

# The Orthodox Western Rite

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*The Very Rev'd Nicholas R. Alford*

*St. Gregory Orthodox Church*

*Washington, DC*

Orthodoxy has often been called a “well kept secret” and many people know little of the Orthodox Church, save that it involves Russians and Greeks, icons, men with beards wearing black robes, and elaborate rituals. We, however, know that the Orthodox faith is the true and right faith and that the Orthodox Church is the Church founded by Christ and His Apostles. While the vast majority of Orthodox Christians worship in a manner that is culturally Eastern, a small but increasing number of Orthodox Christians are joyful to worship and live out their faith in a culturally Western manner - in the Orthodox Western Rite. Within Orthodoxy itself, however, the Western Rite is certainly a “well kept secret.” Many Orthodox Christians have never heard of the Western Rite; others may be confused or concerned about it. This paper will address the question of what the Western Rite is, followed by a brief history of the Western Rite, and conclude with a few remarks addressing the matter of why the Western Rite is needed.

First, there is the matter of what is meant by the word *rite*. The Latin word *ritus*, from which our English word *rite* comes, means “any form or manner of religious observance.” So in that sense we may speak of the form used for the Liturgy or for Chrismation or for the blessing of a house or for any other service of the church as *rites*. In a more general sense, however, the word *rite* is also applied to the whole body of services, ceremonies, hymns, prayers, devotions and practices of a religious people. In this way we may speak of the Byzantine Rite or the Roman Rite or the Coptic Rite or even the Presbyterian, Baptist or Pentecostal Rites (as Protestants undoubtedly have their own rituals or regularly prescribed ways of doing things, whether they will admit it or not).

As we strive to relate to God (who is certainly “beyond description, beyond understanding, invisible (and) incomprehensible”), as we seek to know God and to enter into relationship with Him, we must do so in a manner which we can begin to understand, that is at least in part comprehensible to us, in a language which speaks to us, in the language of our culture. A *Rite* is a cultural expression of the faith believed by a particular people. A rite is not the faith itself, but rather conveys the truth of the faith

within the language of the culture, in the language of the people. His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania has stated:

This issue of culture is a very basic one. When the Gospel meets another culture, three things happen. One part of the culture clearly you have to accept - for instance, the language. Another part of the culture you have to reject - that which does not agree with the Gospel... and there is a third part, which you have to transform. I can say to “baptize,” to use it, giving it another meaning... We have to see that other cultures have their own dignity, their own interest and we must respect them... we have to accept our ignorance and be more humble in our attitude towards others. We must accept the expression of their feelings and their life and not say, “this is not Orthodox!” What is not Orthodox? Not Orthodox is to be impure, to be dishonest, to be against the will of God, this is unorthodox.”

We know that the Orthodox Church is the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Church established by Christ and led by the Holy Spirit into all truth. For the first thousand years after the earthly life, death and resurrection of Christ, there was essentially one Church believing a common faith (yes, we can speak of the schisms following the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon - but the East and the West were still united). There was one church united in faith, but with different cultural expressions of that common faith. In Syria the Liturgy of St. James was used, in Egypt the liturgy of St. Mark, in Rome the Liturgy of St. Peter (later called the Liturgy of St. Gregory), in Constantinople the Liturgies of St. Basil and John Chrysostom, and we could go on to speak of the Celtic liturgy and the Gallican Liturgy, and the Mozarabic liturgy and many others - all different cultural expressions of the one Orthodox faith, all important aspects of Holy Tradition.

Gradually, within the two halves of the Roman Empire, Eastern and Western, two rites came to dominate. In the Eastern portion of the Empire, the Rite of the City of Constantinople supplanted other liturgical forms, including replacing the ancient Liturgy of St. James in Syria by the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the West, the Liturgy of Rome became the norm. At times these changes were forced upon the people; at other times the people wanted to emulate what was done in the imperial cities (for example, we know, in the early part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, that the English Church historian, St. Bede, speaks of sending to Rome for books and teachers and chanters to learn how to do things correctly). Before the schism of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, these two dominant forms of worship, that of Rome and Constantinople, existed side by side within the Roman Empire and within the Orthodox Church.

