

Notes for Church History, Part 1

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Slide 1

Brief overview of what we'll cover: first 1000 years of Church history, when there was essentially one Church.

Slide 2 – The “Fullness of Time”

We begin with a period in history that the Bible calls “the fullness of time”, during which God transitions His people from the Old to the New Covenant.

1. “Fullness of time”, a phrase from Gal. 4:4, refers to the God-appointed period in history when:

- The world had deteriorated spiritually, but advanced culturally and politically.
- Hellenic philosophy, culture and literature was widespread. According to the Church Fathers, Hellenistic thought contains hints of Christian truth, and some of its ideas could be employed in the promulgation of the Christian Faith.
- The Roman Caesars, for their part, had established an era of relative peace, the Pax Romana, with an advanced system of laws, communications, roads, and other achievements which facilitated the transmission of the Gospel.
- Thus, Divine Providence had appointed the Greco-Roman Empire as a vehicle for the spread of the Faith.

2. The Apostle Peter confesses that this Messiah is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, and Christ replies “upon this rock I will build My Church.” (Matt 16:18). The Orthodox Church has always taught that the “rock” is not Peter himself—as the Roman Catholics did much later to justify the emergence of the Papacy—but his confession of faith.

3. The New Covenant is established by Christ at the Mystical Supper in the upper room. In St Matthew 26:28 we read: “And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

4. After His Resurrection He gives the Great Commission, which is a command to build the Church. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt 28:19); and

for this purpose Christ promises that the Holy Spirit will come and lead “them into all the truth” (John 16:13).

The Apostles begin waiting for this promised Holy Spirit, which leads to what we call the “birth of the Church” >>>

Slide 3 – The Church is “Born”

1. The Greek word *Ekklesia* is translated as "Church" and literally means "the assembly of the called-out ones." This assembly of God's chosen people has indeed always existed; the nation of Israel was the *Ekklesia* of the Old Covenant (the *Qahal Yahweh*)—the people called out of Egypt and assembled at Sinai to receive the Law.

Therefore, Pentecost is not the birth of the called-out people of God itself, *but rather the birth of the assembly of the New Covenant*. It is the moment when the True Israel—the Body of Christ—is instituted. This new assembly is defined by its members being baptized into Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit (the “circumcision of the heart”). This marks the transition from the Old Covenant *Ekklesia* of law and ethnicity to the New Covenant Church of grace and the Spirit, which is led by the Apostles and those who follow them in Apostolic Succession.

2. Acts 2:2-4 records the event commonly known as the “birth of the New Covenant church”:

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

This event fulfills the prophecy in Joel 2:28 that “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh”.

3. The Greek Septuagint is more correctly translated as “I will pour *out of* My Spirit...” One of the Church's most important theologians, St. Gregory Palamas, comments on this in his book *150 Chapters*:

“... those deemed worthy of union with God are united to God in energy, [i.e.] the uncreated energy of the Spirit and not the *essence* of God. For God foretold through the Prophet, not ‘My Spirit,’ but rather ‘I will pour out *of* My Spirit upon all flesh.”

In other words, God doesn't pour out the *essence* of Himself (“My Spirit” might imply the hypostases of the Third Person of the Holy Spirit), but rather pours *of out of* His Spirit, that is, He pours out his divine energies.

This may seem academic, you'll learn more in the second lecture about why it's important distinction.

4. The Church celebrates this event on the Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Pascha. The Apolytikion of the Feast reads:

"Blessed are You, O Christ our God, Who has shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them drew the world into Your net. O Befriender of man, glory be to You."

5. The Icon for the Feast depicts the Divine Energies of God radiating out to the Apostles who are gathered in the upper room. (Some versions of this Icon include a little "tongue of fire" above each of the Apostles.) Below them is an interesting figure holding a cloth with scrolls lying in it. Fr Josiah Trenham notes: "The salvation of the world as rooted in Pentecost is shown on the Pentecost icon by the "King" at the bottom of the icon beneath the apostles. This King is not a historical one. He is 'King Cosmos'—He is the world, which the anointed disciples are about to harvest." And the scrolls represent the many nations.

What does the early Church look like? >>>

Slide 4 – Conciliar and Martyrical

1. The Church is "conciliar", that is, decisions are made by councils—also known as synods. This is different than, say, later Roman Catholicism where decisions essential to the faith are made by the Pope, and spoken *ex cathedra*, which means "from the chair", i.e., the Pope's chair, on his authority alone. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, a Pope speaking *ex cathedra* on issues of faith or morals is infallible.

2. St. James, the Apostle and Brother of the Lord, was consecrated by the Apostles, through the laying on hands, as the first Bishop of Jerusalem. (He is loosely called "the Brother of the Lord", but he is technically his half-brother, for they both shared Joseph as their father: James by blood, and Jesus by law, i.e., under Joseph's paternal guardianship.)

The Book of Acts provides clear evidence of the important episcopal role he played from the earliest years of the Church. We read that when Peter, having miraculously escaped from prison, had to flee Jerusalem, he asked that James be informed (12:17).

3. *An early example of a council is the Synod of Jerusalem in AD 49:* When the Christians of Antioch were concerned over whether Gentile Christians need be circumcised to be saved, they sent Paul and Barnabas to confer with the church there, and it is Saint James who uttered the definitive judgment (15:13ff). And when Paul arrives in Jerusalem to deliver the money he raised for the faithful there, it is James to whom he speaks, and who insists that Paul ritually cleanse himself (21:18).

4. Acts 15:28 reads: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”: From the beginning the Church believed that when Her leaders came together to pray and seek God concerning issues troubling the Church that the Holy Spirit would inspire them in ways that led to God-pleasing decisions and the preservation of the truth.

This does not, however, mean that every council that convenes is a true council. The decisions of any council, especially one considered ecumenical, must be followed by reception by the people, who ratify the truth of those decisions. An example of this can be seen in Acts 15:30-31, where decisions of the Council of Jerusalem are read to the faithful and they rejoice.

5. The Church is also “martyrly”, i.e., founded upon the blood of the martyrs and witnessing Christ to the world.

6. During the first few centuries we are in the “Age of Martyrs”, an age which began one or two years after the Resurrection, when the Deacon Stephen was also stoned to death. Saul of Tarsus, who was to become Saint Paul, was the chief instigator of his martyrdom. Saint Stephen is called “the Protomartyr” because he was the first Christian to die for Christ. The “Age of Martyrs” lasted until Christianity was legalized by St. Constantine (about which you will learn more shortly).

