

## A Word About Church History

Scholars estimate there are over 2600 groups today who lay claim to being the Church, or at least the direct descendants of the Church described in the New Testament. Repeat: 2600!

But for the first thousand years of her history the Church was essentially one. Five historic patriarchal centers--Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople--formed a cohesive whole and were in full communion with one another. There were occasional heretical or schismatic groups going their own way, to be certain, but the Church was unified until the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Then, in events culminating in A.D. 1054, the Roman Patriarch pulled away from the other four; the result was a tragic splintering of the historic Christian Church.

Today, nearly a thousand years later, the other four Patriarchates remain intact, in full communion, maintaining that Orthodox Apostolic Faith of the inspired New Testament record. A brief history of the Orthodox Church follows, from Pentecost to the present day.

- 33 Pentecost (A.D. 29 is thought to be more accurate).
- 49 Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) establishes precedent for addressing Church disputes in conciliar manner. St. James presides as bishop.
- 69 Bishop Ignatius consecrated in Antioch in heart of New Testament era--St. Peter had been the first bishop there. Other early bishops include James, Polycarp, and Clement.
- 95 Book of Revelation written, probably the last of the New Testament books.
- 150 St. Justin Martyr describes the liturgical worship of the Church, centered in the Eucharist. Liturgical worship is rooted in both the Old and New Testaments.

- 313 The Edict of Milan marks the end of the period of Roman persecution of Christianity.
- 325 The Council of Nicea settles the major heretical challenge to the Christian faith posed when the heretic Arius asserted that Christ was *created* by the Father. St. Athanasius defends the eternity of the Son of God. Nicea is the first of Seven Ecumenical (Church-wide) Councils.
- 451 Council of Chalcedon (Second Ecumenical Council) affirms the apostolic doctrine of the two natures of Christ (fully human and fully divine).
- 589 A synod in Toledo, Spain, adds the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed (asserting that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*). This theological error is later adopted by Rome.
- 787 The era of Ecumenical Councils ends at Nicea; the Seventh Ecumenical Council restores the centuries-old use of icons to the Church.
- 988 Conversion of Rus' (Russia) begins.
- 1054 The Great Schism occurs. Two major issues include Rome's claim to a universal papal supremacy and her addition of the aforementioned *filioque* clause to the Nicene Creed. The Photian Schism (880) further complicates the debate.
- 1066 Norman Conquest of Britain. Orthodox hierarchs are replaced with those loyal to Rome.
- 1095 The Crusades begin. The sack of Constantinople (1204) adds great stress to the already strained relations between the Christians of the East and West.
- 1333 St. Gregory Palamas defends the Orthodox practice of hesychast spirituality and the use of the "Jesus Prayer."

- 1453 Turks overrun Constantinople; Byzantine Empire ceases to exist.
- 1517 Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses to the door of the Roman Church in Wittenberg, initiating the Protestant Reformation.
- 1529 Church of England begins pulling away from Rome.
- 1794 Missionaries arrive on Kodiak Island in Alaska; Orthodoxy introduced to North America.
- 1870 Papal Infallibility, under certain circumstances, becomes Roman dogma.
- 1988 One thousand years of Orthodoxy in Russia recognized; Orthodox Church world-wide maintains fullness of the Apostolic Faith.