One of the duties of the Church is to help us to become holy and the Orthodox Church in the West and in the East equally produced many, many saints. In the Liturgy of St. Gregory we recall the early Popes after St. Peter and others who were martyrs for the faith in the West: Saints Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Laurence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul...” We could mention St. Alban the proto-martyr of Britain who died about the year 202; St. Ambrose of Milan, who in the 4<sup>th</sup> century converted and baptized St. Augustine, wrote hymns and called the Emperor to account; St. Patrick the great 5<sup>th</sup> century missionary to the Irish; St. Boniface (the 8<sup>th</sup> century Apostle to Germany); and the list goes on and on. The prayers, liturgies, hymns and devotions which nurtured these saints, which helped to make these people holy *are* the Western Rite. This rite was Orthodox for a thousand years. Then the West departed from the Orthodox faith. This, at first, was largely the work of rulers and academics, exacerbated by linguistic differences, and then the rift was made worse by the crusades and the rise of Scholasticism, driving wedges between the hearts and minds of the peoples of the East and of the West.

While there was some continued Western liturgical presence in the East after the schism of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, such as that of the Benedictine monastery of the Amalfians on Mt. Athos, which existed until 1287, the real history of the restoration of the Western Rite begins with Julius Joseph Overbeck in 1864. A former Roman Catholic priest, Overbeck left the priesthood, got married, and then moved to England to teach. After studying both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, Overbeck determined that both were seriously flawed. He was received into the Orthodox Church at the Russian Embassy in London in 1865. Overbeck, along with a number of Tractarian Anglicans, began to work towards the establishment of a Western Orthodox Church, petitioning the Holy Synod of Moscow, and a Synodal Commission was established to study this request and the Roman Liturgy. Old Catholics, who had left the Roman Communion after the First Vatican Council also expressed interest in this work. The proposal received the approval of the Synodal Commission and Overbeck then turned to seek the approval of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, where the Patriarch, Joachim III, recognized the need and accepted the idea of a Western Rite. Ultimately, however, Overbeck felt that the Greeks in England were to blame for stopping the progress of this work and Overbeck died in 1905, without seeing his plan completed. There is some evidence that the Greeks in England were responding to pressure from the Church of England, where the establishment of a Western Rite was viewed as a threat.

Meanwhile, St. Tikhon was serving as bishop in America and had befriended Catholic-minded Episcopalians, including Bishop Charles Grafton of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. In 1904 Archbishop Tikhon asked the Moscow Synod to review the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and the Synod prepared a report detailing what needed to be added and what had to be removed for the Prayerbook to be used in Orthodox worship. St. Tikhon also attended Evensong at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Denver, Colorado, which now, by the grace of God and the prayers of St. Tikhon, is St. Mark's Orthodox Church.

In 1911, the first Old Catholic Bishop in Great Britain, Arnold Harris Matthew, entered into union with the Patriarchate of Antioch, under the guidance of Metropolitan Gerasimos (Messarah) of Beirut. This union lasted only for a matter of months, before the Church of England again brought pressure to bear against what could have become a threat in England. While Matthew went on to have a rather unstable life, perhaps due to continued persecution, this temporary union does have significance for us, both as the Patriarchate of Antioch saw the need for the establishment of a Western Rite, and as a young Anthony Bashir served as Deacon to Metropolitan Gerasimos.

The chaos and turmoil following the Russian Revolution brought the work of the Moscow Synod towards establishing a Western Rite to a sudden end, as they had innumerable difficulties to deal with. In Europe the situation was somewhat better and after a few false starts, six Polish congregations were received as Western Rite congregations by the Russian Church in 1926. In the 1930's, the French Orthodox Church was received by the Russians; some in this group used the corrected Roman Rite, others attempted to reconstruct the Old Gallican liturgy. The French Orthodox Church has moved in and out of canonical Orthodoxy: at times under the Russian Church in Exile, at times with the Romanians, at times autonomous, and most recently, some of this group have been received by the Serbs.

