

Ad fontes: Source Materials for the Western Rite of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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Introduction

While the vast majority of Orthodox Christians worship with services which developed in Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, and other areas of the Byzantine Empire, a small number have been given the blessing of worshipping with services which developed in Rome, Gaul, and other areas of the Western Roman Empire. These Western liturgies, hymns, devotions, blessings and other services are collectively known as “Western Rite Orthodox,” or simply as “Western Orthodox,” when they are restored to the Orthodox Church. This paper will review the historic documentation which has led to the creation and evolution of the Orthodox Western Rite.¹

As the evidence will show, there was general agreement concerning what was appropriate for Western Orthodoxy until 2009. The changes which followed were welcomed by some and strenuously opposed by others. These disagreements have caused open strife and anger, at times, to the detriment of focusing on the good news of Christ, with clergy and people identifying with this side or that side of the conflict. Articles, videos, and social media have served to solidify the divisions, more than to help us grow together. Recent conversations have demonstrated that the clergy of the Vicariate will not agree on basic definitions and guidelines without outside guidance and intervention. We are at risk of echoing the days recounted in the Book of Judges where “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). We need clear definitions (or guidelines) from our bishops, helping us to understand what of the Western heritage may appropriately be brought into Orthodoxy, and what must be left behind.

Studying our history helps us to know who we are and gives context for understanding our present situation. For centuries most of the Christian world shared a common faith, yet there were different cultural expressions of that faith. Great Fathers of the Church, such as Ss. John Chrysostom, Basil, Athanasius, and John of Damascus shared a common faith with Ss. Hilary of Poitiers, Leo of Rome, Benedict of Nursia, and Gregory the Great, yet they worshiped with different liturgies. By the time of the Fourth Council of Constantinople (879–880) the West had begun to drift away from the East in faith and practice. Not only the addition of the filioque clause to the Creed, but the use of leavened vs. unleavened bread, the question of enforced clerical celibacy, various liturgical matters, dietary practices, and even whether clergy should be bearded or clean-shaven were cited as factors leading to the schism of the 11th century.² Patriarch Peter III of Antioch, however, in his letter of 1054 to Patriarch Michael Kerularios of Constantinople, first denying that the Pope of Rome was commemorated in Antioch, having been “cut out of the sacred diptychs from the holy sixth ecumenical council to the present” (Paragraph 2), then speaks of the differences between East and West saying “some of them seem abominable

¹ The research contained in this summary began in preparation for teaching the history of the Western Rite in the Antiochian House of Studies, Spring Semester 2024. This revision is dated 1 February 2025 (the Feast of St. Ignatius of Antioch in the Western Calendar). © 2025 by Nicholas R. Alford. All rights reserved.

² See John Erickson, “Leavened vs Unleavened: Some Theological Implications of the Schism of 1054” in *The Challenge of Our Past* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 133ff.

and should be fled; others are curable; still others can be overlooked” (Paragraph 6).³ The actions of the Crusaders and the rise of Scholasticism further separated the hearts and minds of the Christians of the East from those of the West.

The Eastern Patriarchs corresponded with Protestant Reformers in Germany in the 16th century and English Reformers in the 18th century, seeking common ground. The Orthodox were disappointed to learn that the Protestants had rejected much of the traditional faith, and the Protestants were surprised to learn that the Orthodox maintained beliefs and practices mistakenly identified as Roman Catholic. As the Protestant churches continued to fragment and the Roman Catholic Church moved toward the decrees of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (defined as dogma in 1854) and Papal Infallibility (1870), some in the West sought a way to maintain what was ancient, good and spiritually healthy in the Western liturgical and devotional heritage, and so turned to the Orthodox churches. The initial work toward this goal by Julian Joseph Overbeck and a Commission of the Moscow Synod examining the Roman Rite will be summarized below, along with the creation of the French Orthodox Church in the 1930’s.

In America, Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin), the future Patriarch of Moscow and saint of the Church (glorified by both the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad in the 1980s), sent the 1892 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer to the Commission for review of the Anglican services. Archbishop Aftimios Ofiesh authorized a Western Rite at a time of turmoil, following the Russian Revolution. The Russian Church Abroad, the Romanian Church, and the Moscow Patriarchate have had Western Rite congregations in America and Europe (where they received encouragement from St. John Maximovitch).

It is fitting that Antioch has become the home for Western Orthodoxy, as Ss. Peter and Paul are patrons of both Antioch and Rome. In 1958, Archbishop Anthony Bashir offered a home in canonical Orthodoxy to the small Western Rite movement in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, issuing his “Edict on the Western Rite.” In the Edict he noted his awareness that “other parts of our Orthodox Church have provided for the reception of separated Western Christians by authorizing the retention of rites and ceremonies used in the West before the Papal Schism of the eleventh century, but which then dropped out of the Church because all who used them were torn away from Orthodoxy.”⁴ In 1961, following a time of preparation, the first clergy and people were received into the archdiocese worshipping in the Western Rite. The following year His Eminence issued the “Western Rite Directory” giving general directions and stating two purposes for the Western Rite: 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.”⁵ The main times of growth of Western Rite communities in the Antiochian Archdiocese were in the late 1970s and 1990s, with growing liberalism in the Episcopal Church, and in the early 2000s, with additional refugees from the Episcopal Church and those leaving the Charismatic Episcopal Church seeking to be part of the historic Church. Today there are more than twenty Western Rite parishes across the archdiocese. For a time there were also Antiochian Western Rite communities in New Zealand and the Philippines, but these have not survived. The Antiochian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland has recently received a community formerly under the Russian Church Abroad.

³ <https://origin.web.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1054peter-of-antioch-to-michael-kerularious1.asp>

⁴ *Edict on the Western Rite*, 1958.

⁵ *Western Rite Directory*, 1962, section I.

The principal liturgical resources for the Western Rite are:

1. the Roman Missal (also called the Liturgy of St. Gregory),
2. a revision of the Roman Missal based on the Anglican Use (called the Liturgy of St. Tikhon),
3. the Benedictine Monastic Office,
4. the English Office (based on the Anglican Office)
5. and the Roman Ritual (containing the services for Baptism, Chrismation, Marriage, Confession, Holy Unction, and various blessings and devotions).⁶

As the Roman services were all originally in Latin, early use in Orthodoxy relied on the translations supplied by Catholic-minded Anglicans, corrected for Orthodox use. Subsequent editions remain controversial, due to disagreements concerning how the Western Rite should be defined, the appropriate process for review, and what has been authorized for use.

The clergy and people of the Antiochian Western Rite in America have come from diverse backgrounds: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Evangelical Protestant, and others. We have lacked a unifying vision of what the Orthodox Western Rite should be. For some the priority is to embrace the Western faith and practice of the first thousand or so years; for others the focus has been on reclaiming Western practice before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), maintaining that it is authentically Orthodox, with few exceptions other than the *filioque*. Some have sought simply to maintain the services and devotions of their former church homes with as little disruption as possible.

Before turning to specific texts addressing the call for and implementation of the restoration of the Orthodox Western Rite, we will examine the two primary Orthodox documents of the 19th century which speak of errors in Roman Catholic belief and practice which would clearly be inappropriate to bring into Orthodoxy from Roman practice.

Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs, 1848

In 1848 Pope Pius IX released the encyclical *In Suprema Petri Apostoli Sede* (On the Supreme See of Peter the Apostle), sometimes called “The Epistle to the Easterners,” calling the Orthodox to accept Roman terms and enter communion with Rome. Later that same year, the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem (being the four Eastern Patriarchs) issued their encyclical in reply.⁷ Their letter denounces Rome for the false teaching of the *filioque*, for claims of papal supremacy and universal jurisdiction, and for the efforts of Roman missionaries to lure Orthodox Christians away from their faith. The Patriarchs spoke of the Fourth Council of Constantinople (879/880) as the Eighth Ecumenical Council, which noted that the introduction of the *filioque* “was subjected to anathema, as a novelty and augmentation of the Creed.” The Patriarchs clearly declared that Rome was in a state of both heresy and schism, and after introducing the false teaching of the *filioque* other novelties were introduced, including (as per section V. xii):

⁶ Outside of the Antiochian Patriarchate there have also been Western Orthodox attempts to reconstruct and use the old Gallican liturgy and use of the Sarum Rite, a local variation of the Roman Rite, originating in Salisbury, England, and dating to the 13th century, though with earlier roots (for more information on the origins of the Sarum Use see: <https://anglicanhistory.org/essays/wright/sarum.pdf>).

⁷ <https://origin-rh.web.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1848orthodoxencyclical.asp> (Fr. Patrick Viscuso assisted with correcting the translation of the Patriarchal Greek).

1. sprinkling instead of Baptism
2. denial of the Chalice to the laity
3. the use of individual wafers instead of the one loaf for the communion of all
4. the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist
5. the abandonment of the *epiclesis*
6. the practice of not chrismating and communing infants the exclusion of married men from the priesthood
7. claims of the infallibility of the Pope and of the Pope being the Vicar of Christ.

The Response of Constantinople to Pope Leo XIII

In many ways the dominant mindset of the Roman Church leading to the First Vatican Council (1869 and following) led to calls for the creation of an Orthodox Western Rite. There was no official Orthodox response to Vatican I, as it was viewed as a Roman Catholic council responding to Roman Catholic concerns. In 1894 Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical on the Reunion of Christendom, *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae*. Though Leo struck a more irenic tone, the content was basically the same as Pius IX's letter, calling the Orthodox into union with Rome. The Orthodox response came from the Synod of Constantinople in 1895 and made clear that, "the Western Church, from the tenth century downwards, has privily brought into herself through the papacy various and strange and heretical doctrines and innovations (XXIV)."⁸ These included:

1. Baptism by sprinkling or effusion, rather than by triple immersion (VIII),
2. the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist (IX),
3. that the bread and wine are consecrated by the words of institution (whereas the Orthodox Church teaches "that the precious gifts are consecrated after the prayer of the invocation of the Holy Ghost" (X),
4. that the Chalice would be denied to the laity (XI),
5. that "the Papal Church from the twelfth century downwards has invented and heaped together in the person of the Pope, as one singularly privileged, a multitude of innovations concerning
 - a. purgatorial fire,
 - b. a superabundance of the virtues of the saints, and the distribution of them to those who need them, and the like, setting forth also a full reward for the just before the universal resurrection and judgment" (XII),
6. that the conception of the Mother of God was immaculate (XIII)

It is also significant to note, in considering the Orthodox Western Rite, that the Synod of Constantinople wrote:

...we do not at all refer to the differences regarding the ritual of the sacred services and the hymns, or the sacred vestments, and the like, which matters, even though they still vary, as they did of old, do not in the least injure the substance and the unity of the faith... in cases where the thing disregarded is not the faith (says also the holy Photius) and is no falling away from any general and catholic decree, different rites and customs being observed among different people, a man who knows how to judge rightly would

⁸ <https://origin-rh.web.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1895orthodoxencyclical.asp>

decide that neither do those who observe them act wrongly, nor do those who have not received them break the law.

