocia and Syria
Byzantine	Constantinople (the Byzantine Empire)
Chaldean (based on ancient Antiochene Rite)	East Syria (Antioch and Jerusalem)
Coptic	Alexandria, Egypt
Ethiopian(Abyssinian)	Ethiopia
Malankarese (Thomas Christians)	South India
Maronite	Antioch, Syria
Melkite (Melchite)	Palestine
Mozarabic (for quasi-private use in Toledo, Spain only)	Spain
Roman or Latin	Rome
Ruthenian	Slavic Eastern Europe
Syrian	Antioch, Syria
Syro-Malabarese (Thomas Christians)	Southwest India



Cathedral of St. Mark's in Venice, Italy, constructed from 1042 to 1071 in the Byzantine style