7. The Divine Liturgy is always celebrated on the relics of martyrs. This is a deep tradition, rooted in the early Church's practice of celebrating the Eucharist over the tombs of the martyrs. The Altar Table in every Orthodox Church represents both Christ's Tomb (where His sacrifice was completed) and His Heavenly Throne.

This requirement to serve the Liturgy on the Tomb of Christ is fulfilled either by sealing the relics of Martyrs permanently within the main Altar Table (only for a consecrated church) or through the use of an *Antimension*. This is a consecrated cloth that literally means “in place of the altar table,” and it must have relics of a Martyr sown into it. It iconographically features the Entombment of Christ, visually confirming the Altar's symbolism. The *Antimension* is essential because it guarantees the Liturgy is celebrated on a holy, sanctified surface containing the witness of the martyrs.

The *Antimension* also serves a vital canonical purpose: it must be consecrated and signed by the local Bishop. It acts as the Priest's personal “license” and spiritual authorization for him to serve the Divine Liturgy. This simple cloth connects the local parish to the Bishop's authority and, through him, to the Apostolic Succession and the entire Body of the Church. Without the *Antimension*, the Divine Liturgy cannot be legitimately served.

The Apostles were actively ordaining Bishops >>>

Slide 5 – Episcopal and Eucharistic

1. The Church is also “episcopal”, which means that its governance and order are rooted in the office of the Bishop (Greek: *episkopos*). This structure holds that

Bishops, as the successors to the Apostles, hold the chief authority for teaching, sanctifying, and ruling the Church. The three-fold ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons was well-established by the end of the 1st century.

2. St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy about the qualifications a man should have in order to be a Bishop. And from the beginning the Apostles were active in consecrating Bishops, and the Bishops then ordained Priests and Deacons to help them in their ministry.

3. Saint Ignatius of Antioch is a shining example of an early Church Bishop. He was consecrated as the second Bishop of Antioch, a see that was established by the Apostle Peter. As a youth he knew the Apostles and was personally initiated into the deepest mysteries of the Faith by St. John the Evangelist. Enroute to his martyrdom in Rome, St. Ignatius wrote a series of letters which have been preserved as an important example of Christian theology, especially concerning the structure and nature of the Church.

“Take care to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God, and with the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and with the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the business of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father from the beginning and is at last made manifest” (*Letter to the Magnesians* 2, 6:1)

“Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful to baptize or give communion without the consent of the bishop.” (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8)

NOTE: We will speak more about the term “Catholic” a bit later, but here the Saint is saying that the local church, gathered around Her Bishop or the Priest as the Bishop’s appointed delegate, represents the entire Church, i.e., the Church in Her fullness, and not just a part of it. This word was already in widespread use by his time.

So we see that the early church is hierarchical and conciliar.

4. It is also eucharistic. To say the Church is “Eucharistic” is to say that the Divine Liturgy is the heart of the Church’s being. It’s not just a ritual we perform, but the event that makes us the Church. In the Eucharist, we do two things that define our existence:

We assemble as one Body, demonstrating that the Church is not merely a collection of individuals, but a single, unified organism (1 Corinthians 10:17f).

We participate mystically in the Kingdom of God, making Christ truly present among us in His Body and Blood.

Therefore, the Church is Eucharistic because where the Eucharist is, there is the Church in its fullness. Our unity, our faith, our hierarchy (with the Bishop at the

center), and our continuity with the Apostles are all made visible and effective when we gather to receive the Body of Christ.

What did early Church worship look like? >>>

Slide 6 – The Early Divine Liturgy

1. In his *First Apology*, written around 155 AD and most likely in response to the recent martyrdom of St. Polycarp, St. Justin Martyr writes to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius to explain and defend what Christians do and believe.

2. In his description of Sunday worship—again, from the middle of the 2nd century—we learn that the worship was ordered, and clearly liturgical. It was not “free form”—as some Protestant groups teach. You can find his *First Apology* online.

OPTIONAL: “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.”

NOTE: The “president” referred to here is the Bishop or a Priest whom he has appointed to preside over the assembly.

3. Let there be no doubt about how the early Christians viewed the consecrated bread and wine. The Saint writes:

“And this food is called among us the Eucharist.... [And] not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”

This what our Lord taught in St. John Ch. 6 and elsewhere.

4. We should not be surprised that Christian worship has always been liturgical. We find a similar pattern of worship in the Old Testament, as types and shadows, which

in the New Testament is more fully revealed. This is all maintained in the worship services of the Orthodox Church to this day.

We now come to a watershed event that soon will bring to an end the “age of martyrs” >>>

Slide 7 – Christianity Legalized & the Cross Found

1. In 312 AD, the Emperor Constantine—who has not yet converted to Christianity, but has doubtless been favorably disposed to it by his pious mother, the Empress St Helen—is riding through France with his army when suddenly he sees a large Cross of light in the sky. An inscription on the Cross read “In this sign conquer”. That night, Christ appeared to him in a dream, confirming the sign and commanding him to make a likeness of the heavenly sign to use as a military standard. Constantine immediately ordered the creation of the Labarum, a new military standard bearing the Chi-Rho monogram (the first two Greek letters of “Christ”). He used this sign in the decisive Battle of the Milvian Bridge and won, attributing the victory to the Christian God.

2. He thus embraces Christianity, and the next year issues the Edict of Milan, legalizing Christianity and making it the official religion of the Romans. Almost overnight the persecuted Church of the Catacombs became the Church of the Empire.

3. Twelve years later he moved the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire to the city of Byzantium on the Bosphorus River. He named it after himself: Constantinople. Today this city is commonly known as Istanbul in Turkey, but Orthodox still usually call it Constantinople.

4. He begins to stabilize and organize the “*oikoumene*” around the Church. “*Oikoumene*” means “the inhabited world”, though from the Emperor’s perspective, this meant “the entire empire”, that is, the entire Christian world.

5. His mother, the Empress St. Helen, builds many churches through the empire. Around 326 AD, led by God, she ordered a temple of the goddess Venus (aka, Aphrodite) to be destroyed—temples were often built over Christian holy sites by pagans in order to obscure them—and during the excavation found three wooden crosses. With the help of Saint Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, the Cross of Christ was miraculously identified. And it is the Tradition of the Church that this excavation area was not only the site of the Rock of Golgotha—where Christ was crucified—but also of his Holy Sepulcher, where he was buried.