Julian Joseph Overbeck

The first formal call for the acceptance of a restored Western Rite within Orthodoxy came from Julian Joseph Overbeck, a former German Roman Catholic priest who left the priesthood, married and settled in England. In 1868, on the eve of Vatican I, Overbeck issued “Outlines of the Constitution of the Orthodox Catholic Church of the West.”⁹ After establishing that the faith must be the same, East and West, that like-minded individuals would petition the Governing Synod of the Russian Church to be admitted to the Church pledging “not to retain or introduce anything Western which the Holy Governing Synod does not approve of,” Overbeck then called for:

1. a Western priest ordained and conforming to Orthodoxy to celebrate the Liturgy as found in the *Missale Romanum* (without the Elevation after the words of the institution), to offer confession to the faithful, and solemnize the sacrament of matrimony
2. masses of modern (e.g. post-schism) saints to be excluded
3. Holy Communion to be administered under both kinds
4. Baptisms to be by triple immersion
5. the sacrament of the Unction of the sick to be administered, “not to be limited to the hopeless state of the dying” (in other words, for healing and not only for “last rites”)
6. the Synod to supply an *Antimension* for the celebration of the Liturgy.
7. the Liturgy and the other services to be held in the vernacular tongue (but the official language used in documents, Councils, etc., would remain Latin)
8. the sacerdotal garments (now partly curtailed and disfigured) to be restored to their primitive-Western shape and simplicity.
9. no opera-music, but the dignified Gregorian chant.
10. only Icons to be used in Church (no statues).
11. the *Horae canonicae* to be purified from Romish stain; and to be said in full length by the Regular Clergy (Monks), but "*ritu paschali*" by the Secular clergy.

In response to Overbeck’s petition, the Russian Church established a Commission in 1869 in St. Petersburg, consisting of bishops and faculty of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, under the leadership of Metropolitan Isidore of St. Petersburg. The following notes on the work of the Commission are taken from research by Alexey Chumichev for Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University of Humanities in Moscow.¹⁰ Overbeck and the Commission agreed that:

1. there would be no attempt to reconstruct the pre-schism Western Rite, but to adapt the modern order of that time, clearing it of dogmatic distortions of the Catholic Church, starting with the Tridentine Mass.
2. the use of statues was prohibited; statues were to be replaced with icons.

⁹ J. J. Overbeck, *Catholic Orthodoxy and Anglo-Catholicism: A Word about Intercommunion Between the English and the Orthodox Churches* (London: N. Trübner, 1866), 199.

¹⁰ Alexey Chumichev, “Liturgical aspects of J. J. Overbeck's project of revival of the Orthodoxy of the Western rite”, *Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo gumanitarnogo universiteta. Seriya II : Istorii. Istoriiia Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi*, 2017, vol. 78, pp. 83-94 (in Russian). *Copies of manuscript correspondence are being sought from the Russian State Library and Archives.*

3. the use of organ music was allowed during the singing of the laity, but not to accompany the singing of the priest and choir; secular organ music was excluded.
4. the corporal was to be replaced by the *antimens*.
5. the laity were to receive communion in both the Body and Blood
6. the Chalice, discos, spoon and spear were to be used in the liturgy.
7. the Eucharist was to be celebrated with leavened bread.
8. the priests' vestments should be longer and resemble ancient patterns.
9. the Catholic practice of classifying liturgies as "solemn, low, and private" was abolished.
10. on non-holy days, a shorter celebration without singing, with clear and distinct pronunciation was allowed.
11. while Overbeck wanted to include the *epiclesis* from the Mozarabic liturgy, the Commission required the epiclesis from the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom; Overbeck's translation includes *transubstantiando*, and the triple Amen.
12. the Mass was to be celebrated not in Latin, but in the national languages.
13. in the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, the phrase *per merita Sanctorum tuorum* was replaced by *per preces Sanctorum* ("according to the prayers of thy Saints").
14. in the *Gloria in excelsis, Hominibus bonae voluntatis* (to men of good will), was replaced by *hominibus beneplacitum* (goodwill toward men).
15. the *Trisagion* was added, "to testify to the unity with the Eastern Orthodox Church," immediately before the Epistle (In Greek twice, and in the national language).
16. the sign of the Cross was not to be made on the Gospel text before the Gospel was read.
17. the words *Deum de Deo* were to be omitted from the text of the Creed, as repetitious and not present in the Greek text.
18. during the anaphora, the frequent repetition of the sign of the Cross was to be omitted, retaining only those during the consecration of the Holy Gifts.
19. the more ancient Eastern manner of making the sign of the Cross was to be adopted.
20. in the prayer *Te igitur...* (Therefore, most gracious Father...) the words were added: *una cum famulis Tuis patriarchis et Synudis orthodoxis* (together with Thy servants, the Patriarchs and Synods of the Orthodox) "as a sign of unity with all Orthodox Churches."
21. after the words *Memento, Domine* (remember, Lord), to add the words: *Regis (Reginae) nostri, gubernii nostri* (Remember, Lord, N., our king (queen), our government).
22. part of the prayer *Unde et memores* (Therefore, we too), namely: *donis ac datis, hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam, Panem sanctum vitae aeternae, et calicem salutis perpetuae* (we bring to Your glorious Majesty from Your blessings and gifts clean sacrifice, holy sacrifice, immaculate sacrifice, holy bread of eternal life and the cup of eternal salvation) was removed by the commission without explanation.
23. kneeling, adoration, and the elevation of the gifts was removed at the Words of Institution, "since the Eastern Church believes that the consecration of the Holy Gifts takes place only in the invocation of the Holy Spirit."
24. Eastern Rite services were to be translated for use, including, The Octoechos, the Hours, Akathists, Canons, Holy Week services, etc. These translations were to help bring this church closer to the spiritual tradition of the East.

Though Overbeck's work did not bear immediate fruit it laid important groundwork, especially in conversation with the Russian Church and for the theological questions addressed. One hundred years later, Fr. Georges Florovsky observed:

There was an obvious Utopian element in the scheme, and it failed to attract any appreciable number of adherents. And yet it was not just a fantastic dream. The question raised by Overbeck was pertinent, even if his own answer to it was confusedly conceived. And probably the vision of Overbeck was greater than his personal interpretation. It was a vision of an *Urkatholizismus*, restored in the West with the help of, and in communion with, the Catholic Orthodox Church of the East, which had never been involved in the variations of the West. Overbeck differed from the main Old Catholic involvement chiefly in his emphatic stress on the need for a restored communion with the East in order to make the return to a pre-Roman Catholicism real. It was unrealistic to disregard the fact of an age-long separation. This was the main contention of his brief Latin tract: *Libellus Invitat onus ad Clerum Laicosque Romano-Catholicos qui antiquam Occidentis Ecclesiam ad pristinam puritatem et gloriam restauratam videre cupiunt* (Halle, 1871).¹¹

St. Tikhon & the Book of Common Prayer

St. Tikhon (Bellavin), while serving as Bishop in America, following discussions with Catholic-minded Episcopalians, sent the American Book of Common Prayer (1892 edition) to a committee appointed by the Holy Synod of Moscow on Old Catholic and Anglican questions. Their report of 1904¹² responded to the questions, "If an entire parish with its minister should simultaneously leave Anglicanism to join the Orthodox Church in America, then would it be possible to authorize the 'Common Prayer Book' for their liturgical use? If so, then what in this book should be deleted, what corrected, and what supplemented?" For the Antiochian Western Rite Vicariate, the more important sections of this report address the Communion Service and the Daily Office, as other services for the Vicariate are drawn from Roman use. The committee found that the two primary deficiencies in the Communion Service were clear belief in:

1. "the change or transformation of the holy Gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ"
2. "the Eucharist as a sacrifice for the living and the dead."

Concerning the Daily Office, the committee observed that:

There is nothing in the actual contents of "Daily Morning and Evening Prayer," together with the collects, which change according to the season, which is open to any particular objection on the positive side from the Orthodox point of view, unless the addition of the *Filioque* to the Creed is taken into account. But at the same time, 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.

The report concludes with the summary:

¹¹ Georges Florovsky, *Aspects of Church History* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing, 1975), 25.

¹² *Russian Observations upon the American Prayer Book*, tr. W. J. Barnes (Alcuin Club Tracts XII, A. R. Mowbray and Co. Ltd. London, 1917).

The examination of the "Book of Common Prayer" leads to the general conclusion that its actual contents present very little comparatively that clearly contradicts Orthodox teaching, and therefore would not be admissible in Orthodox worship. But this conclusion comes not from the fact that the book is actually Orthodox, but merely from the fact that it was compiled in a spirit of compromise, and that, while skillfully evading all more or less debatable points of doctrine, it endeavours to reconcile tendencies which are really contradictory. Consequently both those who profess protestantism and their opponents can alike use it with a quiet conscience. But worship which is so indefinite and colourless (in its denomination bearing) cannot, of course, be accepted as satisfactory for sons of the Orthodox Church, who are not afraid of their confession of Faith, and still less for sons who have only just joined the Orthodox Church from Anglicanism. If it were, their prayer would not be a full expression of their new beliefs, such as it ought essentially to be.