Back in America, Bishop Aftimios (Ofiesh), the successor to St. Raphael (Hawaweeny), in his attempts to start what was called "The American Orthodox Catholic Church," consecrated a former Episcopal priest, Ignatius (William Albert) Nicholas, as Auxiliary Bishop of Washington and gave him jurisdiction over the Western Rite. When both Aftimios and Ignatius got married, in violations of the canons of the Church, the Russian Church broke communion with this group. In 1932 Ignatius established the

Society of St. Basil, a devotional society committed to the establishment of the Orthodox Western Rite and in 1939 Ignatius consecrated Alexander Turner to be his assistant and successor. Turner was also the pastor of the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Mt. Vernon, NY. He knew that ultimately there was no future for the Western Rite apart from the canonical church. He began discussions with the Antiochian Archdiocese where Anthony Bashir was now the Metropolitan Archbishop, and Metropolitan Anthony issued his Western Rite Edict in 1958 (so we can rightly speak of 2008 as our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year). In 1961 Metropolitan Anthony received the first three Western Rite congregations. Bishop Alexander Turner then became Fr. Alexander Turner and served as our first Vicar General. Growth and the quest for stability was slow at first, but the situation improved beginning in the mid-1970's, as a number of former Episcopal congregations were received into the Archdiocese.

Why did Metropolitan Anthony take this action? As he presented his vision for the Western Rite to the Archdiocese, Metropolitan Anthony stated two purposes for his actions: first, to “provide a home in the Orthodox Church for Western people of non-Byzantine cultural and religious background”, and second, “to witness to the catholicity of the Orthodox Church to her Byzantine people, priests and theologians.” In his report to the Archdiocesan Convention of 1958, to what was a predominantly Arabic audience, Metropolitan Anthony stated:

We Orthodox teach that we are the one, holy, Catholic Church. We must not then force the whole world to become Eastern in order to enter the true Church and be saved! The faith must be one, and Orthodox, but its expression has always been suited to the races and nations which accepted Christ. Food is necessary to life, but it attracts different races when it is prepared differently. We know that Yorkshire Pudding and Sauerkraut and Spaghetti are just as nourishing as Kibbi, it's just that we don't enjoy them as much!”

Metropolitan Anthony, and for the past forty-two years, Metropolitan Philip, have supported and encouraged the Western Rite within this Archdiocese. We are organized both as a department and as a vicariate of the archdiocese. Fr. Paul Schneirla has served as the Vicar General since the death of Fr. Alexander Turner, the first Vicar General in 1971. His Grace, Bishop BASIL serves as our hierarchical overseer. Today we have about two dozen congregations scattered across the country and there are other groups in conversation with us about entering the Orthodox Church and worshiping in the Western Rite. There are also Western Rite congregations and monasteries within the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. The French Orthodox Church (which currently has a

questionable canonical status) has Western Rite congregations, and there are a number of small Western Rite groups who claim to be Orthodox but who are not in communion with the Church (but who do have a very large presence on the internet).

While the French Orthodox Church had sought to recreate the ancient Gallican Liturgy, at times in creative ways, Metropolitan Anthony made it clear that the Western Rite within this Archdiocese should be based on the ‘living liturgy’ of the West, in other words on the Roman Liturgy as it existed in 1958, before the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. While this liturgy is sometimes called the “Tridentine Mass,” that is something of a misnomer. The term “Tridentine” refers to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic Council of Trent, which took the ancient liturgy of the City of Rome and made its use mandatory for all places under Rome’s jurisdiction which did not have an ancient liturgy of their own. Our liturgy is that ancient Roman liturgy.

To look at a brief history of our liturgy: St. Justin Martyr and Hippolytus both give early accounts of what the Roman liturgy was like. The Roman liturgy was originally offered in Greek, but was offered in Latin by the time of Pope Victor who died in 202. Pope St. Gregory the Great who died in 604, took the ancient liturgy, stripped out what had been recently added and gave the liturgy its current organization, adding only one phrase to the Eucharistic prayer. An Antiochian Pope, St. Sergius I, who died in 701, added the *Agnus Dei* (“O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us...”), sung shortly before receiving Holy Communion. There was substantial cross-fertilization with the Gallican Church following the rise of Charlemagne towards the end of the eighth century and from that influence we have received the blessings of palms and candles and ashes and much of the dramatic nature of our Holy Week services. The Nicene Creed was added to the liturgy in Rome around the 11<sup>th</sup> century following the practice in Constantinople, though the Creed had been professed in the West since the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Around the 13<sup>th</sup> century a number of prayers were added, which the priest says privately. At the time of the Council of Trent the intent was to keep the ancient forms of worship and all that was added were prayers of preparation before the mass begins (which had previously been said in the sacristy) and additional devotions which follow the dismissal, such as the reading of the Prologue of St. John’s Gospel. So in a sense we can say that the liturgy, as we have it, is essentially unchanged from the time of St. Gregory at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and in terms of what the people hear spoken or sung during the Mass, the primary changes since Gregory’s time have

