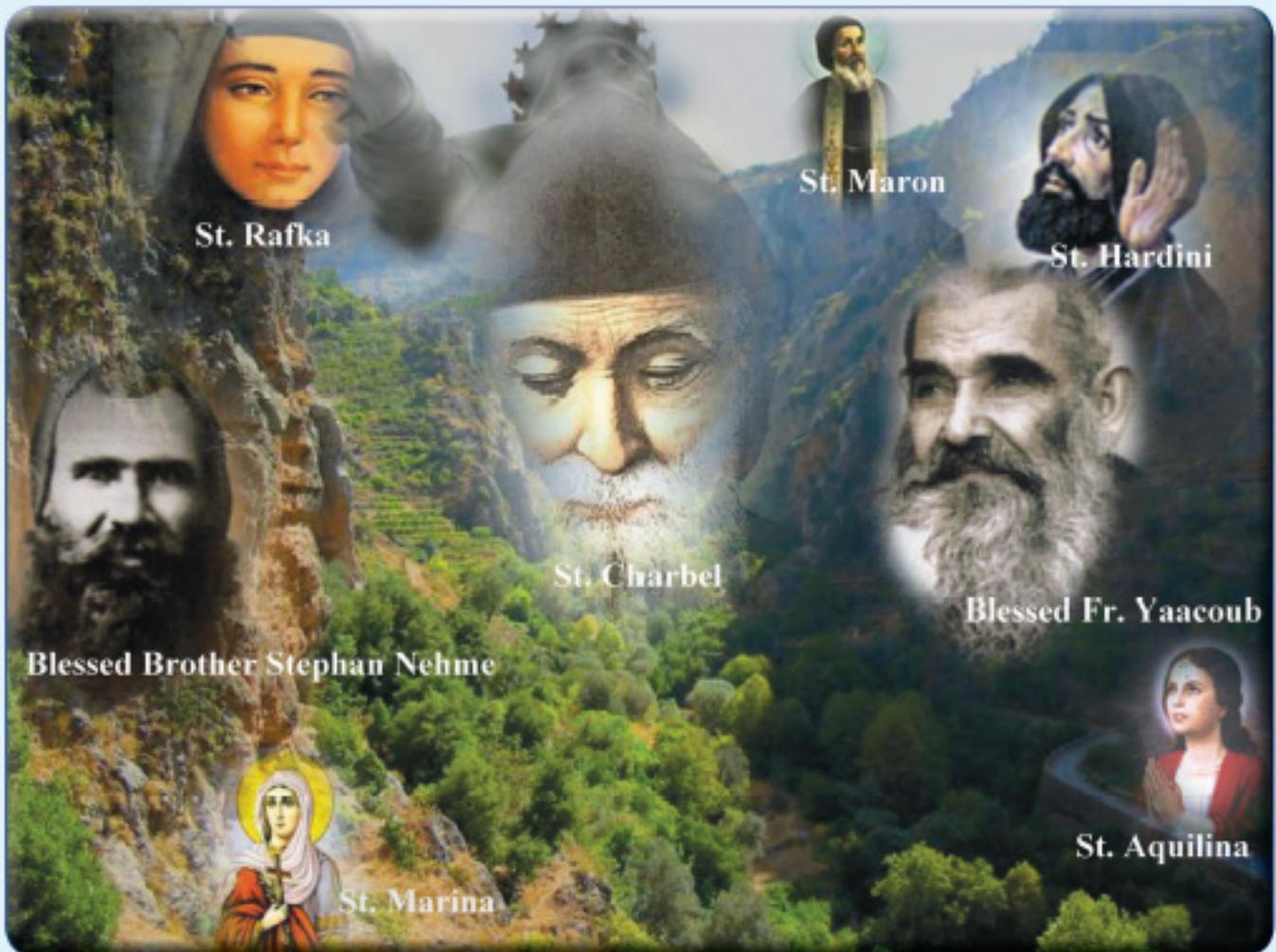


THE UNIVERSAL CATHOLIC CHURCH



Maronites, Who Are They?