6. This all led to Saint Constantine building the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—which stands today, and is a focal point for Christian worship in the Middle East—and the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, celebrated on September 14, which celebrates the elevation (aka, exaltation) of the Cross by St. Macarius before all the people, and its subsequent veneration.

It is from the word “Oikoumene” that we get “Ecumenical”, and St. Constantine ushers in the “Age of the Councils”, beginning with the First Ecumenical Council
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Slide 8 – The 1st Ecumenical Council

1. First Ecumenical Council was convened in Nicea in 325. Bishop Kallistos in his book *The Orthodox Church* writes:

“The main work of the First Ecumenical Council was the condemnation of Arianism.... Arius, a priest in Alexandria, maintained that the Son was inferior to the Father, and, in drawing a dividing line between God and creation, he placed the Son among created things: a superior creature, it is true, but a creature none the less. His motive... was to protect the uniqueness and the transcendence of God, but the effect of his teaching, in making Christ *less* than God, *was to render impossible our human deification*. Only if Christ is truly God, the council answered, can He unite us to God, for none but God Himself can open to humans the way of union. Christ is “one in essence” (*homoousios*) with the Father. (*The Orthodox Church*, p. 30)

(As we continue in this history series you will see that all heresies that the Councils address are attacks on one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, usually Christ.)

2. 318 Bishops attended this Council, and St. Constantine showed great respect and admiration for them. He entered with no entourage, pomp or ceremony. He wore humble clothes, and he sat among the Bishops, not as one on a throne presiding over the assembly. This is just one of the many reasons why St. Constantine is honored by the Church as “the Great” and “equal to the Apostles”.

3. Many great Saints were in attendance, including St. Athanasius the Great (then, an Archdeacon)—who wrote a number of important books, perhaps most notable a book title *On the Incarnation of God*, which I highly recommend you pick up at our bookstore; it has an introduction written by C.S. Lewis)—and St. Nicholas of Myra and Lycia, who is honored by the Church as a prototype of all Bishops. The famous historian Eusebius of Nicomedia was there to record the events.

4. The Council produced, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the first version of the Symbol of the Christian Faith commonly known as the “Nicene Creed”. This is about half the length of the final “Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed”, which is the chief profession of faith for most Christians, and is always recited by everyone at the Divine Liturgy, and often during other services. This first version ended with an anathema of Arianism.

5. The Council also sought to resolve the long-standing “Quartodeciman” controversy by establishing a uniform, universal rule for dating Pascha.

The issue centered on a group of Christians (called Quartodecimans, meaning “Fourteenth-ers,” prevalent in regions like Syria and Asia Minor) who insisted on

celebrating Christ's Passion and Resurrection on the 14th day of Nisan—the exact day the Jews observed the Passover sacrifice.

Their rationale was that Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, was crucified on the 14th of Nisan, and thus the Christian Pascha must align with this Old Testament date.

However, this practice meant that the celebration of Christ's Resurrection did not always fall on a Sunday, violating the growing universal custom of celebrating the Resurrection on the Lord's Day (Sunday).

So the Council ruled that Pascha must not only *follow* the Jewish Passover, but also be celebrated on a Sunday, and in this case, on the first Sunday following the full moon.

This might all seem a bit confusing and complicated. Just know that it ended this controversy over the date of Pascha, and that the Orthodox Church *still* follows this Canonical ruling, meaning that the period of the Triodion (Lenten services) and Pentecostarion (Pascha and the services up through Pentecost) follow the lunar-based Julian Calendar, even if a minority of Orthodox churches—like the Greek Archdiocese in North America, but not, say Mount Athos—follow the Gregorian Calendar for the rest of the year, a change which occurred in some churches in 1924, and which is still a hotly debated decision today.

Let's take a look at the key part of this “Symbol of Faith”, as it is called, which dealt a blow to Arianism. >>>

Slide 9 – Combatting Arianism

No additional notes.

Slide 10 – OPTIONAL, time permitting

The Orthodox Church sings Her theology. I have here two hymns from the service that precedes the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of Nicea. This service is called “Orthros” or “Matins”. These hymns contain some important statements about Councils of the Church that I want to share before we talk briefly about the remaining Councils.

Key points:

The Holy Fathers are seen as God-inspired scribes, speaking and writing on that which they receive from the Holy Spirit, Whom Christ promised His Apostles would be sent to them to guide them into all truth. St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy that the “Church is the pillar and ground of the Truth”, and the Ecumenical Councils are the preeminent example of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church through Her Bishops gathered together. Thus we read in the First Canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (which happens to be the Second Council of Nicea), “We welcome and

embrace the divine Canons, and we corroborate the entire and rigid fiat of them that have been set forth by the renowned Apostles, who were and are trumpets of the Spirit, and those both of the six Holy Ecumenical Synods and of the ones assembled regionally for the purpose of setting forth such edicts, and of those of our Holy Fathers. For all those men, having been guided by the light dawning out of the same Spirit, prescribed rules that are to our best interest.”

The Holy Fathers are described as following in the manner in which the Apostles taught. In this they are faithful to St. Paul’s admonition to the Thessalonians (2Thess 2:15): “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” This is why Tradition is so important for preserving Christian truth, and why the Protestant doctrine of sola Scriptura has led to so many doctrinal disputes. It is reasonable to ask, How can the concept of “sola Scriptura” be true when even the Reformers themselves could not agree upon the meaning of the most central act of Christian worship, the Holy Eucharist?

Finally, the second hymn speaks of the Holy Fathers as defenders of Christ’s doctrines. This touches on an important aspect of the nature of Councils: they are convened as defensive measures. They never gathered to formulate doctrinal statements out of a desire to explain all the mysteries of the Christian faith. No, they merely sought to prevent certain misunderstandings and false teachings from leading their flocks astray, i.e., away from the path of salvation. They wanted to put a fence around the truth, knowing that true theology is inexplicable—it is a noetic experience of God that is beyond words. Recall St. Paul’s words in 2 Cor. 2:2-4: “I knew a man in Christ [who was]... caught up to the third heaven (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” That is the experience of a true theologian, and what many Saints have experienced throughout the years.

Slide 11 - The Birth of Monasticism

1. The period from roughly 270 AD to 350 AD is pivotal: it marks one of the greatest transitions in Church history—the shift from the Church of the Martyrs to the Church of the Empire. Monasticism begins just as the persecutions are ending and explodes in popularity immediately after.
2. Monastics became a new type of martyr. This is the core theological identity of the early monk. As you have learned, the Greek word “*martyr*” means “witness.” For the first 300 years, the ultimate witness was “red martyrdom”—dying for Christ. But when the persecutions stopped, that path to perfect imitation of Christ vanished. Monasticism arose as the “white martyrdom”—a voluntary, daily death to the self, a bloodless sacrifice of one’s will, passions, and worldly attachments. It was, and is, a new way to bear total witness.
3. So, monasticism emerges as persecution ends, and Orthodoxy becomes mainstream and at times “worldly” or less fervent.