been made by Syrians: first the addition of the Agnus Dei by St. Sergius, and then in the 1970's the epiclesis from the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom was added by the Patriarchate; the prayer, "I believe, O Lord, and I confess..." also from the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom was added in the early 1990's to our Western Rite at the request of Patriarch Ignatius IV, as a sign of our Orthodox understanding of the reality of the Eucharist. As St. Gregory was the last to make any truly substantial revisions to the Liturgy, it commonly bears his name: the Liturgy of St. Gregory, even as we speak of Gregorian chant due to his work to collect and organize the chant of the Church as it existed in his day.

Another form of the liturgy is also used within the Western Rite Vicariate of our Archdiocese. It bears the name of the Liturgy of St. Tikhon, not because it was composed by St. Tikhon of Moscow, but in honor of the work that St. Tikhon undertook on behalf of establishing the Orthodox Western Rite before his death in 1925. This liturgy is based on the service of Holy Communion from the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Protestant Episcopal Church, but as presented in the *English Missal*, which was an attempt to restore many elements from the Roman Rite which had been removed at the time of the Reformation (this Missal, and a similar work, the *Anglican Missal*, were widely used by Catholic-minded Anglicans and Episcopalians). While some have objected that this liturgy has a Reformation heritage, this did not appear to trouble the Holy Synod of Moscow when the liturgy was recommended for use with corrections in 1904; they merely stated what must be added and what must be omitted to bring the liturgy into conformity with the Orthodox Faith. For those who are interested in learning more about this liturgy, there is an eloquent defense of the Liturgy of St. Tikhon posted on the website of St. Mark's in Denver, showing its roots in the Sarum liturgy (the dominant form of the Roman Rite in use in England before the Reformation). Both of our liturgies are contained in *The Orthodox Missal* available from the Western Rite Vicariate and in a slightly different form in the *St. Andrew's Service Book* available from the Archdiocese.

For the Daily Offices our congregations have a choice. The Roman Monastic Office may be used in its Benedictine form with its seven day offices (Prime, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline) and the night office (Matins). This complete office is rarely kept outside of monastic houses, but many of our clergy do recite much of the day office. The Monastic Office is contained in the *Monastic Diurnal* and the *Monastic Breviary Matins*, both now available from St. Mark's in Denver in recently

reprinted editions. The other choice is *The English Office*, based upon the services of Morning and Evening Prayer found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. In the report of the Moscow Synod on the *Book of Common Prayer* it was noted that “while the recourse in prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God, to the Angel Hosts, and to the illustrious saints, the glorification and invocation of them, forms an essential part of Orthodox and Catholic worship, these things are entirely foreign to Anglican worship. It is absolutely necessary that there should be introduced into this worship some such prayers (or hymns) in one or another form and degree.” These enrichments, especially the Office Hymns and antiphons, compiled from traditional Western sources, are made available in *The St. Ambrose Hymnal* and *The Antiphoner*, both available from St. Gregory’s in Washington. A good example of what the report of the Moscow Synod was speaking of is found in two antiphon for All Saints Day:

O Savior of the world, save us all, and let thy most holy ever-Virgin Mother intercede for us: aided by the prayers of holy Apostles, Martyrs, and Confessors, with those of holy Virgins, we humbly supplicate, that we may be delivered from all evil, and be counted worthy, now and ever, to be filled with all good things.

The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee; the goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee; the white robed army of Martyrs praise thee unceasingly: and all the Saints and elect with one voice acknowledge thee, O blessed Trinity, one God.

The English Office itself is available in *The English Office Noted* from St. Gregory’s, the *St. Dunstan’s Psalter* from St. Mark’s and without music in the *St. Andrew’s Service Book*.