The committee, after reviewing these "Observations," allowed in general the possibility that if Orthodox parishes, composed of former Anglicans, were organized in America, they might be allowed, at their desire, to perform their worship according to the "Book of Common Prayer," but only on condition that the following corrections were made in the spirit of the Orthodox Church. On the one hand everything must be removed from the Book that bears a clearly non-Orthodox character—the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Confession, the Catechism with its protestant teaching about the sacraments, the Filioque, the idea of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as the sole source of the teaching of the Faith, etc. On the other hand, there must be inserted into the text of the prayers and rites contained in the Book those Orthodox beliefs which it is essentially necessary to profess in Orthodox worship—into the rite of the Liturgy, the profession of belief in the change of the Holy Gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ, and of belief in the sacrificial significance of the Eucharist; into the rite of ordination, the belief in the divine establishment of the ministry with its distinction of degrees, and the recognition of the distinctive right of the priest to offer the bloodless sacrifice. Into all the services in general prayers must be inserted addressed to the Blessed Mother of God, to Angels and Saints, with the glorification and invocation of them (direct), also prayers for the dead (especially in the Liturgy and the Burial Service). There must be included in liturgical practice, and put into the Book, the missing rites for the sacraments of penance, oil-anointing and unction, and the rite of consecration of churches (as distinct from the consecration of a house of prayer); and finally there must be introduced the cult of sacred images. But since the detailed changes in the "Book of Prayers," and, generally speaking, in Anglican liturgical practice together with the compilation of new prayers and even of entire rites can be carried out only on the spot, in America, in correspondence with existing demands and conditions, it is found desirable to send the "Observations" themselves to the Right Rev. Tikhon, the American Bishop.

In memory of his endeavors which made bringing parts of the Anglican heritage into Orthodoxy possible, the revised liturgy based on the Holy Communion Service of the Book of Common Prayer would be titled "the Liturgy of St. Tikhon" some seventy years later.

Metropolitan Gerassimos & Arnold Harris Mathew

In one of many early short-lived excursions into Orthodoxy via the Western Rite, in 1911 Arnold Harris Mathew, an Old Catholic bishop, entered into talks with Metropolitan Gerassimos Messara of Beirut. In what some Old Catholics call the “1911 Act of Union” Metropolitan Gerassimos wrote to Mathew saying, “... I receive you among us, and I accept your oath of fidelity to His Beatitude, the Orthodox Patriarch and his holy Synod of Antioch...” The terms of union were not listed, approval from the Patriarch and Synod was never given, and Mathew soon went on to facilitate the formation of a number of *vagante* groups. Some have claimed that Metropolitan Gerassimos gave approval to the Missal and Ritual used by Mathew,¹³ but as with the union, the terms of acceptance and what changes were needed were not clarified. The most significant effect of this episode was the lasting effect it had on a young Deacon Anthony Bashir, who accompanied Metropolitan Gerrasimos, as it was Metropolitan Anthony Bashir who gave a canonical home to the Western Rite movement in America forty-seven years later.

The 1936 Ukase of the Moscow Patriarchate

As with Overbeck’s work, the earliest congregations brought into the Orthodox Church worshiping with the Western Rite did not bear lasting fruit. In the 1930’s, the Brotherhood of St. Photius (an association of Orthodox theologians, intellectuals, and artists meeting in Paris, including the theologian Vladimir Lossky, the canonist Evgraf Kovalevsky, and the iconographers George Krug and Leonid Ouspensky) sent a report to the Moscow Patriarchate concerning Louis-Charles Winnaert and a group of some 1500 people who wished to become Orthodox using Western liturgical forms. The Ukase of the Moscow Patriarchate of 16 June 1936 (No. 75)¹⁴ was issued concerning reception of what became known as the Orthodox Church of France. Extracts from the Ukase pertaining to liturgical practice are given below.

IV. In [its] Divine Services and, generally, in the liturgical cult, the united community may preserve the Western Rite which it has maintained until now; however, the liturgical texts must be expurgated (even though gradually) of all expressions and thoughts not acceptable to the Orthodox Church.

V. The united community receives into it [the] Menology all of the Saints who are venerated by the Eastern Church, but only those of the West who were canonized before the separation of Rome from the Orthodox Church.

VI. In the Liturgy it is indispensable that: [a] only leavened bread be used; [b] the Invocation of the Holy Spirit (the Epiclesis) and the Consecration of the Gifts be placed, not before, but after the words of Institution in order to remove all misunderstanding concerning the moment of consecration; [c] the laity be communicated under both kinds concurrently by means of the spoon; [d] the Liturgy be celebrated on a *Antimins*, consecrated and issued by the Most Reverend prelate ruling the Russian churches in Western Europe, in token of canonical unity with the Orthodox Diocese.

¹³ A. H. Mathew, *The Old Catholic Missal and Ritual* (London: Cope & Fenwick, 1909). It should not be assumed that Metropolitan Gerrasimos fully approved this Missal and Ritual, as it contains post-schism commemorations, the “merits of the saints,” infant Baptism without the administration of Holy Communion (but with Chrismation), and other problematic materials.

¹⁴ See full text here: <https://www.stgregoryoc.org/1936-ukase-of-the-moscow-patriarchate/>

VII. The Sacrament of Baptism must be administered by triune immersion and only in view of an exception - by pouring or sprinkling; in Chrismation, Holy Chrism which is received from the Diocesan Bishop must be used; it must be indicated in the rite of Holy Unction that it is given not only in the capacity of "extreme unction" but also for the healing of the souls and bodies of the sick.

Patriarch Alexander III of Antioch sent this document to Metropolitan Anthony Bashir in May of 1958, instructing him to "take the same action, leaving to your Orthodox zeal and good judgement the right to work out the details in the local situations."¹⁵

Fr. Paul Schneirla

In 1958, in the pages of the St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly,¹⁶ Fr. Paul Schneirla, pastor of St. Mary Orthodox Church in Brooklyn, NY and Professor of Old Testament at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, outlined the history, forms, and opportunities of the Western Rite within Orthodoxy. Fr. Paul presented different alternatives of liturgical use:

1. a "purified Roman rite may be retained entire"
2. a "restored Roman rite may be essayed"
3. or "rites twice removed from the Church, as a result of schisms from Rome, or recently "self made" rites might be granted formal recognition."

After noting the wide use and "continuity with the uses of the pre-Schismatic west" of the Roman Rite, Fr. Paul acknowledged that "its actual use must be modified to conform to Orthodox norms of corporate worship" in addition to "changes of text or offices."

In the meanwhile, while retaining as much of the externals as possible to encourage those outside the Church, some important revisions must be made in the Missal of Pius V to bring it into harmony with Orthodox teaching. These reforms are generally self-evident, and have been a feature of all Orthodox versions of the Roman rite, so they require no detailed treatment here.

The whole matter of the eucharistic Epiklesis, especially when connected with some theory of a "moment" of consecration, is a western question, alien to sound theological categories. Probably the prayer *Supplices te rogamus* in the Roman Canon is an epiklesis, but since the question is always raised and a well established precedent has been set, it is certainly important to insert an epiklesis in any Orthodox western rite. How this can be done is demonstrated by Overbeck's use, although the elevations cannot now be dropped or transferred without disturbing western Christians, if they preceded the epiklesis they would have the devotional value of the Great Entrance in the eastern liturgies, and reverence at that point would not constitute an abuse in the context of Orthodox teaching on the character of the whole Anaphora.

¹⁵ D. Ambramtsov, "A Brief History of the Western Rite," *The Word* (April 1962, vol. 6, no. 4) 27. As original copies of this correspondence are not in the archives of the archdiocese, it is hoped that copies may be found in the archives of the patriarchate.

¹⁶ *SVTQ* (Spring 1958, vol. 2, no. 2), 20ff.

All references to works of supererogation in the Missal may be removed without offence to laity accustomed to a celebration outside the Church. So too with propers of post-Schism Saints and late Latin novelties: e.g. the Sacred Heart, etc. The *Corpus Christi* offices composed in a spirit foreign to ancient eucharistic doctrine emphasize the false western answer to a question never raised in the east, and contain other inaccuracies. In some instances, e.g. the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the use of older Roman Offices may be substituted for compositions post dating the introduction of the doctrinal novelty.

The use of unleavened bread requires a change, which need not become an obstacle to missionary use if the bread is prepared in a form similar to that now customary in the west. Communion in both kinds for the laity is solved by intinction, which is the eastern practice, and is already a feature of some western observances.

The offices other than the Mass require modification so basic as to be beyond the possibility of description here, but provisional use might follow minor changes such as shifted emphases or rearrangement. Baptism, Chrismation and first Communion could satisfy the requirements of successive administration by coalescing the present forms...

Fr. Alexander Turner

In 1932 Bishop Aftimios Ofiesh consecrated Ignatius Nicholas to be a bishop using the Western Rite within the "American Orthodox Catholic Church." The "Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil" was formed by Nichols in the 1930's as a missionary and devotional society to encourage use of the Western Rite. Ignatius Nicholas consecrated Alexander Turner as his successor in 1939. Turner later became friends with Fr. Paul Schneirla, who introduced Turner to Metropolitan Anthony Bashir. Metropolitan Anthony received Turner (as a priest) and some of his group of Western Rite clergy and people in 1961, following conversations with Patriarch Alexander III. Fr. Alexander was then appointed as the first Vicar General of the Western Rite for the Antiochian Archdiocese. In writing about the Western Rite in the April 1962 edition of *The Word*¹⁷ Fr. Alexander mentions several areas where the post-Schism West was in error and where an Orthodox Western Rite would require correction.

"A professional clergy aloof from the faithful, and a dichotomy between the performer on the one hand and the observer on the other" yielded

1. "Mass 'said' by the priest, 'heard' by the attendants"
2. Masses which became less "a corporate act of the Christian family" and instead "a religious extravagance on the one hand, or a mysterious incantation on the other"
3. Laymen who "left the holy sacrifice to the professionals and occupied [themselves] instead with 'devotions' – self-centered, sentimental reveries such as the rosary, or pious irrelevancies assigned to give mystical symbolism to parts of the liturgy."
4. "little spiritual nourishment" but rather encouraged "an appetite for religious sensationalism and novelty, to be fed by a stream of fashionable saints and devotional fads."