After the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, Christianity became safe, and then, under Constantine and his successors, it became the favored religion of the Roman Empire. Suddenly, being a Christian was perhaps easy, even politically advantageous. This led to a “worldliness” and a cooling of the original apostolic fervor. The first monastics fled this new, comfortable “mainstream” Church. They went to the desert precisely because the cities had become too Christian and, in their view, too lukewarm. The desert became the new arena of spiritual warfare, replacing the gladiator's arena.

4. Three forms of monasticism were established in Egypt by 350 AD. Each of these forms represent the different ways this “angelic life” can be lived, and they set the pattern for all of Christian history, both East and West.

a. First is the Eremitic or anchoritic life, from the word for 'hermit' or 'desert.' Its father is St. Anthony the Great. This is the life of total solitude. St. Anthony famously went into the deep desert to fight the demons face-to-face, armed only with prayer and fasting. This path is for the strongest, a life of individual spiritual warfare.

b. Second is the Coenobitic life, from *koinos bios*, or “common life.” St. Pachomius the Great, also in Egypt, realized that total solitude was too dangerous for most—they might fall into pride or delusion. He organized monks into a community under a single rule and a single spiritual father, the abbot. This life emphasizes obedience, humility, and shared work and prayer. This model was so successful that his rule became the direct inspiration for St. Benedict in the West, making St. Pachomius the spiritual grandfather of virtually all Western monasticism as well.

c. The third form is the Semi-Eremitic model, often called a skete (after the Scetis desert in Egypt). This is the “middle way,” perfected by saints like St. Macarius of Egypt. Here, a small group of monks, perhaps two to six, live in individual cells, but close enough to be guided by a common elder, or “Abba.” They live as hermits during the week, in silence and prayer, and then come together on Saturday and Sunday for the Divine Liturgy and a communal meal. It combines the solitude of St. Anthony with the accountability of St. Pachomius.

5. But monasticism didn't just stay in the desert. Monasteries became the spiritual heart of the Byzantine Empire and, subsequently, of every Orthodox nation—from Russia to Romania, from Greece to Serbia. They were not separate from the Church; they were its spiritual powerhouses, preserving theology, iconography, and the fullness of the liturgical life, especially during times of invasion or persecution.

6. Monasticism serves a dual purpose. For the individual, it is a focused, intense path to a deeper experience of life in Christ—a path to *theosis*, or deification. But for the Church as a whole, it acts as a spiritual barometer. The health of the Church can often be measured by the fervor and spiritual vitality of its monasteries. When they are strong, the entire body is strong.

7. This exact tradition is alive today in North America. The late Elder Ephraim of Arizona, a direct spiritual child of the Athonite (Mount Athos) tradition, came to America and, in just a few decades, founded nearly 20 traditional monasteries for men and women. These are direct transplants of that same 4th-century Egyptian and Byzantine spirituality, proving that the "angelic life" continues to be a vital path for those seeking Christ in our own time.

Slide 12 – 2nd Ecumenical Council

1. The 2nd Ecumenical Council was convened in Constantinople (381) to condemn Macedonianism and (again) Arianism. What is Macedonianism, and why should we know about it?

2. First, it should be noted that Macedonius was the Patriarch of Constantinople for various periods during the mid-4th century (c. 342–360 AD). He was a wolf in sheep's clothing. He taught that the Holy Spirit was inferior to the Father and the Son, that He was simply a "power" of God. This was basically a more developed, nuanced version of some aspects of Arianism. Macedonius and his followers were collectively known by the Greek term *Pneumatomachians*, which literally means "Spirit-Fighters" or "opponents of the Spirit."

Since as semi-Arians they already believed the Son was subordinate to the Father (that is, being of "similar" but not the "same" essence), they reasoned that the Holy Spirit must be subordinate to the Son. If the Father is first and the Son is second, the Spirit must logically be third and therefore a created being, placed lower on the divine what they called the "chain of being."

And like the Arians before them, they feared that affirming three fully divine, equal Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) would lead to Tritheism (belief in three separate gods). Their solution was to subordinate the Son and the Spirit to the Father in order to maintain monotheism.

3. In response the Council of Bishops decreed that there was one God—one *ousia*, or essence—in three persons, or *hypostases*.

Hypostasis is a fundamental term in ancient Greek philosophy that denotes a distinct person, subject, or individual reality that possesses a shared essence or nature. This term was adopted by the Holy Fathers.

They confirmed that Scripture points to the eternal and divine nature of the Holy Spirit; that if the Holy Spirit is not God we have no salvation after Christ ascended; and that, philosophically, whatever *proceeds from God, is God*.

So the Council affirmed and completed the original version of the Nicene Creed, adding a clarifying article about the Holy Spirit: "Who proceeds from the Father; Who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and glorified." The Holy Spirit thus *proceeds* from the Father, but is *sent by* the Son.

In Western Christianity, confusion about His eternal *procession* versus His *sending* by the Son has caused a lot of doctrinal errors, chief among them being the addition of the *Filioque* clause to the Creed, i.e., that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father “... *and the Son*”. You will learn more about this in the second class.

4. The Council also added the ninth article concerning belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” Church. The Creed thus prescribes *belief in* the Church, that is, as an article of Faith.

OPTIONAL: Marks of the Church (cover if not covered already in a previous lecture)

a. **One** (from Timothy [Metropolitan Kallistos] Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 1963 edition):

‘The Church is one. Its unity follows of necessity from the unity of God’... If we take seriously the bond between God and His Church, then we must inevitably think of the Church as one, even as God is one: there is only one Christ, and so there can be only one Body of Christ. Nor is this unity merely ideal and invisible; Orthodox theology refuses to separate the ‘invisible’ and the ‘visible Church,’ and therefore it refuses to say that the Church is invisibly one but visibly divided. No: the Church is one, in the sense that here on earth there is a single, visible community which alone can claim to be the one true Church. The ‘undivided Church’ is not merely something that existed in the past, and which we hope will exist again in the future: it is something that exists here and now. Unity is one of the essential characteristics of the Church, and since the Church on earth, despite the sinfulness of its members, retains its essential characteristics, it remains and always will remain visibly one. There can be schisms *from* the Church, but no schisms *within* the Church. And while it is undeniably true that, on a purely human level, the Church’s life is grievously impoverished as a result of schisms, yet such schisms cannot affect the essential nature of the Church.

b. **Holy**: set apart for the purpose of worshipping God, communing with Him, advancing His Kingdom, etc.

c. **Catholic**: doesn’t mean “universal”, nor does it mean “Roman Catholic”. It’s from the Greek “katholikos”, which literally means “according to the whole”. It means that the Church has everything for our salvation. She lacks nothing, and is infallible. So, the Orthodox Church is *the* Catholic Church (again, not *Roman* Catholic, a term which only came into widespread use in the 17th century, and was used in a way that implied universality).