The official forms of the other services and Sacraments are contained in the *Orthodox Ritual* available from the Vicariate. This work is heavily based upon the old Roman Ritual and our forms for weddings, baptisms, chrismations, unction and funerals are essentially the old Roman forms, corrected for Orthodox usage when necessary. For the most part, ordinations take place in their Byzantine forms, this being the form familiar to our bishops.



When Metropolitan Anthony established the Western Rite Vicariate, he gave permission for us to make use of “devotional practices and customs as are not contrary to the Orthodox faith...” Thus our people and congregations may make use of post-schism devotions, such as the rosary and sing hymns familiar to modern Catholics and Protestants, hymns which convey basic Christian faith and contain nothing objectionable, nothing which is contrary to the teachings of our Church. In addition to the Gregorian Chants called for in our services (which developed along parallel lines with Byzantine chant), we also sing ancient hymns, such as those by St. Ambrose and St. Gregory, and more modern hymns, such as those by Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts; all of which convey a clear and Orthodox Christian faith. Who could find anything “un-Orthodox” in words such as these by William Chatterton Dix written in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century:

Alleluia, sing to Jesus! His the scepter, His the throne.  
Alleluia, His the triumph, His the victory alone.  
Hark, the songs of peaceful Sion thunder like a mighty flood.  
Jesus out of every nation hath redeemed us by His blood.

Alleluia, King eternal, thee the Lord of lords we own.  
Alleluia, born of Mary, earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne.  
Thou within the veil hast entered, robed in flesh, our great High Priest.  
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim in the Eucharistic Feast.

Most of our congregations do make use of an organ to support congregational singing, as the organ has long been a distinctly “church” instrument in the West. While the use of three-dimensional art, such as statues is optional, we adorn our churches with icons. Some of our churches have made substantial effort to recover the ancient Western forms of iconography, others use the commonly available Byzantine forms, knowing that the great old churches of Rome and Ravenna are filled with Byzantine mosaics and icons.

An important part of any rite is the observance of the liturgical year. In our Western Rite Vicariate we keep the same date for Pascha (and hence all the other feast days based on the date of Easter) as all other congregations of the Archdiocese. Our cycle of Saints days is based primarily on the Roman *Martyrology*, with the addition of prominent Eastern saints. In addition to keeping essentially the same great feasts as our Eastern Rite brothers and sisters, the Western Calendar has additional major feast days,

such as Trinity Sunday on the Sunday after Pentecost and All Saints Day on November 1<sup>st</sup>. We have three weeks of Pre-Lent instead of four (as the Byzantine Rite has) and Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Our Advent Fast begins on the Sunday nearest to St. Andrew's Day, November 30<sup>th</sup> (and the First Sunday of Advent is also the beginning of the Church Year in the Western calendar). We do not keep the Apostle's Fast or the Dormition Fast (as they were never kept in the West), but we have other fast days that are not found in the Eastern Rite, such as the Ember Days (fasts which have been kept since the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries). We also commonly make a distinction between fasting (by which we mean reducing the amount of food eaten) and abstinence (by which we mean not eating certain foods, such as meat and dairy).

In the earliest centuries, both Eastern and Western Churches used leavened bread for the Eucharist, though we know that the use of leavened versus unleavened bread had become a point of great contention by the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Now Western Rite Orthodox Churches are required to use leavened hosts in the Eucharist. Most of our congregations also follow the practice of distributing blessed bread in a manner similar to the custom of *Antidoron*. While this is typically thought of as an Eastern custom, the earliest recorded reference to distributing blessed bread apart from the Eucharistic gifts in the East or West is actually found in a 5<sup>th</sup> century letter of St. Augustine of Hippo. However, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it existed in the West only in France (where it was known as *pain benit*).

The final element of our Rite to comment on at this time is our vestments. The Roman form of vestments developed along parallel lines to Byzantine vestments, both initially derived largely from imperial court dress, but developing somewhat different patterns and style of decoration. The tunic that became the sticharion in the East became a number of different garments in the West: the alb and the deacon's dalmatic and the subdeacon's tunicle, and in later centuries, the surplice. What became the zone in the East became the girdle or cincture in the West. What became the orarion and the epitrachelion in the East became the stole in the West. What became the phelonion in the East became both the chasuble and the cope in the West. While we do not have cuffs, we do have the maniple, a thin strip of cloth which hangs over the left fore-arm of the subdeacon, deacon and priest at the Eucharist, symbolizing both the manner in which Christ was bound at His Passion and our sense of sorrow and fatigue over the burden of our sins.