¹⁷ Alexander Turner, "The Western Rite: Its fascinating past and promising future," *The Word* (April 1962, vol. 6, no. 4) 4ff.

Though acknowledging that the “western rite, subsequent to the schism, accumulated evidences of doctrinal waywardness,” the structure of western worship had been “providentially preserved” and harmful accretions could be “easily removed without affecting its structural integrity.” The specific “heresies” to be removed from the Western Rite were:

1. Papal Infallibility, primarily present in extra-liturgical prayers after mass, in devotions, and in the Common for one or several popes
2. The Immaculate Conception, with problematic texts in the Mass and Breviary Office, easily replaced by older forms
3. Supererogation, particularly “in prayers that we may benefit from the merits of the saints”, though such language could be changed to asking the prayers of the saints or omitted
4. The double procession of the Holy Spirit, present both in the Creed and in the doxologies in some Office hymns

Fr. Alexander went on to mention that the “authorized western use has been edited to conform to [the] Church’s doctrine and teaching, and an epiclesis has been restored to its original place in the anaphora...” Concerning the calendar of saints, Fr. Alexander wrote, “Western Rite Orthodox have their own calendar which commemorates the more important pre-schism saints of both east and west, together with several later saints such as Seraphim of Sarov and Sergius of Radonezh.” He continued saying that assembling the calendar had “been guided by three main objectives: to achieve a proportional and balanced catalogue of the great lights of the Church, to restore to active status commemorations of many of the eastern fathers which have lapsed in the popular western calendars, and to recognize such western saints as have been obscured by the predominantly Latin character of western Catholicism. The Western Orthodox calendar is therefore both Orthodox and western without dominant regionalisms... representative of the Church’s life in all lands and all ages.”

Metropolitan Anthony & the Western Rite Directory

Metropolitan Anthony Bashir gave the Western Rite a home in canonical Orthodoxy in America when he issued his Edict in 1958. In the Edict His Eminence states:

We applied to His Beatitude of eternal memory, Alexander III, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East for guidance, and on May 31st, 1958, after consultation with representatives of some other autocephalous Churches, His Beatitude replied. His Beatitude of blessed memory, enclosed for our information an Arabic translation of a Ukase issued by the Russian Church in a similar instance, and authorized us to “take the same action, leaving to your Orthodox zeal and good judgment the right to work out the details in the local situation as you see fit.” (from the Patriarchal Brief, May 31, 1958)

Later that same year, Metropolitan Anthony spoke about this work in his report to the 13th Annual Archdiocesan Convention meeting in Los Angeles, saying:

With the blessing of the Patriarch and following the example of other Orthodox Patriarchates we have made it possible for Western Christians to enter the church and preserve ancient forms which are so precious to them as ours are to us... Their French and German and English ancestors were Orthodox before the Popes took them out of the church in the eleventh century,

but they were Western Orthodox. Our scholars and theologians have examined this claim, and found it just and reasonable.¹⁸

On 15 October 1962, Metropolitan Anthony Bashir issued the “Western Rite Directory” to supplement the “Edict” of 1958.¹⁹ While the Edict dealt largely with organizational and educational matters, the Directory addressed the Liturgy and lines of authority. After declaring that “Western Rite members shall adhere to the full Orthodox faith without admixture, omission or variation,” the section on Liturgical Practice was introduced by saying that “the clergy and laity of the Western Rite shall conform in all respects to the liturgical standards set by the Western Rite Commission and approved by us. No one shall introduce any modification, variations, changes, amendments, revisions, “improvements”, omissions, or alterations without the approval of the Commission and our license.” As much of the Directory has not been controversial, the following items are limited to areas of current controversy:

III. C. 1a. The ordinary of the Mass shall follow “The Missal for the Use of Orthodox” as published following the present revision by the Commission in Latin or an authorized vernacular version.

1b. The Nicene Creed is to be recited at all Masses (*altered to “follow the Ordo” in the 3rd Edition, 1994*).

C. 2. The Propers of the Mass shall follow the text of the Fifth Edition (1958) of the Missale Anglicanum until alternative offices are authorized. The addition of the Mass for the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Law in the Octave of All Saints is authorized.

C. 4. The bread used for the Mass shall be the leavened hosts as used at Holy Wisdom, Mount Vernon... (*the source was altered to read “apply to the Vicariate” in the 3rd Edition, 1994*).

C. 6. The laws of fasting and abstinence are those in use in the dissident West in 1950.

D. The Breviary

1. Western Rite Clergy above the order of deacon are bound to the daily recitation of so much of the Breviarium Monasticum as in their discretion they are able to say.
2. In addition to the original text, the office may be said or sung from *The Monastic Diurnal*, Oxford, 1957, and *The Monastic Breviary Matins*, Society of the Sacred Cross, Tynmawr, 1961.
3. No other Breviary texts are to be used in the private or public recitation of the office (*altered in the 3rd Edition, 1994, to add “The offices of Matins and Evensong according to the Rite of St. Tikhon are authorized substitutes.”*²⁰)

F. The Ritual

1. The offices for the Sacraments and blessings shall follow the Ritual approved in 1912 by Metropolitan Gerassimos Messarah, of thrice-blessed memory, for use in England, until such

¹⁸ *The Word* (November, 1958) 15.

¹⁹ The Third Edition of the *Edict and Directory* (1994) can be found here: <http://www.stgregoryoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Western-Rite-Edict-and-Directory-letters-etc.pdf>. The edition of the Edict and Directory printed in *With What Zeal*, edited by Fr. John Fenton (2023), has been issued without evidence of archdiocesan approval.

²⁰ While the Ordo stated that those who celebrated the Mass of St. Gregory were obligated to the recitation of the Monastic Office and those who celebrated the Liturgy of St. Tikhon were obligated to recite the English Office, Fr. Paul Schneirla, who succeeded Turner as Vicar General, told clergy they could use whichever Office they preferred.

time as the commission shall have published authorized revisions (*changed in the 3rd Edition, 1994, to read* “The Ritual as printed in 1993 shall be used ONLY.”)

G. Calendar

1. The calendar of the Western Rite is the Roman Martyrology with all post-schismatic saints and feasts expunged...

The final section of the Directory returns to the work of the Western Rite Commission, to be appointed by the Metropolitan, consisting “of Byzantine rite clergy of proven academic standing,” to assist the Vicar General “in all possible ways, especially in reference to the liturgical rite. No permanent changes in the Rite shall be made without the approval of the Commission.”

Fr. Joseph Angwin, the English Office & the Liturgy of St. Tikhon

In 1977, Fr. Joseph Angwin and the people of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation in Detroit, Michigan were received into the Antiochian Archdiocese by Metropolitan Philip. Fr. Joseph and others developed what is now known as “The Liturgy of St. Tikhon,” in keeping with the 1904 report of the Commission of the Moscow Synod on the Book of Common Prayer. While the Commission had surveyed the 1892 edition of the Book of Common Prayer, Fr. Joseph based his work on the 1928 edition in use at the time, with the service for the Mass adapted from the Missal form in common use among Catholic-minded Anglicans (supplemented with material from the Roman Missal). In 1989 the forms for Morning Prayer and Evensong were reprinted directly from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, without the additions called for in the 1904 report. The short preface notes, “the collects are not included because they are the responsibility of the leader in public worship and further a wider selection provides opportunity for the enrichment desired by the Decision of 1905 by which the use of these excerpts was authorized.”²¹

The Orthodox Ritual

The current official version of the “Orthodox Ritual” was published in 1993.²² In the Foreword, Fr. Paul Schneirla states,

The offices and blessings contained in this Ritual were adapted from western forms in use for centuries before 1958. Some were revised by a committee consisting of Frs. Chambault, Turner, Schmemmann, Schneirla and Upson and were authorized in 1952 for official use in the Western Rite Vicariate by the late Metropolitan Anthony Bashir of thrice-blessed memory. In his original preface he noted that the forms for Christian Initiation were approved in 1911 by Metropolitan Gerassimos (Messarah) of Beirut with whom the young Deacon Anthony Bashir first came to the United States. Revisions have been confined to such matters as flawed pneumatology, the removal of references to persons venerated for careers outside of the Church, and doctrines or opinions alien to Orthodoxy.

²¹ *The English Office* (Stanton, NJ, 1989) vii.

²² *Orthodox Ritual* (Stanton, NJ, St. Luke’s Priory Press, 2nd ed., 1993).

The book was issued without a table of contents, index or page numbers, making use difficult. The forms for the Baptism of Infants, the Blessing of the Font or Baptismal Water, and the Order for Private Baptism were newly typeset, combining the forms for Baptism, Confirmation (Chrismation), and First Communion. Most of the book is photo-copied directly from *The English Ritual* (W. Knott & Son: London, 1948) with a few corrections pasted in. There is no evidence that Fr. Alexander Schmemmann participated in discussions concerning the Ritual beyond the revised form for Baptism, or gave the work as a whole his approval. Fr. Alexander's full endorsement of the Ritual was highly unlikely, as it includes Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Litany of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Prayers for the Church after Low Mass (which in 1929 Pope Pius XI ordered be said "to permit tranquility and freedom to profess the faith to be restored to the afflicted people of Russia," commonly understood to be for the conversion of the Russian people to Roman Catholicism).