Concerning infallibility I again quote from *The Orthodox Church*:

The Church is infallible. This again follows from the indissoluble unity between God and His Church. Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot err, and since the Church is Christ’s body, since it is a continued Pentecost, it is therefore

infallible. It is "the pillar and the ground of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). "When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). So Christ promised at the Last Supper; and Orthodoxy believes that Christ's promise cannot fail. In the words of Dositheus: 'We believe the Catholic Church to be taught by the Holy Spirit ... and therefore we both believe and profess as true and undoubtedly certain, that it is impossible for the Catholic Church to err, or to be at all deceived, or ever to choose falsehood instead of truth (Confession, Decree 12).

The Church's infallibility is expressed chiefly through Ecumenical Councils. But before we can understand what makes a Council Ecumenical, we must consider the place of bishops and of the laity in the Orthodox communion.

d. **Apostolic:** it is the continuity of not only the teaching of the Apostles, but also their spiritual lineage in the Apostolic Succession of bishops.

5. One of the key texts from this period is St. Basil the Great's "On the Holy Spirit", written in the year 374. Chapters 66-67 of this treatise contain some very important teachings about Church Tradition and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to find this text on the Web and read it.

Slide 13 – "The Book of the Church"

1. For the first four hundred years the Church prayed and worshipped together without a canonical Bible. Yet the Church wrote, used and treasured the core writings because their contents were handed down by the Holy Fathers (i.e., Bishops and leaders of the Church) starting with the Apostles. The Bible is only properly seen as "the Book of the Church"; and it is only properly interpreted within the context of the Church's oral and written tradition from which the Scriptures emerged.

2. The earliest known canon of Scripture is the Muratorian Canon, or a fragment therefore (we have part of a translation of the actual listing of books), which cites all the books we consider as parts of the Bible today, except for Hebrews, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. The author considers spurious the letters claiming to have Paul as author that are ostensibly addressed to the Laodiceans and to the Alexandrians. Of these he says they are "forged in Paul's name to [further] the heresy of Marcion", which began around the year 144. Marcion rejected the Hebrew Bible and the God of Israel. Marcionists believed that the wrathful Hebrew God was a separate and lower entity than the all-forgiving God of the New Testament.

3. **Montanism** was another 2nd century heresy. Montanists claimed that they were completing Christ's unfinished work, and that rejecting their three prophets was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Church's attitude was that there was no new revelation, no new prophetic utterances that should be included in Sacred Scripture. The authoritative Canon may not have been sorted out yet, but whatever books would be officially listed were written long ago.

Key point: Just as the Church's dogmas were articulated/formulated due to the Church's defensive stance against heresies, so too was the Canon of Scripture ratified because of a need to defend the boundaries of what described God's written Word.

4. St. Athanasius then wrote his 39th Festal Letter in 367, enumerating all the books that we recognize today as part of the Canon of Scripture. He was the Patriarch of Alexandria at the time.

OPTIONAL:

In his letter he wrote: "Since some have taken in hand to set in order for themselves the so-called apocrypha and to mingle them with the God-inspired scripture, concerning which we have attained to a sure persuasion, according to what the original eye-witness and ministers of the word have delivered unto our fathers, I also... have decided to set forth in order the writings that have been put in the canon, that have been handed down and confirmed as divine....

NOTE: The "apocrypha" he mentions here are New Testament apocryphal books, that is, spurious and even heretical writings after the time of Christ, such as the Gospel of Thomas. He is not referring to the collection of Old Testament writings that we accept as the so-called Apocrypha.

The Saint continues: "I must without hesitation mention the scriptures of the New Testament; they are the following:...[THEN HE LISTS THEM]....

5. In the late 4th and early 5th centuries, Saint Augustine of Hippo convened three Synods to settle the matter of which books were to be included in the Canon of Scripture. The second of these Synods took place in Carthage in 397. It determined that "besides the Canonical Scriptures, nothing be read in the Church under the title of divine Scriptures." It then lists them.

As with all Synods, **the purpose was to confirm and ratify what the Church already held or believed, not to come up with something new.** Thus, the concluding words of third of these Synods—held in 419, and which confirmed the previous two Synods on canonicity—contain the following: "Let this be sent to our brother and fellow-bishop, Boniface [i.e., the Pope of Rome], and to the other bishops of those parts, that they may confirm this canon, for these are the things that we have received from our fathers to be read in church."

6. The "official" Canon of Scripture did not receive ratification by an *Ecumenical* Council until the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 681, which in its Canon 2 ratifies the earlier Councils which ruled on this.

7. It's worth mentioning that although the Book of Revelation was controversial, but was ultimately listed in the Canon and is not in doubt today. Many commentaries exist (both by ancient Saints & modern writers), but also enjoys no regular place in readings appointed for services.

Slide 14 – 3rd Ecumenical Council

1. Convened in Ephesus (431) mainly to condemn Nestorianism, but also Pelagianism. Nestorius was at the time the Bishop of Constantinople. He was an ascetic, of high moral caliber and a superb preacher.

People did not realize, however, that he was not very theologically literate, nor did he care much about following in the footsteps of the recognized Holy Fathers. He began a series of sermons wherein he tried to answer a question some considered unsolved: *“How can Jesus Christ, being part man, not be partially a sinner as well, since man is by definition a sinner since the Fall?”* To solve this apparent conundrum he taught that Mary gave birth to Jesus the *man*, not the *divine Logos* Who existed before Mary and indeed before time itself.

2. He thus refused to call the Virgin Mary “Mother of God” (*Theotokos*). This title was already accepted in popular devotion, but it seemed to Nestorius to imply a confusion of Christ's humanity and His Godhead. Mary, he argued...is only to be called “Mother of Man” or at the most “Mother of Christ” [*Christotokos*], since she is mother only of Christ's humanity, not of His divinity.