In the West the color of vestments to be used at any given liturgy is clearly prescribed. White (or gold) is used for all feasts of Our Lord, His Blessed Mother, the Holy Angels and saints who are not martyrs. Red is used for Masses of the Holy Spirit, including Pentecost, Masses of the Holy Cross, and Masses of Martyrs. Purple is used for Advent and Lent and for the Vigils (or day before) certain feast days. Green is used for the Sundays after Pentecost and the latter part of the season of Epiphany. Black is used for funerals and for Good Friday. We also have a lighter version of purple called 'rose' used only on the third Sunday of Advent and the fourth Sunday of Lent, indicating a brief lightening of the tone of the our preparation before Christmas and Easter. Much of this system has been widely adopted in the East, where it is done by choice, but for us it is a requirement. Some of our parishes will also use blue vestments for Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but strictly speaking this is not an 'official' choice within the Roman pattern.

While there is much more we could discuss, this brief introduction has served to present a picture of what the Western Rite *is*, and that is the ancient Western manner of living out the Orthodox faith. It is a full and complete system of celebrating the Holy Mysteries, of living the Church year, of saying our prayers and singing our praises. The Orthodox faith is a way of life. The Western Rite is the traditional Western cultural expression of that life and we give thanks that our bishops have blessed us to live out our faith in this way.

As small as the Western Rite is within the Orthodox Church, the amount of opposition that it receives is truly surprising! Often this opposition comes from converts of Western backgrounds who have decided that nothing good ever came out of the West. Perhaps these refugees from the West previously lived, not with the full tradition of the West, but with the watered down forms that are commonly used in modern Catholic and Protestant churches today. Other concerns come from wise and cautious individuals, understandably concerned about change, or what appears to be new, within Orthodoxy. We read many objections to the Western Rite on the Internet. We hear it said that the Western Rite is not truly Orthodox, but then it was clearly a part of the life of the undivided Church, the Church that we say was the Orthodox Church and none other, and our bishops have blessed us to live and worship in this manner. We hear it said that only the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom guarantees conveying the fullness of the Orthodox faith, but then we know that however wonderful the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is, it

does not guarantee Orthodoxy as the Uniate Catholics use the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. We hear it said that our people do not really convert but retain their old ways of life with their old liturgies. This is certainly a danger for all converts, whether they worship in the Eastern or Western Rites. We need to work to convert our hearts and our minds. All converts need to work to acquire an Orthodox mind and world-view and we believe that both liturgies help us to do that. The answer is to fully and completely enter into the life of the Church, to strive to know and to live our faith. We hear it said that the liturgies used in the Western Rite are not the ancient western forms, but rather reformation and counter-reformation liturgies. This exposes a lack of understanding of the history of these liturgies and the manner in which they are lived out in our congregations.

And then we hear it said that the existence of the Western Rite within Orthodoxy is divisive, unwise and not pastorally sensitive, as it will confuse the faithful. Experience has shown otherwise. In the Washington, DC area we have every sort of Orthodox life. The manner in which the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is served is very different as you travel from Antiochian congregations, to congregations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, to congregations of the Greek Archdiocese (not to mention the Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Ukrainians, the Romanians, and so forth). This difference is both understandable and appropriate due to the cultural backgrounds of those congregations, but the faith is always the same. My church, St. Gregory's, is the only Orthodox Church in the Washington area that is easily accessible via public transportation. When we have had visitors from St. Mary's in Brooklyn, St. Nicholas in Los Angeles or from Eastern Rite congregations in England or Switzerland or Lebanon, they find our Liturgy unfamiliar, but the faith they encounter is the same. Some years ago, when visitors from St. George's in Houston arrived they rightly asked who our Bishop was, and when we said "Metropolitan PHILIP", they replied, "well then, this is our Church!" And they enjoyed their first experience of the Western Rite and broadened their view of Holy Tradition.