Fasting

The fasting regulations for the Vicariate have long been a source of disagreement. The *Ordo* for many years, in keeping with the *Directory*, included the simple statement, "The laws of fasting and abstinence are those in use in the separated West in 1950."²³ In 2001 clarification was offered in *The Ordo*, prefaced with the statement, "The laws quoted below are as printed in New York in the mid-1940's." The *Ordo* went on to note that fasting days included "Every day in Lent, Sunday excepted" and "All Fridays, throughout the year, are days of abstinence."²⁴ For many centuries the West has spoken separately of fasting (a reduction of food) and abstinence (not eating certain foods). The days of Lent, "Sundays excepted,"²⁵ were fasting days, but not days of abstinence, hence those within the Western Rite Vicariate were technically allowed to have meat and dairy on the Thursday following Ash Wednesday, having ostensibly put away all meat and dairy on Shrove Tuesday, only two days before! Some in the Vicariate, not finding these restrictions in the spirit of Orthodoxy (or according to Western historical precedent), asked their bishops for guidance and were told that the bishops would prefer to have everyone keep the same fast to the degree they were able, meaning to keep the Eastern fast from meat, dairy, wine and olive oil (which also happens to be the older Western pattern, with lard or other animal fat restricted instead of olive oil), along with a general reduction of the amount consumed.

The Orthodox Missal

In 1995 the Vicariate published the "Orthodox Missal," which "contains all that is necessary for the people's participation in the liturgy."²⁶ The book includes the official texts for the Liturgy of St Gregory, the Liturgy of St. Tikhon, and "the propers of the day for all the Sundays of the year and major Holy Days, as well as those additional ceremonies which are included in the Masses of certain days (such as Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, and Holy Week." The Holy Week services are taken from the Fifth Edition (1958) of the *Missale Anglicanum* (also known as the *Knott Missal*, as it was published in London by W. Knott & Son). The letter from Metropolitan Philip which appears before

²³ *Ordo* (Stanton, NJ: St. Luke's Priory Press, 2000), iv.

²⁴ *Ordo* (Stanton, NJ: St. Luke's Priory Press, 2001), Title III C 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Orthodox Missal* (St. Luke's Priory Press, Staunton, NJ, 1995) 3.

the Foreword states, “These approved texts are the exclusive use of our Archdiocese.”²⁷ The “Kalendar” included in the Orthodox Missal, in keeping with Fr. Alexander Turner’s instruction, included Orthodox saints throughout the East and West. Four post-schism commemorations were included: Corpus Christi (13th c.), Trinity Sunday (14th c.), the Feast of Christ the King (1925), and Our Lady of Walsingham (often dated to 1061, before the Norman Conquest imposed a more Roman approach on the Church in England). The first three can be celebrated giving an Orthodox understanding of the gift of the Eucharist, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the Kingship of Christ. Our Lady of Walsingham has been a principal Marian celebration in England, and is observed by Protestants (Anglicans), Roman Catholics, and Orthodox, though on different feast days.

Also in 1995, Patriarch Ignatius, of thrice-blessed memory, requested that the prayer “I believe and I confess...” be added to Western Rite liturgies, to clarify that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, and as a sign of Orthodox unity (the Commission of the Moscow Synod had requested the addition of the Trisagion Prayers for the same reason, but this has not been part of typical Antiochian practice).

The St. Andrew Service Book

In 1989 Fr. Michael Keiser, pastor of St. Andrew Orthodox Church of Eustis, Florida and a member of the Western Rite Commission, prepared the *Saint Andrew Service Book* for use in that congregation which had entered Orthodoxy from the Episcopal Church. Metropolitan Philip gave his approval for publication with a letter stating,

This SERVICE BOOK, containing among other things, Matins, Vespers, and the readings necessary for them, the Eucharistic Liturgy, and the Pastoral Offices, is hereby approved for use by the congregations of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America using the Western Rite in their liturgical services. This SERVICE BOOK comes as a welcome addition to the other service books available to the clergy and laity who worship in a tradition as ancient as the Eastern.²⁸

In 1996, a revised and expanded edition was prepared under the direction of Fr. Michael Trigg, pastor of St. Michael Orthodox Church in Whittier, California. This book was published by the Archdiocese and included another letter of authorization from Metropolitan Philip stating, “We pray that the attentive use of these authorized liturgies and other rites and ceremonies by the Western Rite clergy and laity of our beloved Archdiocese will be a cause of spiritual and liturgical renewal within our church in North America.” Several parishes used this service book, at least temporarily; today it is still in use at St. Andrew Church in Eustis, Florida.

Other Publications

Given the overall lack of resources within the Vicariate, both St. Mark’s Church in Denver (by creating Lancelot Andrewes Press) and St. Gregory Church in Washington, DC began to produce liturgical texts. *The St. Ambrose Hymnal* was published by St. Gregory’s in 2001, with theological oversight provided by the late Fr. Daniel Griffith, appointed by Bishop Basil. For the Daily Office, in

²⁷ Ibid, 2.

²⁸ Saint Andrew’s Service Book, 1989. A second edition followed in 1992, spiral-bound, as was the first edition.

its English form, Lancelot Andrewes Press produced *The St. Dunstan's Psalter* in 2002 and St. Gregory's issued *The English Office Noted* in 2004 (later revisions include a supplement contains a selection of antiphons, office hymns, versicles and responses, etc.). In 2005 St. Gregory's issued a draft revision of *The Orthodox Ritual* (further revisions were released in 2016). In 2006 Lancelot Andrewes Press received permission from Oxford University Press to reprint *The Monastic Diurnal*, and permission in 2007 to reprint the *Monastic Breviary Matins* (both were reprinted without change, hence the Orthodox user must make edits while in use). Altar Missals were printed by St. Gregory's in 2008 (an expanded edition of *The Orthodox Missal*) and by Lancelot Andrewes Press in 2010 (an expanded edition of *The American Missal*, widely used by Catholic-minded Episcopalians). In 2015 St. Gregory's published an edition of the *Roman Martyrology* for Orthodox use, partially based on the work of the late Fr. Jack Witbrock, an Antiochian priest serving in New Zealand.

The Daily Office

When the first clergy and parishes were admitted into the archdiocese using the Western Rite, the only option was the use of the revised Roman liturgy and the Monastic Office (the Society of Saint Basil which provided the early converts was in part a devotional society centered in the use of the Western Monastic Office). The first edition of *The Directory* reflected this use. None of the early parishes using the Roman and Monastic services survived. Following the admission of The Church of the Incarnation in Detroit in 1977 (and the churches of St. Andrew's, Eustis, FL in 1979 and St. Michael's, Whittier, CA in 1981) provision was made for use of an adapted form of the Daily Office from the 1928 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. When St. Augustine's, Denver came into the archdiocese from an Old Catholic background in 1990, they began using the Roman Mass, but the Monastic Office was generally prayed privately. St. Gregory's in Washington, DC entered the archdiocese in 1996 and also began offering the liturgy of St. Gregory. After a period of learning the Monastic Office, it was decided to offer *The English Office* at St. Gregory's (as its services were thought to be more suitable for parish and occasional use, as opposed to the regular offering of eight services a day in a monastic setting). Though the wording concerning which office was to be used remained unchanged in *The Ordo*, the official minutes of the Western Rite Conference in 2008 published in *Ad Clerum* reported, "There was discussion about the use of the English Office vs. the Monastic Office, which Fr. Schneirla reminded us is a matter of choice for any parish."²⁹

The English Office originally incorporated the lectionary printed with the Book of Common Prayer in 1928. By 2008 Fr. Paul Schneirla allowed clergy to use either the 1928 lectionary or the completely different Episcopal Church lectionary issued in 1943, a move taken without approval by the Western Rite Commission or by the Metropolitan (the Ordo of 2008 referred to an "unauthorized plurality of Lesson selections"). In 2009 the Ordo was issued with both lectionaries, dividing practice within the parishes offering the English Office.

The State of the Vicariate: 2008

Fr. Paul Schneirla served as the second Vicar General of the Western Rite for some thirty-seven years, retiring at the end of 2008. While many clergy reported that Fr. Paul had given conflicting instructions at different times and places, up to Fr. Paul's retirement the status and practice of the Western Rite Vicariate may be generally summarized in this manner.

²⁹ *Ad Clerum*, August 2008, 3. *Ad Clerum* is an occasional newsletter of the Vicariate for the clergy.

1. Two eucharistic liturgies in use: the *Liturgy of St. Gregory* (the old Roman liturgy in the form used by the Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil and called *The Missal for the Use of Orthodox*) and the *Liturgy of St. Tikhon* (the Anglo-Catholic version of the Communion Service from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, as adapted by Fr. Joseph Angwin and others). The texts of these services were included in *The Orthodox Missal* and the *Saint Andrew Service Book*, both clearly authorized by Metropolitan Philip.
2. The Canon of the Mass (the *anaphora*) was to be said audibly³⁰
3. Celebration on an *antimension*
4. The *epiclesis* from the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom added to both liturgies with the triple Amen
5. The prayer for “the President of these United States...” added after the prayers for the Patriarch, the Metropolitan, and the Holy Synod of Antioch. Later practice changed this to prayers for the Metropolitan, the local bishop (when present), and the President of these United States.
6. Leavened bread hosts for the Eucharist (but often appearing as though unleavened in a traditional Roman Catholic form)
7. “I believe and I confess...” added to both liturgies
8. Two forms of the Daily Office: The Monastic Breviary and The English Office. Neither forms have official versions edited for Orthodox use, and officiants using Roman Catholic or Anglican resources must edit while in use
9. *The Orthodox Ritual*, based on the *Rituale Romanum*, but without evidence of full vetting or approval by a Western Rite Commission or by the Metropolitan.
10. Baptism by triple immersion, including Chrismation and the administration of Communion
11. Fasting regulations following Roman Catholic practice of 1950
12. Calendar of pre-schism feasts and saints (with some modifications), approved by Metropolitan Philip
13. Removal of all language concerning the double-procession of the Holy Spirit, the merits of the saints, purgatory, the immaculate conception of Mary, and papal supremacy/infallibility
14. The use of icons, especially of “Western saints and themes based on good Romanesque models” was encouraged and statues were to “conform to pre-schism use”³¹
15. Approval of the Western Rite Commission and the Metropolitan required for all changes to the Rite (though bypassed at times by Fr. Paul Schneirla)

Transition: Fr. Edward Hughes as Vicar General

Fr. Edward Hughes was appointed to serve as the Vicar General in early 2009, with Fr. John Fenton serving as his assistant. For a traditional Roman Catholic definition, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* of 1917 states that the Vicar General is “the highest official of a diocese after the ordinary. He is a cleric legitimately deputed to exercise generally the episcopal jurisdiction in the name of the bishop, so that his acts are reputed the acts of the bishop himself.” When Fr. Thomas

³⁰ In the September 2008 edition of *Ad Clerum*, Fr. Paul Schneirla wrote, “From the outset the Vicariate has worshipped with an audible canon from the day of the late Father Alexander Turner whose Eucharist’s (*sic*) included responses from the laity... This is the usage of the Vicariate and always has been. The silent canon appeared rather late in the West...”