3. When pressed he would confess that, yes, there is *some* type of union between the human and divine in the Person of Christ; yet despite his attempts to show he was Orthodox, it became clear that the unity he professed was only superficial: it was not the hypostatic union which the Church had always believed.

4. Bishop Kallistos Ware writes:

“Saint Cyril of Alexandria, supported by the council, answered...that Mary is God's mother, for, “[S]he bore the Word of God made flesh.” What Mary bore was not a man loosely united to God, but a single and undivided person, who is God and man at once. The name *Theotokos* safeguards the unity of Christ's person: to deny her this title is to separate the Incarnate Christ into two, breaking down the bridge between God and humanity and erecting within Christ's person a middle wall of partition. Thus we can see that not only titles of devotion were involved at Ephesus, but the very message of salvation. The same primacy that the word *homoousios* [recall the First Ecumenical Synod] occupies in the doctrine of the Trinity, the word *Theotokos* holds in the doctrine of the Incarnation. (Ware, p. 33)

Sadly, some rejected the Council's decisions, broke away and formed the Nestorian Church.

5. Today in the Orthodox Church you will often hear the term “*Theotokos*”. She is infrequently referred to simply as “Mary” or “Mariam”. We continue to venerate her as God's holy mother, thus fulfilling the prophetic words she sang aloud after greeting Elizabeth, whose babe—the Holy Prophet and Forerunner of the Lord, John the Baptist—had just leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb.

OPTIONAL:

This is recorded in St Luke's 1:48:

And Mary said,
My soul magnifies the Lord,

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:

for, behold, from henceforth all generations
shall call me blessed (i.e., will honor me).
For he that is mighty has done to me great things;
and holy [is] his name.

The Orthodox Church includes among her “twelve great annual feast days” the following feasts for the Mother of God: Her Nativity on Sept. 8th, Her entrance into the Temple as a little girl, to be consecrated to God (Nov. 21st), the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, where she presents the Christ child to St. Symeon (Feb. 2nd), the Annunciation (Mar 25)–on which is commemorated the Archangel Gabriel’s announcement that she would bear the Son of God (one could also thus call this the Feast of the Incarnation, for Christ was conceived in her womb when the Holy Spirit overshadowed her following the announcement), and her Dormition, or falling asleep, on Aug 15, which is preceded by a two-week fast and daily services in her honor.

Although all this veneration of her may seem, to many Protestants, unusual if not scandalous, it’s important to realize that the Church from the very beginning held her in the highest honor, as the chief among the Saints. Moreover, she is rarely depicted alone, but almost always with Christ. As the Third Ecumenical Council affirmed, she is honored because “she bore the Word of God made flesh,” and this understanding is crucial to our salvation. Orthodox Christians don’t “worship Mary,” we just venerate her and “call her blessed” (as she prophesied) in a variety of ways.

Slide 15 – 4th Ecumenical Council

1. The 4th Ecumenical Council was convened in Chalcedon (451) to condemn Monophysitism.

2. A monk named Eutyches, who was held in very high regard by many of the faithful, began teaching a subtle variation on the traditional Christology. As he described in a letter to Pope Leo I in 448, he did this in an attempt to stop a new outbreak of Nestorianism, but he went off the rails and would not repent. He had a desire to fiercely uphold the *unity* of Christ, but this ultimately ended up distorting the reality of Christ’s humanity.

Recall Nestorius taught that in Christ, the divine nature (the *Logos*) and the human nature were two distinct, separate *hypostases* (persons) that were merely joined by a moral union. His teaching effectively split Christ into two subjects. Eutyches wanted

to avoid this "splitting" of Christ at all costs. He sought to affirm the seamless, absolute unity of Christ's Person, that is, the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union (one Person).

However, to secure this unity, Eutyches reasoned that after the Incarnation, the human nature of Christ must have been absorbed or "swallowed up" by His divine nature, much like a drop of honey dissolving into the sea.

In other words, while Christ may have been "of two natures before the union" (meaning the Logos and human flesh existed separately), He was "one nature after the union." Hence the term "Monophysite", that is, one ("mono") nature ("physis"). And if the two natures formed one single nature, the divine one must have dominated. Therefore, the human nature was not truly consubstantial (of the same substance) with our human nature. Monophysites even called Christ's body "celestial" or divine.

The consequence of Eutyches' teaching was that Christ ceased to be fully human. His divinity was so overwhelming that His humanity was rendered illusory, changed, or merged into something new that was neither fully human nor fully divine in a recognizable way. This directly affects not only the Church's doctrine of the Christ and the Godhead, but also of the doctrines that flow from this, like the doctrine of salvation.

3. At the Council the Pope of Rome, St. Leo the Great, was invited to preside, but he declined due to the threat on the Western Roman Empire by Attila the Hun. Instead he wrote his famous "Tomos", or "Tome", which expound the Orthodox Christological teachings.

4. The Orthodox at the council held fast to the Tome,

"in which the distinction between the two natures is clearly stated, although the unity of Christ's person is also emphasized. In their proclamation of faith they stated their belief in 'one and the same Son, perfect in Godhead and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly human ... acknowledged in two natures *unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the difference between the natures is in no way removed because of the union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature is preserved, and both combine in one person and in one hypostasis'". (Ware, p. 34, quoting the Council of Chalcedon)

This is known as the "hypostatic union" of the God-man.

5. Affirmation of the Tome was due largely to a miracle by St. Euphemia, a famous late 3rd century martyr of Chalcedon. From the Synaxarion—the collection of the Lives of Saints— on July 11th we can read about this:

"In order to settle their differences by a decision that had come from God, the holy Patriarch Anatolius suggested to the attendees that each of the two parties write a

volume containing their respective professions of faith, and that the two documents be placed in the reliquary containing the body of Saint Euphemia. The two scrolls, in which were written the definitions of the faith concerning the Person of Christ, were then placed on the Saint's chest; and, after having sealed the casket, the Fathers fell to prayer. After eight days, they all went to the martyrion and, opening the reliquary, discovered with wonder that the Saint was clutching the Orthodox scroll in her hands, as though she wanted to press it into her heart, while the heretics' scroll lay at her feet. Before this amazing demonstration of the truth, the Orthodox gave thanks to God, and the heretics, booed by the crowd, were covered with shame." (*Synaxarion* published by Simonos Petra Monastery, July 11)

Again, sadly, some in the Church did not accept the Council, broke away, and formed "Non-Chalcedonian" churches, the most significant of which is the Coptic Orthodox Church, known then as the Church of Alexandria.

