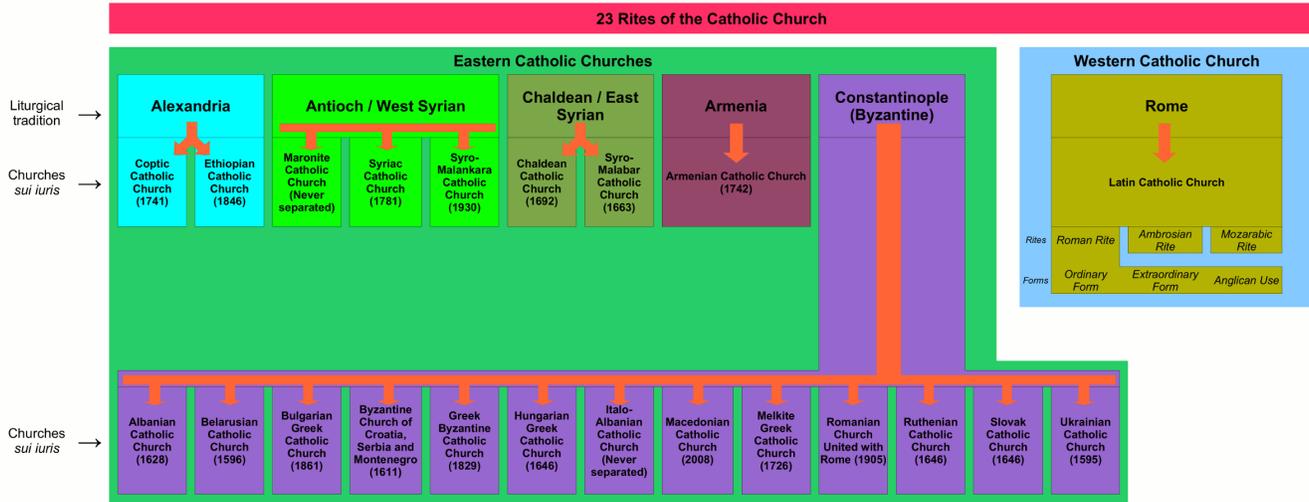


## The Catholic Church and Her 23 Rites

I was recently asked if there was a difference between the “Catholic Church” and the “Roman Catholic Church”. Are they the same thing? What is the correct name of our Church?

So I provided this simple answer.

The official name of our church is “Catholic Church”. But the Church has 23 different rites. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines a rite as “The diverse liturgical traditions in which the one catholic and apostolic faith has come to be expressed and celebrated in various cultures and lands.”



As part of this one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Catholic Church there are twenty-three individual rites which are equally valid with different liturgical traditions with different forms of liturgy, often based on cultural and language differences, but all in union with the Bishop of Rome.

Those of us in the West, are mostly members of the Latin or Roman Rite, which is named the Roman Catholic Church. There are others rites with unique names within the Catholic Church: the Maronite Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic Church, the Melkite Catholic Church, etc.

Roman Catholic Church is not the name of the whole Church, only the name of the Roman rite of the Catholic Church.

So the official name of our universal Church is “Catholic Church”. Roman Catholic Church is the Roman rite within the larger Catholic Church. But all the various liturgical rites are one and in union with Rome.

This is very different than the Orthodox churches of the East which are in schism from the Catholic Church, having broken their union with Rome in 1054 A.D. They broke with the Universal Catholic Church and took a new name—Orthodox Church(es). It should be remembered that there is no such thing as “the Orthodox Church”; rather, there are Orthodox churches that are divided up along national lines. So there is the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church, etc. They are not in union with each other like the rites of the Catholic Church.

Here is the list of rites that are integral parts of the one, Holy, Catholic and apostolic Church:

- [Latin Church](#) with [Latin liturgical traditions](#)
- [Eastern Catholic Churches](#) with particular liturgical traditions:
  - [Alexandrian liturgical tradition](#):
    - [Coptic Catholic Church](#)
    - [Ethiopian Catholic Church](#)
    - [Eritrean Catholic Church](#)
  - [Antiochian liturgical tradition](#):
    - [Maronite Church](#)
    - [Syrian Catholic Church](#)
    - [Syro-Malankara Catholic Church](#)
  - [Armenian liturgical tradition](#):
    - [Armenian Catholic Church](#)
  - [Chaldean or East Syrian liturgical tradition](#):
    - [Chaldean Catholic Church](#)
    - [Syro-Malabar Catholic Church](#)
  - [Byzantine liturgical tradition](#):
    - [Albanian Byzantine Catholic Church](#)
    - [Belarusian Greek Catholic Church](#)
    - [Bulgarian Greek Catholic Church](#)

- [Byzantine Church of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro](#)
- [Greek Byzantine Catholic Church](#)
- [Hungarian Greek Catholic Church](#)
- [Italo-Albanian Catholic Church](#)
- [Macedonian Greek Catholic Church](#)
- [Melkite Greek Catholic Church](#)
- [Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek-Catholic](#)
- [Russian Greek Catholic Church](#)
- [Ruthenian Catholic Church](#)
- [Slovak Greek Catholic Church](#)
- [Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church](#)

For a more detailed history and explanation, click [here](#).