³¹ Directory, IV, D, 4.

Zain, Vicar General of the Antiochian Archdiocese, was asked about his duties and authority he replied, “to tell the clergy what the Metropolitan wants them to know;” he later added, “to relay information on behalf of the Metropolitan and to represent him at various functions.”³² The office of Vicar General in the West is often seen as analogous to that of the *Protosyngellos* in the East.³³ The authority of the Vicar General of the Western Rite has never been clearly defined within the Antiochian Archdiocese. This has led to disagreement and strife when major changes have been made.

Soon after the appointment of Fr. Edward Hughes the Vicariate began to move toward conformity with the pre-Vatican II Roman texts and rubrics, and these were presented as the ancient use of the Western Church. Some clergy of the Vicariate agreed with this move; others saw the Roman (and Anglican texts) as important sources which must be carefully edited in places to conform to the Orthodox Faith, given the centuries of separation between East and West. The clergy of the Vicariate were told that the Roman Missal, Office and Ritual had all been approved by Orthodox sources,³⁴ but some saw no evidence of full Orthodox review or approval and believed that further work was required.³⁵ Fr. Edward rejected that the texts of *The Orthodox Missal* were of authority, instead seeing *The Orthodox Missal* simply as “a devotional aid.”³⁶ The following passages from Fr. Edward from the May 2011 *Ad Clerum* show his understanding:

Concerning the office, since the authorization of the Tikhon rite it has been required that the recitation of the office publicly in the parish conform to the canon of the mass in use. In other words, parishes using the Ordinary and Canon in the Rite of St Tikhon are required to use the English Office for the public recitation of Evensong and Morning Prayer; and parishes using the Ordinary and Canon in the Rite of St Gregory are required to use the Monastic Office for the public recitation of Vespers and Lauds...

[W]ithout exception, the priests and other clergy of the Vicariate have always been required to conform their private recitation of the office to the *Breviarium Monasticum*, whether in Latin or in English. This requirement is in conformity with the Western Rite Directory, which states that “Western Rite clergy above the order of deacon are bound to the daily recitation of so much of the *Breviarium Monasticum* as in their discretion they are able to say.” (III.D.1)...

Let it be very clear, then, that the explanations and clarifications I offer have admitted no change to the official practice or prayer life of the Vicariate. Rather I have sought to clarify points which might have been unclear to some of our clergy, causing their practice perhaps to fall below the standard always expected of our clergy.³⁷

³² Personal conversations with the author.

³³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protosyncellus#:~:text=A%20protosyncellus%20or%20protosynkellos%20\(Greek,Christian%20churches%20is%20vicar%20general](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protosyncellus#:~:text=A%20protosyncellus%20or%20protosynkellos%20(Greek,Christian%20churches%20is%20vicar%20general)

³⁴ “...the Moscow Synod... approved the Latin liturgical texts (Missal, Breviary, Ritual) without correction.” J. Fenton, *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: The Purpose & Nature of Orthodox Worship*, found at: <https://journal.orthodoxwestblogs.com/2025/01/25/lex-orandi-lex-credendi-the-purpose-nature-of-orthodox-worship/>

³⁵ See the work of Overbeck and the Commission of the Moscow Synod noted above, and this from a Letter of Patriarch Sergius of Moscow to Vladimir Lossky: “The Western rite accepted by us, should be looked upon as a first step which was hurriedly put together and thus it is subject to modifications on the basis of further experience... Probably, there are a number of items in the text of the services and rites in need of revision. In other words our existing version of the Western Orthodox liturgy (the texts, rites and customs) cannot be considered as the final established form and the only acceptable one.” “Patriarkh Sergii i ego dukhovnoye nasledstvo.” [The Patriarch Sergius and His Spiritual Legacy.] Moscow Patriarchate, M., 1946, pp. 72-74. Translated by A. Smirensky.

³⁶ *Ad Clerum*, May 2011, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

What was presented as the long-standing practice of the Vicariate was often at odds with the understanding of established practice held by senior clergy of the Vicariate. Lines of authority have not been clear. The Archdiocese has not defined what the Vicar General can do on his own authority. What requires the approval of a Western Rite Commission? What can only be changed with the Metropolitan's approval? His Grace Bishop Basil of Wichita resigned as Episcopal Overseer for the Western Rite in 2009. After the open strife which followed and seeing that Episcopal oversight was clearly required for the Western Rite parishes, Metropolitan Philip appointed Bishop John of Worcester as overseer in 2012.

The Altar Missal

Before his retirement in 2008, Fr. Paul Schneirla appointed a study group to work on a new altar missal for the Vicariate. In January of 2009 Fr. Edward issued "Principles for the Liturgy Study Group." In the "Overall Principles" Fr. Edward stated, "The Orthodox principle is that liturgical texts are tantamount to the Holy Scriptures. Based on this principle, correcting or editing the original source (Latin) to bring it in line with Orthodox doctrine is considered a *non sequitur* and, therefore, shall not be undertaken."³⁸ In the February Supplement for *Ad Clerum* in 2009, Fr. Edward further reiterated, "Just as none of us would dare to change the text of the Holy Scriptures, or alter the decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, so we would not dare to change the texts of the service books or alter the way we serve the Sacraments."³⁹ Following meetings in Denver and at the Archdiocesan Convention in Palm Desert, CA (July 2009) the study group did not meet again, having failed to reach agreement on a variety of subjects, including the "Principles for the Liturgy Study Group."

While this author understood Fr. Paul's creation of the study group to be charged with the review of a newly completed draft of an Altar Missal prepared at St. Gregory's in Washington, DC, along the lines of *The Orthodox Missal* (which was prepared for congregational use), and with other minor changes approved by Fr. Paul, Fr. Edward's understanding was different. In the December 2009 edition of *Ad Clerum*, Fr. Edward commented on this draft edition of the missal stating:

Specifically, Fr Alford notes that changes were made in "the material in the Knott Missal that referred to the treasury of merits, purgatory, the double procession of the Holy Spirit, and archaic language, [... and] changes to the language of the Exsultet and within the Marriage service..." Except for the correction of the double procession, all changes in this missal are unauthorized, unnecessary and ill-advised and are not in accordance with the beliefs of the Orthodox Church, and so are not to be followed by people using this Missal.⁴⁰

Fr. Edward Hughes and Fr. John Fenton have been preparing a new translation and edition of the Altar Missal along the Principles given by Fr. Edward. Frs. Hughes and Fenton maintain that the new translation was "blessed in 2012 for use by Metropolitan Philip."⁴¹ No evidence of this approval has been provided (e.g. the customary letter of approval from the Metropolitan), nor evidence of the review of a Western Rite Commission, required by the Directory for changes to the Rite. The version of the new translation given in *With What Zeal*, compiled and published by Fr. John Fenton in 2023, includes texts previously omitted in Western Orthodox use (e.g. "by the merits (prayers) of thy

³⁸ Unpublished *Principles for the Liturgy "Study Group,"* 2009.

³⁹ *Ad Clerum*, February 2009 Supplement, 1.

⁴⁰ *Ad Clerum*, December 2009, 2.

⁴¹ J. Fenton, *With what Zeal* (Whittier, CA: Orthodox Christian Press, 2023), 297.

Saints”, with the end note citing the ancient Latin text’s “*per merita Sanctorum tuorum.*”). The version of this new translation posted on the Western Rite page of *Antiochian.org* also claims, without evidence, that it was approved by Metropolitan Philip in 2012 and includes the indication “by **1 thy Saints” with a footnote explaining, “Originally, ‘by the merits of thy Saints’”⁴² The new translation also omits the previously included prayer for the “President of these United States,” calls for the Canon (anaphora) to be said “in the secret voice,” omits the triple “Amen” following the *epiclesis*, omits the prayer “I believe and I confess...” added by Patriarch Ignatius, and makes many other changes. At this time some are using the materials prepared by Frs. Hughes and Fenton, some are using the missal prepared at St. Gregory’s, and some are using the adaptation of *The American Missal* published by Lancelot Andrewes Press.

The Calendar & The Ordo

The Calendar and *The Ordo* have both been sources of disagreement. The *Ordo* provides directions for the Mass and Office for each day of the year, fasting and other general directions. An Ordo is intended to be an official, authorized document of a diocese or monastic order. Unfortunately, the form and content of the annual Ordo of the Vicariate has varied substantially with each change in editorship, but without evidence of hierarchal review or approval. In 2010, Benjamin Anderson (who subsequently became Roman Catholic) prepared an Ordo under the direction of Fr. Edward Hughes which focused on a more traditional Roman Catholic and Benedictine approach to the Mass and Office. The introductory remarks acknowledge that this Ordo is a “new endeavor at producing a liturgical guide reflecting a consistent Roman-Gregorian usage.”⁴³ This Ordo also introduced directions for the Corpus Christi procession and the “October Devotions” (focused on the Rosary and St. Joseph) established by Pope Leo XIII in 1891.⁴⁴ Despite a previous policy of omitting all post-schism feasts and saints and “to recognize such western saints as have been obscured by the predominantly Latin character of western Catholicism” (Turner), the Calendar since 2010 has become heavily Roman Catholic and Benedictine and includes many controversial post-schism commemorations. For example:

1. Most Holy Name of Jesus, the Sunday between 2 January and 5 January (moved to this date by Pope Pius X in 1913 - the calendar of *The Orthodox Missal* gives the 15th c. English date of 7 August)
2. Peter Damian, 24 February (died 1072, reforming Roman Catholic Cardinal who denounced married clergy and their wives, and championed the filioque and self-flagellation): removed from the 2024 Ordo.
3. Sorrows of the BVM, the Friday before Palm Sunday (extended to the entire Latin Church by Pope Benedict XIII in 1727 - removed by Rome in 1969)
4. Solemnity of St. Joseph, the Wednesday following the Second Sunday after Easter (date moved by Pope Pius X in 1911 - removed by Rome in 1955)
5. Most Precious Blood, 1 July (dates from 1849 - the anniversary of the liberation of the Papal States from insurgents; moved by Pius X to 1 July - removed by Rome in 1969). The 2025

⁴² https://antiochianprodsa.blob.core.windows.net/websiteattachments/ordinary_and_canon_rite_of_st_gregory.pdf, p. 4. Fr. Hughes has written defending the use of “the merits of the saints” as it was part of the ancient texts and pre-dates the later Roman Catholic doctrine of the “treasury of merits”; this author has written citing the objections of Orthodox theologians and the confusion reintroducing the term will cause.