6. It's worth noting that this is last council which most Anglicans and many traditional Protestant bodies consider "ecumenical" and "authoritative".

Slide 16 – Map of Christendom, sometime after Chalcedon

Point out the areas where the Nestorian and non-Chalcedonian churches spread.

Nestorian Church (Assyrian Church, East Syrian Church, Persian Church)

"Oriental Orthodoxy": Coptic Orthodox, the Syriac Orthodox (sometimes referred to as "Jacobite"), the Armenian Apostolic, the Ethiopian Orthodox, the Eritrean Orthodox and the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox.

Slide 17 – 5th and 6th Ecumenical Councils

1. The Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils were held in Constantinople in 553 and 680-681, respectively.

The primary work of the Fifth Ecumenical Council was the condemnation of the "Three Chapters", neo-Nestorian texts written by three Syrian theologians, and which had been in circulation and were causing divisions. The Council also condemned these theologians, as well as Origen and his writings.

Despite the clear definition of Christ as being in two natures (divine and human) established at Chalcedon (451 AD), many Christians—especially in Egypt and Syria—remained suspicious. They felt that Chalcedon's language gave too much leeway to Nestorianism (the heresy that Christ was two separate persons). They continued to cling to a form of Monophysitism.

So, the Council accomplished three main things:

A Clarification of Chalcedon: It provided the necessary interpretation and theological "safety check" for the Council of Chalcedon. It showed that Chalcedon's definition of two natures did not mean the Church supported the dual-person heresy of Nestorianism.

An Affirmation of Unity: It strongly affirmed the doctrine of St. Cyril of Alexandria and the unity of Christ's Person (the Hypostatic Union). It stressed that the one Person of the Son of God is the single subject of all Christ's actions and experiences, whether divine or human.

Affirmed that an Apparent Mixture of Doctrines was Necessary: The Council made clear that the two natures were joined "without confusion, without change" (against Monophysitism), but also "without division, without separation" (against Nestorianism). It secured the understanding that the one who was born of the Virgin Mary is the very same person who is God the Word.

In short, the Fifth Ecumenical was absolutely necessary to clarify and safeguard the doctrine of the Incarnation established by the preceding councils, ensuring the Church's teaching on Christ was understood correctly and universally. Without it, the authority of Chalcedon would have remained compromised and the internal schisms unresolved.

2. The Sixth Ecumenical Council defended Chalcedon against new variants of Monophysitism, which impaired the fullness of Christ's humanity. These variants are Monoenergism and Monotheletism. The former is the teaching that, while Christ does have two Natures, He has only one energy or will. By "energy" we understand a person's actions or operations. The idea behind monoenergism was that the human energy of Christ was absorbed by His Divine Energy at the Incarnation.

This idea was replaced with a more refined idea of "two Natures but one Divine Will", or monotheletism; and both heresies are essentially a variation of the already condemned monophysitism.

These variants impair the fullness of Christ's humanity and subtly undermines the hypostatic union of Christ as two natures, one divine and one human, united in one person with neither confusion nor division, as the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon had decided.

3. The driving force behind these heresies was a political desire to reunite the Egyptian Monophysites with the Orthodox Church, and thus bring some unity to an important part of the Empire. (Egypt was, at the time, a very important grain-producing region and of great value.)

4. For some time the Eastern Empire embraced Monotheletism, but St. Maximos the Confessor led the fight against it. He worked tirelessly to secure the heresy's condemnation at several local synods in Africa, and also worked to have it condemned at the Lateran Council of 649. He was then brought to Constantinople in 653, pressured to adhere to the Typos of Emperor Constans II, which promulgated

the heresy in a political attempt at unity. Refusing to do so, he was exiled to Thrace. Rome had not succumbed to the heresy, and St. Maximus' ally, Pope St. Martin of Rome, was tried around the same time in Constantinople, and thus deposed and exiled to Crimea.

In 661 Maximus again was brought to the imperial capital and questioned; while there, he and two of his disciples had his tongue uprooted and his right hand cut off (to prevent them from preaching or writing the true faith). However, shortly after these terrible injuries, the Lord performed an inexplicable miracle: St. Maximus and his disciples regained the ability to speak and write. This allowed him to continue bearing witness to the truth of Christ's two complete natures—divine and human—until his death in exile later that year. He was ultimately exonerated by the Sixth Ecumenical Council and recognized as a Father of the Church.

Slide 18 – 7th Ecumenical Council

1. The Seventh Ecumenical Council was convened in Nicaea in 787. At the time, the Iconoclast Controversy had been raging for 61 years. “Iconoclasm” essentially means “icon smashing”, and Iconoclasts believed that Icons were idolatrous, and should be banished from the Church.

The controversy was first instigated by Emperor Leo III. It's difficult to understand his motives, but they are likely due to a literal interpretation of the Second Commandment regarding idolatry, and influence on him or his court by the teachings of a relatively new, but quickly spreading faith: Islam. And sadly, as in many periods of Church history, heresy found a foothold in certain Church leaders, who supported his policies.

2. “Idolatry” is indeed the view of most Protestants and Muslims today. But the Iconoclasts of olden and modern times misunderstand the special significance and role of Icons. Most also do not know that it was the Apostle Luke himself who painted the first Icons, including one of the Mother of God.

Bishop Kallistos writes, “When an Orthodox kisses an icon or prostrates himself before it, he is not guilty of idolatry. The icon is not an idol but a symbol; the veneration shown to images is directed, not towards stone, wood, and paint, but towards the person depicted.... Because icons are only symbols, Orthodox do not worship them, but reverence or venerate them. [Saint] John of Damascus carefully distinguished between the relative honour of veneration shown to material symbols, and the worship due to God alone.”

3. Bishop Kallistos continues,

“Granted that icons are not idols; granted that they are useful for instruction; but are they not only permissible but necessary? Is it essential to have icons? The Iconodules[—those who supported the use of Icons, i.e., the Orthodox Christians —]held that it is, because icons safeguard a full and proper doctrine of the

Incarnation. Iconoclasts and Iconodules agreed that God cannot be represented in His eternal nature: 'no one has seen God at any time' (John 1:18). But, the Iconodules continued, the Incarnation has made a representational religious art possible: God can be depicted because He became human and took flesh. Material images, argued John of Damascus, can be made of Him who took a material body:

Of old God the incorporeal and uncircumscribed was not depicted at all. But now that God has appeared in the flesh and lived among humans, I make an image of the God who can be seen. I do not worship matter but I worship the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and deigned to dwell in matter, who through matter effected my salvation. I will not cease from worshipping the matter through which my salvation has been effected.