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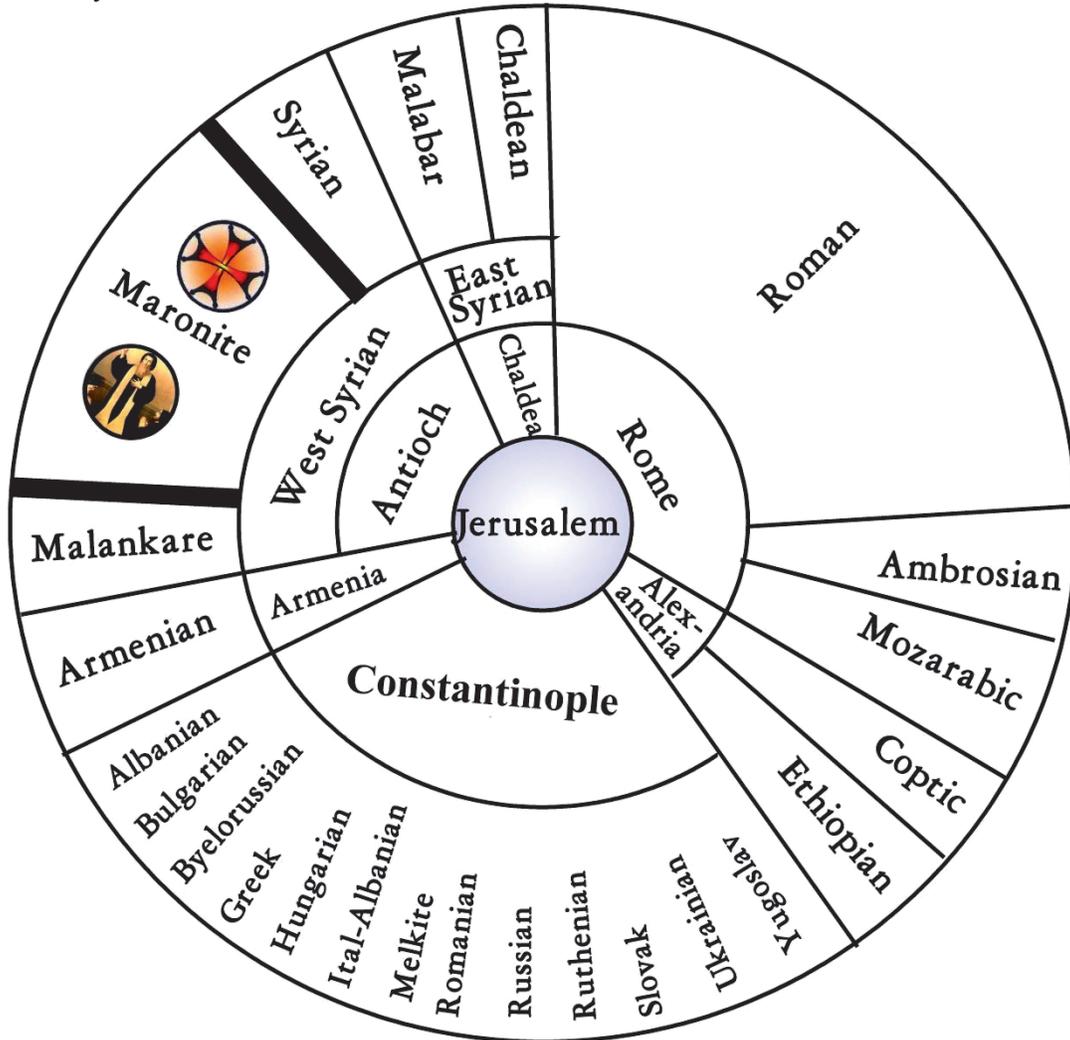
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THE SIX PATRIARCHATES AND TWENTY-TWO CHURCHES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught that the primary subsistence (manifestation) of the Church of Christ is in the Catholic Church. This Church is made up of the Roman or Latin Rite Church, which also includes the Ambrosian and Mozarabic rites, and the 21 Eastern Rite Churches which are in union with the Holy See. The three elements that make these Churches Catholic are:

1. **One Faith Handed down By the Apostles** (All have the same Creed)
2. **Seven Mysteries** (All have the same Sacraments)
3. **Unity with the Shepherd / Bishop of Rome** (All under the Holy Father, the Pope)

The **MARONITE** Church, as one of these twenty-one churches, is one of the oldest traditions of the Catholic Church. Many people when speaking of the Catholic Church are referring to the *Roman or Latin Rite* of the Western branch of the Catholic Church. However, the Church is not the same as a *rite*. Within the **Catholic Church**, there are **twenty-two autonomous churches**, which evolved from **Jerusalem** and developed through one of the six major centers of Christianity call **Patriarchates**.



Autonomous Churches Have Unique Elements:

Each of the twenty-two Catholic Churches has **four elements** that make them unique Catholic traditions. These are:

1. **Liturgy** - the public prayer life and activity for accomplishing God's work of divinization.
2. **Theology** - the study of the relationship between God and human beings in human language.
3. **Spirituality** - the way of life expressed in words and deeds reflecting awareness of God.
4. **Law** - the guidelines for good order in church life and harmony among its members.

What is a RITE: It is a universal community of faith founded on or by an apostle and has its own patriarch, bishops and clergy having unique spiritual and cultural traditions and way of life which has converted an entire people to Jesus Christ.

Therefore, applying the preceding definitions, the Maronite Church is a universal community of faith of the Antiochene-Edessan-Monastic tradition, founded by Peter and developed by Maron and his disciples, which is guided by its Patriarch and bishops, who are shepherding peoples of many different nations and cultures in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

MARONITES

Who are they? Where do they come from?