⁴³ B. Anderson, *Ordo Divini Officii Recitandi Sacrique Peragendi Juxta Titum Gregorianum...* (2010) 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 112. The texts for these devotions were printed in the appendix of *The Orthodox Ritual*, 1993, photocopied from *The English Ritual* (as noted above).

Ordo continues to list this feast in the main body of the Ordo, without comment, then gives page 130 as a reference for “Rubrics for when the Feast of the Most Precious Blood is observed”

6. Most Sacred Heart, the third Friday after Pentecost (In 1856 Pope Pius IX extended this feast to the whole Latin Church. In July of 2024 it was proposed that the name of the feast for the Vicariate be changed to “The Compassion of Christ,” with the date and liturgical material unchanged). The 2025 Ordo continues to list this feast in the main body of the Ordo, without comment, then gives page 130 as a reference for “Rubrics for when the Feast of the Compassion of Our Lord Jesus Christ is observed”
7. Henry II, Emperor and Confessor, 15 July (canonized by Pope Eugene III in 1146; problematic as Henry persuaded Pope Benedict VIII to add the *filioque* to the Creed) removed from the 2025 Ordo.
8. Most Holy Name of Mary, 12 September (dates from 1684 to commemorate the victory at the Battle of Vienna; Pope Pius X moved the feast to this date in 1911)
9. Seven Sorrows of the BVM, 15 September (extended to whole Latin Church in 1814 - moved to this date by Pope Pius X in 1913)
10. Holy Rosary of the BVM, 7 October (extended to the entire Latin Church in 1716 to commemorate victory over the Ottomans at the Battle of Petrovaradin – the observance was moved to 7 October in 1913 by Pope Pius X)
11. Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 11 October (a Papal bull “*Lux Veritas*” was issued in 1931 to commemorate the anniversary of the Council of Ephesus; it also contained commentary affirming that “the authority of the Roman Bishop” was higher than an Ecumenical Council (sections 16ff). The feast itself was established by this Bull, but as a “lasting proof” of Pope Pius XI’s personal piety⁴⁵ - removed by Rome in 1969)

In 2024 *The Ordo* was changed to show these controversial feasts (omitting Peter Damian) in a blue font, but without explanation for the coloration. In 2025 most of the feasts remain, as noted above, but without the unexplained blue font. St. Photius the Great, who had been omitted from the Ordo in recent years, has been restored in the 2025 Ordo. Many of the commemorations of saints of the Patriarchate of Antioch are classified as “memorials,” the lowest rank of feast. As an example, the new commemoration of All Saints of Antioch on 22 June 2025 may not be observed by those following the Vicariate Ordo, as the Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi, the Second Sunday after Pentecost, and St. Alban (proto-martyr of England) all take precedence.⁴⁶

The Ordo in recent years also rejects adjustments made to the Roman lectionary in *The Orthodox Missal* (1995), based on Orthodox priorities. The two principal examples are the commemoration of the Baptism of Our Lord (moved in *The Orthodox Missal* from the octave of Epiphany, generally a week day, to the second Sunday of Epiphany for greater emphasis)⁴⁷, and the addition of the Feast of Patriarchs and Prophets on the Octave Day of All Saints (8 November in the Western calendar) to include the Old Testament saints commemorated in Orthodoxy.⁴⁸

The traditional Roman Catholic character of the Ordo is also shown in the adoption of legalistic language (e.g. “holy days of obligation” and matters “of precept”), and even in errors caused

⁴⁵ *Monastic Breviary Matins* (Tymawr, Society of the Sacred Cross, 1961), supplement (38).

⁴⁶ Ordo, 74. All Saints of Antioch is listed as the fourth commemoration, a Memorial, and hence optional.

⁴⁷ *The Orthodox Missal*, 62.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 445.

by apparent copying from traditional Roman Catholic sources (e.g. “Octave of the Immaculate Conception”⁴⁹).

Holy Week

It has been clearly documented in many places that the Western Holy Week services slowly evolved through the centuries, beginning with what was observed from the rite of Jerusalem, but with added Roman and Gallican influences.⁵⁰ The liturgies and rubrics both became more elaborate through the late Middle Ages until the publication in 1570 of the first official Roman Missal by Pope Pius V, which required uniformity throughout the Catholic Church. By the mid-19th century, liturgical scholars had begun to lament the loss of the earlier practices of Holy Week.⁵¹ The Holy Week reforms of 1955 were meant to return the Catholic Church to earlier practice. As these services, said (at the time of their release) to be more ancient in form, were in use in the Roman Catholic Church when the Western Rite was established within the Patriarchate of Antioch in 1958, these services became the sole approved form for Western Rite Orthodox use in our archdiocese. The *Directory* issued by Metropolitan Anthony in 1962 specifies “The propers of the Mass shall follow the text of the Fifth Edition (1958) of *the Missale Anglicanum* until alternative offices are authorized.” This missal, also known as *The English Missal*, published by Knott & Sons of London, contains the 1955 Holy Week services, and it is from this missal that the Holy Week services in *The Orthodox Missal*, published in 1995, were taken. Today, many ultra-traditional Roman Catholics complain that the 1955 Holy Week services represent the beginning of the movement which led to the unfortunate liturgical revisions of Vatican II. The relative merit of one set of services over another is not being argued here, but rather the question of the actual long-standing practice of the Vicariate, and what has been issued with hierarchical authority. The following notes chronicle the changes which have been made.

1995: publication of *The Orthodox Missal* by St. Luke’s Priory Press. This book contains the 1955 revision of the Holy Week Services from the Fifth Edition (1958) of the *Missale Anglicanum*. It also contains a letter from Metropolitan Philip which includes: “These approved texts are the exclusive use of our Archdiocese.”

c. 1999: Fr. David Lynch (reposed 2008) of St. Augustine’s in Denver compiled a service for the Blessing of Oils and Unction for use on Holy Wednesday evening. He based this service on the Roman form for use in parishes when the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Catechumens blessed by the bishop were not available. This service was approved for use by Fr. Paul Schneirla; it is not known whether Fr. Paul ever sought approval from Metropolitan Philip.

2009: *The Ordo*, published by the Vicariate still contained the statement: “The Propers shall follow the text of *The Orthodox Missal*, published by the Vicariate in 1995.” It also declared, “the clergy and laity of the Western Rite shall conform in all respects to the liturgical standards set by the Western Rite Commission and approved by the Metropolitan.”

2010: *The Ordo* prepared by Benjamin Anderson contained what is apparently the first

⁴⁹ Ordo (2025), 23.

⁵⁰ See T. Klauser, tr. J. Halliburton, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, 2nd ed.), 81.

⁵¹ See P. Gueranger, tr. L. Shepherd, *The Liturgical Year: Passiontide and Holy Week* (Westminster, MD: Newmann Press, 1949), 550ff.

mention of following the pre-1955 services in a Vicariate publication. This Ordo gives instructions for Holy Week for following either the "Traditional Order of 1570" or the "Revised Order of 1955,"

2013: *The Ordo* contained a direction that "The pre-1955 form of Holy Week is recommended as being the ancient Western tradition, but the post-1955 form of Holy Week may be used depending on pastoral circumstances." The 2013 Ordo still contained the statement that "The clergy and laity of the Western Rite shall conform in all respects to the liturgical standards set by the Western Rite Commission and approved by the Metropolitan," but no evidence was given that the change in practice recommended for Holy Week had been discussed by the Western Rite Commission or approved by the Metropolitan.

2014: The statements given in 2013 appear in the introductory notes, as does the following on p. 46: "The following rubrics pertain to the traditional Holy Week (pre-1955). The revised Holy Week (promulgated by Rome in 1955) may be used in place of the Traditional order."

2015: A new claim was made that "The continuous intent of the Vicariate is the celebration of Holy Week according to the order before the liturgical changes by Rome in 1955. In those parishes for which it is a pastoral necessity to use the changes instituted by Rome in 1955 and later, the rubrics are located on p. 136-138." (Ordo p. 16). The introductory notes still state that "The clergy and laity of the Western Rite shall conform in all respects to the liturgical standards set by the Western Rite Commission and approved by the Metropolitan," but again no evidence is given for the approval of this innovation; rather it is described as "the continuous intent."

2017: An Altar edition of the services for Holy Week was published by St. Gregory Orthodox Church, Silver Spring, MD, containing the services from *The Orthodox Missal* (1955 Holy Week) and other approved sources (eg. the 1958 *Missale Anglicanum*). Publication of this work was announced in the April 2017 issue of *The Word* magazine at the suggestion of Bp. John.

2019: The statements concerning Holy Week from the 2015 Ordo still appear in the 2019 Ordo. Instructions for Holy Week in the March 2019 *Ad Clerum* reject the practice of the Holy Wednesday Blessing of Oils and the Holy Thursday foot washing, and announced that texts for Holy Week services would be issued by the Vicariate on or before April 15th, but no evidence of approval by the Metropolitan was supplied.