"The Iconoclasts, by repudiating all representations of God, failed to take full account of the Incarnation. They fell, as so many puritans have done, into a kind of dualism. Regarding matter as a defilement, they wanted a religion freed from all contact with what is material; for they thought that what is spiritual must be non-material. But this is to betray the Incarnation, by allowing no place to Christ's humanity, to His body; it is to forget that our body as well as our soul must be saved and transfigured. The Iconoclast controversy is thus closely linked to the earlier disputes about Christ's person. It was not merely a controversy about religious art, but about the Incarnation, about human salvation, about the salvation of the entire material cosmos....

"The Orthodox doctrine of icons is bound up with the Orthodox belief that the whole of God's creation, material as well as spiritual, is to be redeemed and glorified."
(Ware, pp. 41ff)

OPTIONAL:

You may be thinking, "I've heard the phrase 'miracle-working Icon', as if the Icon itself was working the miracles. I also know there are entire feast days and services composed to some of these Icons. To someone inquiring about the Orthodox Faith it would seem such phrases and feasts would imply that Orthodox *worship* Icons instead of merely *venerating* them."

In answer to this I would say that there are aspects of the Church's life and terminology that can appear odd or scandalous or at best questionable to those who have yet to study the Church's teaching in-depth, or who may be inclined to hastily judge by mere appearances. In the second century Christians were accused of cannibalism by those who misunderstood the "body and blood" imagery of the eucharistic services. And it would be easy to hear some of the poetic, liturgical language used for the Mother of God and think we are worshipping her.

Likewise concerning "miracle-working Icons", it is important to understand that this term is used in a certain context, with the assumption that a person will understand that this phrase means "an Icon through which God and His Saints work miracles"; and for this reason, a service may be composed, such as an Akathist, that, if read

carefully, gives the glory and honor to God Who works wonders through matter, through physical things such as Icons, for our salvation. A term such as “Theotokos” or “miracle-working Icon” is kind of a “holy shorthand” for much deeper theological concepts such as Mary being the bearer of the God-Man Christ, the ladder or bridge from earth to heaven; or, Icons being something special that safeguards the Incarnation and through which God has appointed that his Divine Energies are conveyed in a special way, owing to what the Icons depict in the form of sacred art.

4. And so, in 787, the Seventh and last Ecumenical Synod convened to condemn Iconoclasm. However, another attack on Icons was instigated by Leo V the Armenian in 815, and thus it was not until 843 that we see the final victory of the Iconodules when the Empress Theodora came to power by God’s Providence and restored Icons in the churches. This event is known as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy” and is commemorated each year on the first Sunday of Great Lent.

5. Thus ends the age of the Ecumenical Synods, which delineated and confirmed the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Slide 19 – Summary of the Councils, Part 1

No additional notes.

Slide 20 – OPTIONAL - Summary of the Councils, Part 2

1. At the heart of each is some key Trinitarian or Christological issue that must be defended or the Gospel is in jeopardy. Whether it is that Christ is downgraded as created being; or the Holy Spirit is made a subordinate Person of the Holy Trinity; or that there is no true union of Christ’s two natures; or that Christ has only one Nature; or that He does have union in two Natures, but this united Person has only one divine-human will; or that images of this God-Man cannot be depicted and venerated: all of these obscured (and some continue to this day in various sects like Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormonism) the path that leads mankind to salvation and union with God.

2. I didn’t mention many other things that these Councils did, including the eventual establishment of the five great sees, which became known as Patriarchates. These were, in order, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. All five claimed apostolic foundation. The first four were the most important cities in the Roman Empire. The fifth was added because it was the place where Christ had suffered on the Cross and risen from the dead. The five patriarchates between them divided into spheres of jurisdiction the whole of the known world, apart from Cyprus, which was granted independence by the Council of Ephesus and has remained self-governing ever since. Rome has since fallen away from the Orthodox Faith, and thus we no longer consider Rome a Patriarchate. Many consider Moscow to be a “New Rome”, given the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church is the largest of the

Orthodox churches. But this is not an official title, although the head of the Russian Church is given the title “Patriarch”.

3. These Councils also drafted or ratified hundreds of canons which comprise the Church’s canonical tradition. Although you will sometimes hear this referred to as Canon “Law”, this is more of a Western term, for the Church’s canons have a different purpose and aim than what we think of when we hear “law”, and the canons are not codified and systematized like one finds in the Roman Church. The entire “system”, if one call it that, functions very differently, for their main purpose is to guide the faithful and to help preserve the spiritual well-being of the Church.

4. Quote by Fr. George Florovsky, which continues: “The ultimate “authority” is vested in the Church which is forever the Pillar and Foundation of Truth.... It is a charismatic authority, grounded in the assistance of the Spirit: for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us.”

5. Bishop Kallistos Ware writes: “The Church is infallible. This again follows from the indissoluble unity between God and His Church. Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot err, and since the Church is Christ’s body, since it is a continued Pentecost, it is therefore infallible. It is ‘the pillar and the ground of truth’ (1 Tim. 3:15). ‘When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth’ (John 16:13). So Christ promised at the Last Supper; and Orthodoxy believes that Christ’s promise cannot fail. In the words of Dositheus: ‘We believe the Catholic Church to be taught by the Holy Spirit... and therefore we both believe and profess as true and undoubtedly certain, that it is impossible for the Catholic Church to err, or to be at all deceived, or ever to choose falsehood instead of truth’ (Confession, Decree 12).”

6. The Council of Ferrara-Florence was a lamentable period in Orthodox Church history. Still called the 13th Ecumenical Council by the Roman Catholics, it was an attempt by the Pope to reunify the two churches after the Great Schism, and to solve dogmatic disputes, such as the doctrine of Purgatory and the Filioque. Under political pressure from the Emperor due to concerns about a Muslim onslaught and the need for Western support, numerous Bishops signed a heretical agreement. Only one held out: St Mark of Ephesus. Later, the people reject the Council and St Mark was held to be a Confessor.

OPTIONAL [Bishop Afonsky: “The highest ecclesiastical authority in expressing the true faith of the Orthodox Church is the ecumenical council. Such councils are composed of all bishops of all Orthodox Churches, guided by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the affirmation of the first apostolic council in Jerusalem: ‘It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ (Acts 15:28).”]