All concerns will best be answered by faithfully living the Orthodox life in our congregations. But is a Western Rite needed? We can now find the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom offered in English in any large or medium sized city. There are numerous Eastern Rite congregations composed entirely or predominately of converts. Many Eastern Rite Christians venerate numerous Western Orthodox saints. So why do we still

need a Western Rite within the Orthodox Church? First, because it is a beautiful and God-blessed part of our Orthodox heritage. It is a part of Holy Tradition, and the Church would be poorer for excluding any part of her tradition that had nurtured so many saints. St. John Maximovitch encouraged a Western Rite abbot, saying, “Never, never, never let anyone tell you that, in order to be Orthodox, you must also be eastern. The West was Orthodox for a thousand years, and her venerable liturgy is far older than any of her heresies.”

And then, remembering the reasons that Metropolitan Anthony Bashir cited for giving the Western Rite a home within this Archdiocese, we need a Western Rite to provide a lifeline to Western Christians who have witnessed the collapse of their previous Church homes, and these Christians have come to Orthodoxy from every possible background. Now, we know that many such Christians have embraced the Byzantine Rite, are nourished by it and feel very much at home with the Eastern Rite. Other Christians, however, have found ‘Eastern-ness’ to be a barrier to worshiping in the Orthodox Church and do not feel culturally connected to what they experience in the Eastern Rite. Still other Christians, knowing and loving the Western liturgical heritage, while appreciating the rich beauty of the Byzantine tradition, are happy and blest to maintain the rite that has nourished them throughout their lives, to preserve what is good and life-giving in the Western liturgical tradition and to restore it to its proper home within Orthodoxy.

Then Metropolitan Anthony also mentioned the importance of “witnessing to the Catholicity of the Orthodox Church to her Byzantine Rite people, priests and theologians.” We know that our faith should not be thought of as being limited to one cultural expression. A Church that knows itself to be universal cannot be limited to one cultural expression of the faith. The Roman Catholic Church recognized this when she accepted Eastern Churches into her communion, allowing them to keep their own liturgies and customs (and before anyone think of the Western Rite as a sort of ‘reverse uniatism’ we should hasten to add that no one was ever forced into accepting Western Rite Orthodoxy, and while many Uniate Catholics claim to hold a faith different from Rome, in Western Rite Orthodoxy we know that to be in communion with the Orthodox Church we must hold the fullness of the Orthodox faith). But as Rome acknowledges that the faith is not limited to one culture, so the Orthodox Church acknowledges the same, and condemned the heresy of “phyletism,” the notion that church membership is tied to one’s ethnic or national origin, in 1872.

There is yet another reason why the Western Rite is needed and is good for the Orthodox Church, though it may take some time for this to be made manifest. Some years ago, Pope John Paul II spoke of Rome and the Orthodox Church as the two lungs of the Church, and while our ecclesiology does not acknowledge that there can be schism within the church (but only schism from the church), we can perhaps see that there is something to his charitable remark. Historically, there have been two principal ways of thinking, living and praying within the Church: Eastern and Western. There are many differences in approach, while the two sides need not be of separate mind or world-view. For example, at times, some observers have characterized Eastern liturgy, like Eastern thought, as circular, while they have seen Western liturgy, like Western thought, as linear. And though the Eastern approach is to say something many times in many different ways, the Western approach is more economical and more direct. One way is not better than the other, only different, and one may better speak to one individual and the other to the next person. For a thousand years the Church had an Eastern lung and a Western lung (to use John Paul's metaphor) or perhaps we could say an Eastern 'brain' or way of thinking, and a Western 'brain' or way of thinking and the church is healthy and balanced and at its fullest with the presence of both. In a small, but important way, we hope that in time, the Western Rite may restore that 'brain,' that 'lung' to the Holy Orthodox Church. Thus, we hope that the existence of the Western Rite is not only good for those who delight to be Orthodox and maintain the beauty of their own heritage, but we hope it will be good for the Church as a whole.

We give thanks to God that we have come home to the Holy Orthodox Church - the Church of Martyrs and Confessors, Teachers of the Faith, Abbots and Holy Virgins - the Church of St. Benedict and St. Bridget, St. Cuthbert and St. Monica, St. Laurence and St. Cecilia. Our Fathers (and Mothers) in the faith were Orthodox, nurtured by a rich liturgical and devotional life expressed in the language of their own culture. Now we are blessed as we strive to live that very same life.