2019: "*The Orthodox Missal for Holy Week & Easter*" was published by the Orthodox Christian Press, Whittier, CA with the claim "The texts contained in this Missal are taken from the earliest Holy Week services in the Western tradition, as they were faithfully transmitted in the *Missale Romanum, Editio XXII, Juxta Typicam Vaticanum*, as translated in the English Missal (1933). Revisions have been confined to rubrical matters." The pre-1955 services are given, largely in their Tridentine form. The claim that these services are "the earliest Holy Week services in the Western tradition" cannot be supported historically, as the Tridentine services show considerable development in the late Middle Ages, particularly with the liturgical cross-fertilization between Rome and Gaul.

2025: *The Ordo* includes the new and unprecedented claim that the pre-1955 Holy Week services of the Missal of Pius V are “pre-schism” (p. 15) and the 1955 revised services are “post schism (p. 131).⁵² The Ordo also includes what are identified as “Post-Schism 1955 Church of Rome rubrics” (p. 131).

Merits

The draft of the new translation of the Liturgy of St Gregory which Frs. Hughes and Fenton maintain was “blessed in 2012 for use by Metropolitan Philip” introduced the use of the term “merits of the saints” into Western Orthodox use for the first time, but without evidence of hierarchical approval for this change. Since that time some Vicariate clergy have maintained that “merit language used in the strict sense forms an integral part of the prayers of the western liturgical tradition, as it does the teaching of the western Fathers”, and that such language is “an integral part of the western theological and spiritual patrimony.”⁵³ Some have also stated that while language concerning the merits of the saints has been associated with the late Roman Catholic doctrine of the ‘treasury of merits’ in the past that it no longer has that association. Others have argued that:

1. Orthodoxy rejects the Roman Catholic doctrine of the treasury of merits⁵⁴
2. such language has been rejected for use within a restored Orthodox Western Rite for our entire history by Overbeck, the Commission of the Moscow Synod, and our two first Vicars General
3. the current Catechism of the Catholic Church still includes teaching about the treasury of merits in the section on indulgences⁵⁵
4. the reintroduction of such language is confusing at best, and
5. the reintroduction of such language, even with Western Patristic precedent, has not been given consideration and approval by Orthodox theologians or hierarchs.

Fasting

In 2010, a new Ordo published under the direction of the Vicar General included the statement that: “only those between the ages of 21 and 60 are bound to the law of fasting.”⁵⁶ In 2012 the Vicariate issued new fasting regulations, stating, “The laws of fasting and abstinence are those in use in the West in the 9th century.”⁵⁷ No historical evidence was provided, however, to support the claim that the pattern given is actually that in general practice in the 9th century. The regulations listed in *The Ordo* specifically exclude Sundays during fasting seasons from abstinence, thus allowing meat and dairy on the Sundays of Lent, etc. Many historic references make clear that the current fasting regulations of the Vicariate are not those of the 9th century in the West. For example:

the precept of abstaining from flesh-meat is so essential to Lent, that even on Sundays, when the fasting is interrupted, abstinence is an obligation, binding even on those who are dispensed

⁵² This identification is made without explanation.

⁵³ D. McCready, The Concept of Merit in the Western Rite. Available at <https://journal.orthodoxwestblogs.com/2024/06/06/the-concept-of-merit-in-the-western-rite/>

⁵⁴ See V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1976, p. 197f).

⁵⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, article 1478.

⁵⁶ B. Anderson, *Ordo Divini...*, 17.

⁵⁷ *Ordo* (Methuen, MA, 2013), 6.

from the fasts of the week, unless there be a special dispensation granted for eating meat on the Sundays.⁵⁸

The unsupported claim that the fasting regulations were “those in use in the West in the 9th century” has been removed in the 2025 Ordo, but the regulations themselves remain unchanged.⁵⁹

The Ordo also states, “On Abstinence days the faithful are obliged to abstain from flesh-meat only and the juice thereof (soup, etc.),”⁶⁰ but no mention is made of abstinence from dairy products (as required by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century),⁶¹ much less wine or oil. While abstinence from dairy had been set aside at many times and places, a ten-year papal indult by Leo XIII for the United States bishops to set aside abstinence from dairy products, etc., demonstrates that the prohibition was still in effect in 1886.⁶² Historically, Christians have fasted with their own bishop.

The Western Rite Commission

Despite the clear instructions in the Directory that “No one shall introduce any modifications, variations, changes, amendments, revisions, “improvements,” omissions or alterations without the approval of the Commission and our license,” the Commission has not met once since 2009 according to the late Fr. Michael Keiser and Marie Hyder, two of the three members of the commission. In like manner, no evidence has been shown of approval from the Metropolitan for any of the changes listed above.

Ironically, the Directory itself has been changed in a number of ways (some via helpful changes in organization), though without evidence of review by the Western Rite Commission or approval from the Metropolitan. The changes in a revision of the Directory issued by Fr. Edward Hughes and printed in *With What Zeal* include:

1. For the Calendar: removal of the older statement that “The calendar of the Western Rite is the Roman Martyrology with all post-schism saints and feasts expunged” and substitution of “The calendar of the Western Rite is the annual Ordo published by the Western Rite Vicariate and shall be used in all parishes of the Western Rite.”⁶³
2. That the use of the Gregorian Canon requires the use of the *Breviarum Monasticum* for the Office, those using the “Synodal 1904 (Anglican) Canon of the Mass” will use the English Office, and that all versions of the latter used in the Vicariate must conform to “The English Office” printed by the Vicariate,⁶⁴ (but without the enrichments called for by the Russian report on the Prayerbook).

⁵⁸ P. Guéranger, *The Liturgical Year: Lent*, (Westminster, MD: Newmann Press, 1949) 4.

⁵⁹ *Ordo* (2025) 10. A “fish” symbol, identifying a “Day of Abstinence,” is given, however, for each day of Lent, Sundays included, in the main body of the Ordo, signifying a meatless day.

⁶⁰ *Ordo* (Methuen, MA, 2013), 7.

⁶¹ *Summa Theologiae*, Question 147, Article 8.

⁶² *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. See also: <https://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2021/02/abstinence-from-meat-animal-products-on.html>

⁶³ J. Fenton, *With What Zeal* (Whittier, CA, Orthodox Christian Press, 2023), 24.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 23.

The Report of Fr. Theodore Pulcini

In August of 2022, Metropolitan Joseph announced the retirement of Fr. Edward Hughes, and that Fr. Ted Pulcini had been appointed to interview the clergy serving in Western Rite parishes and prepare a report on the state of the Vicariate.⁶⁵ Released in 2023, the report provides an objective survey and makes several suggestions for improvement, including the need for a reconstituted Western Rite Commission⁶⁶ and “guardrails” to delineate acceptable diversity within Western Orthodox practice. This report has been given to Metropolitan Saba and Bishop John and discussed with the clergy, who await the guidance and decisions of the Metropolitan.

Afterword

For the Orthodox Western Rite to be authentic it must first be Orthodox. We are Orthodox Christians, we are children of Antioch, and we have been blessed to keep those portions of the Western liturgical, devotional, spiritual, and musical heritage which are in keeping with the Holy Orthodox faith. As expressed in the well-known maxim of Prosper of Aquitaine in the 5th century, *Lex orandi, lex credendi* ("the law of what is prayed [is] the law of what is believed"); our faith and our prayer are inextricably linked. Our prayer informs our faith, and our faith informs our prayer. If we are Orthodox in our faith, we must be Orthodox in our worship. Our worship must express the Orthodox faith.

There is much that is good in the history of the Western Rite of Orthodoxy, particularly on the parish level, as it has brought many in search of authentic Christianity into the Orthodox Church. Some have later moved into the Eastern Rite; many others have found a lasting home in the faith and Western practice of their ancestors. That history has yet to be written in a full manner and continues to develop.

The above survey of documents shows the general expectations for the Western Rite before 2009 and the direction taken thereafter. Some in the Vicariate welcomed the initiatives of Fr. Edward Hughes, others found them to be inappropriate, still others wished to avoid the conflict and focus on other matters. We have not had a common vision or understanding of the limits of what is truly Orthodox. Perhaps above all, we have failed to discuss these matters “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). All are weary of the strife, await the guidance of our bishops, and hope to find a way to move forward.

In responding to Fr. Paul Schneirla’s article in the *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* in 1958, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann spoke of Metropolitan Anthony’s goal of “facilitating conversion” by the Western Rite. Fr. Alexander spoke of real conversion as “the individual or the corporate acceptance of the Orthodox faith and the integration in the life of the Church, in the full communion of faith in love.”⁶⁷ His critique, and those of many others who ask whether a Western Rite separated from the Orthodox Church for a thousand years can still convey the Orthodox faith, must be taken seriously and answered, as by frank discussion we can better understand each other and ourselves. Ultimately the Western Rite should be judged by its fruit: does it help God’s children to grow in

⁶⁵ Fr. John Fenton continues to serve as Bishop John’s assistant and as the editor of the *Ordo*.

⁶⁶ This author hopes that a reconstituted Commission will examine the entirety of the Western Rite in light of Orthodox theology and practice.

⁶⁷ *SVTQ* (Fall 1958, vol. 2, no. 4) 37.

holiness of life? Can it still nurture saints as it did for a millennium? We need to guard against adopting romanticized views of a West that never existed and accept that much in the West was broken and should not be taken into our Orthodox faith and life. Fr. Alexander concluded with the prescient warning, “I think that in the present situation of the Orthodox Church in America, the Western Rite, theoretically justified and acceptable as it is, would, instead of ‘facilitating conversion’, dangerously multiply spiritual adventures of which we have had too many in the past, and which can but hinder the real progress of Orthodoxy in the West.”⁶⁸ How we live and work in the Vicariate will ultimately prove Fr. Alexander right or wrong.

May God grant us wisdom and strength to discern what is appropriate and authentic within the Western heritage to bring into Orthodoxy, that our conversion truly be to the full “acceptance of the Orthodox faith and the integration in the life of the Church, in the full communion of faith in love.”

⁶⁸ Ibid, 38.