

World Religions – The Eastern Orthodox Churches

Overview

There are several other – often called Eastern Orthodox Catholic Churches – with roots to the Roman Catholic Church. Basically the Greek Orthodox Church is the same as what is called the Eastern Orthodox Church – although the tendency is to use the national name such as Albanian, Bulgarian and so on. This is because they consider it historically correct since the original scriptures were written in Greek.

These churches include the following:

- ❖ Greek Orthodox Church:
- ❖ Russian Orthodox Church:
- ❖ Armenian Church:
- ❖ Anglican Church:

In General, these Eastern churches are all very similar in their beliefs but I will use the Greek Orthodox Church for my example. My information comes published materials and my best references are the book ***Religions of America*** written by Leo Rosten. Leo presents the material in the form of a questionnaire which was completed by a church official to ensure accuracy in the information. In the information which follows, I make use of some the key tenants of the Catholic faith for my comparison.

Greek Orthodox Church

The **Greek Cross** is a different shape than that used for Catholicism as it has all four members the same length and usually suggests the Christian church rather than a symbol of Christ's suffering. It appears as a 'plus sign' in liturgical documents to indicate where the priest should make the sign of the cross: (For example "The peace + of the Lord be + always with + you.")



Founding & Spiritual Leaders: Its founding is also based upon the teachings of Jesus – 2000 years ago. The major differences are in the areas of administration, doctrine and practice. These churches do not have an allegiance with the Pope. Instead, their spiritual leader is a Patriarch – one for each of the countries where the faith is practiced.

These churches had their beginnings with a schism in 1054 over the Holy Spirit. Roman Catholic churches say that the Holy Spirit flows **between** the Father and the Son while Eastern Orthodox churches believe the Spirit flows **from** the Father to the Son.

Beliefs of God: Same as Roman Catholics

Eucharist/Lord's Supper: Holy Communion includes **leavened bread** as compared to non-leavened bread for Roman Catholics and is not given until the age of reason – usually about 12 years of age.

Apostolic succession: The Apostolic succession for its priests has not been broken.

Creed and Doctrines: The Creed is the same as Roman Catholics although some doctrine differs. Confirmation is conferred upon Baptism

Afterlife: Same as Roman Catholics

Deposit of Faith: Same as Roman Catholics

What distinguishes Catholics from this faith: Allegiance to the Pope is not accepted and the certain areas of celebration listed above are the major differences. In addition, the sign of the cross is made with the three fingers of the thumb, forefinger and middle finger from right to left – opposite to that of Roman Catholics. Basically we are in full communion with the Eastern Churches.