The Maronite Catholic Church, sometimes called the Maronite Rite, had its beginning in the city of Antioch, Syria which was the first See of Saint Peter, *where the disciples were first called Christians* (Acts 11:26).

From Antioch, Saint Peter went to Alexandria and then to Rome, where he was martyred and then buried on the Vatican Hill. The name "Maronite" is derived from Saint Maron, a holy priest and monk who lived in the vicinity of Antioch and who died in the year 410 A.D. Saint Maron converted a pagan temple, ministered to the people of God along the Orontes River – south of Antioch in Syria, and performed many healings of body and spirit. After his death a monastery was built with 800 monks living within its walls.

From the early centuries of the church, the Maronites abided by the precepts of the Holy Ecumenical Councils. Many among them were martyred for defending the teachings of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon and of Pope Saint Leo in the year 451. For many centuries the Maronites were the only Christians in the east who were in complete communion with our Holy Father the Pope in Rome and have always maintained that unity.

The Maronites looked constantly towards world Christian unity, despite the dissensions in the East among various Christian sects. They lived under the Byzantines for centuries but maintained their autonomous church and rite.

As the Arabization of the Middle East took place in the early 7th century A.D., most of the peoples of the region were converted to Islam. The Maronites took refuge in Mount Lebanon to preserve their identity and faith.

For more than seven centuries, the Maronites withstood the onslaught by several dynasties, including the Umayyades, Abbassides, Mamelukes, and Ottomans. Lebanon became their homeland, which they defended fiercely along with other persecuted minorities. The Maronites cherished their church and spoke the Syriac language, a dialect of Aramaic which was spoken by Jesus, His Mother, and His Apostles. Syriac/Aramaic is still used in parts of the Maronite Liturgy.

In the 19th century, many Maronites emigrated to the west, particularly to the United States. Seeking both freedom from oppression and economic opportunity, tens of thousands of Maronites joined lawful and hard working emigrants in America.

In 1966, Pope Paul VI appointed the first Maronite Bishop for the faithful of the United States. Now there are two Maronite Diocese, called Eparchies, in the United States -- The Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn, Eastern U.S.A., and The Eparchy Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Western U.S.A.

THE MARONITE DIVINE LITURGY

The Maronite Church in its Liturgy is fortunate to be the heir of at least two rich traditions, those of Edessa and Antioch. The Church of Edessa traces its origins to the preaching of the Liturgical contributors **including St. Ephrem and James of Saroug. The first Christian converts to the Church of Edessa** were among the earliest Jewish-Christians. Therefore, its Liturgy is strongly influenced by the world-view of the Bible. As one of the oldest established churches, it developed its prayer forms before being influenced by Greek thought.

The Church of Antioch was the ancient See of Peter and developed its Liturgy with influences from the Church of Jerusalem. The Maronite Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles represents the oldest tradition of the Church of Antioch. St. John Chrysostom took this Anaphora with him to Constantinople and it became the basis of the Byzantine Liturgy. As heir to the Patriarchate of Antioch, the Maronite Church represents the Antiochene Liturgy in its fullness. Thus, the Maronite Church, in its prayer life, preserves the way of worship of the Apostles and their earliest disciples.

We are a Catholic Church of the Eastern Rites, and are in communion with the Holy See; therefore your obligation to attend Sunday Mass or on Holy Days of obligation is fulfilled by attending a Maronite Divine Liturgy. The Maronite Divine Liturgy may be strange to some of you because you will hear the Liturgy and some songs in two different languages. Besides English, you will also hear Aramaic.

One of the most precious traditions which were retained is the use of Syriac/Aramaic in some parts of the Maronite Liturgy. Aramaic was the language Jesus Christ and his disciples spoke among themselves. During the Liturgy, at the moment of consecration of the bread and wine, the Priest chants the narrative of the Institution in Syriac/Aramaic. In that way, we are hearing *not only the story of the Last Supper, but we hear it in the language Christ Himself used!*

The Kiss Of Peace is another difference between our two cultures. In the Maronite Liturgy the kiss of peace is taken from the altar, through the priest, given to altar servers and distributed to the congregation *with joined hands*. A hand shake is not a form of the kiss of peace in the Maronite community.

Communion is received by Intinction. That means the Priest dips the Body (host) into the Blood (wine). Because both the Body and Blood are present in the Communion, the Priest puts them onto the tongue, and not in the hand.

Like all Catholics, as Maronite Catholics we believe that **the Eucharist is the REALITY, not merely a symbol, of the Presence of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** here on our Altar. Therefore in order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sins, and normally should have fasted for one hour. *A Person who is conscious of Grave Sins is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior reception of the sacrament of Confession.*

If you are unable to receive Communion but would like a blessing please approach the priest in the communion procession, cross your arms over your chest and bow your head.

All Are Welcome!