

## Rome's Liturgical Instruction for the Eastern Catholic Churches

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### Abstract

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By means of a detailed study of the 1996 Vatican document, *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, as well as the *Code* itself, the author attempts to assist Eastern Catholics in the process of returning to their roots and eradicating whatever is foreign to their rich liturgical and spiritual patrimony as mandated by the Second Vatican Council and subsequent Roman documents, especially those of Pope John Paul II. The author concentrates on the structures of Eastern Catholic Churches and their lawful autonomy and authority before focusing on several key areas, including: the publication of liturgical books; liturgical formation of seminarians; the proper celebration of the sacraments of initiation, healing, and vocation; sacramentals; the sanctoral cycle, including days of feast and fast, and the importance of lost traditions such as the Lenten Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts; the spiritual necessity of recovering public celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours; and the role of icons. He concludes with an appeal for the full restoration by Eastern Catholics of their liturgico-theological heritage for its own sake as well as for the sake of Orthodox-Catholic unity.



### *Introduction*

On January 6, 1996, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches published an *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical*

*Prescripts of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*<sup>1</sup> (hereafter: LI). The *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (hereafter: CCEO), following the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on the Eastern Churches (Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 1), deals here and there with a series of important norms pertaining to liturgical matters. The LI, by contrast, gathers all these norms into a systematic whole, completing them with further details, and presenting them to the Eastern Catholic Churches so that they fully realize their own identity (n. 5).

The LI has the following objectives: a) to lead to a more profound understanding of the immense richness of the authentic Eastern traditions, which are to be scrupulously maintained and communicated to all the faithful; b) to arrange the liturgical norms valid for all the Catholic Eastern Churches in an organic summary and to introduce recovery, where necessary, of the Eastern liturgical authenticity, according to the Tradition which each Eastern Church has inherited from the Apostles through the Fathers; c) to exhort a permanent liturgical formation to be organized on a solid basis, for both the clergy – beginning with seminaries and formation institutes – and the laity through schools of mystagogical catechesis; and d) to list the principles in common for the elaboration of liturgical directories for the individual Churches *sui iuris* (n. 5). In light of these principles, we reflect below on the most germane parts of the LI.

### ***Eastern Code and Liturgy***

In canon 3, the CCEO states that: “the code, although it often refers to the prescripts of liturgical books, does not for the most part determine liturgical matters; therefore, these prescripts are to be diligently observed, unless they are contrary to the canons of the Code.” Thus the CCEO does not directly regulate questions of a liturgical character. It belongs,

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<sup>1</sup> *Istruzione per l'applicazione delle prescrizioni liturgiche del Codice dei Canoni delle Chiese Orientali* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996). In English: *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescripts of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996).

therefore, to the competent ecclesiastical authority to regulate public divine worship according to can. 657. Can. 3 uses the expression “prescripts of liturgical books” and not that of “liturgical norms,” and this is because the code underlines the obligation of these “*praescripta*” to be observed by all the Eastern Churches and determines which authority can approve the liturgical books.

The reference to the liturgy is something fundamental and constant in the CCEO.<sup>2</sup> The code refers repeatedly to “liturgical books,” to the “prescripts of the liturgical books,” to “what is contained in the liturgical books,” to the “liturgical laws,” to the “particular law” in liturgical matters, and to “the legitimate customs” in liturgical matters. All these expressions, although they may not always have the same juridical significance, are inserted into the “particular law,” understood in the sense of can. 1493 § 2 as “all laws, legitimate customs, statutes and other norms of law, which are not common to the entire Church nor to all the Eastern Churches,” but to each Church *sui iuris*. The frequent reference of the code to the laws and norms or liturgical prescripts attributes to them greater vigor, as much as their application is really required for the application of the same canonical norms. In fact, the liturgical books of the different Churches *sui iuris*, legitimately approved, contain particular prescripts for the order of divine worship and the celebration and administration of the sacraments and sacramentals. Here it is not a question of liturgical rubrics or mere exhortation, but the true liturgical order, required by sound spiritual life and a real ecclesial foundation. Therefore, can. 3 establishes a general norm whereby the prescripts of the liturgical books should be diligently observed, unless they are contrary to the canons of the code.

It is obvious that the reform and changes of the liturgical books undertaken by the various Eastern Catholic Churches, after the promulgation of the code, cannot contain liturgical norms contrary to the canons of the code. In this perspective, can. 40 § 1, confirming the teaching of Vatican II<sup>3</sup>, orders that

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., especially Title XVI, “On Divine Worship and Especially the Sacraments.”

<sup>3</sup> See the conciliar decree, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum n. 6*.

Eastern rite church , also called Eastern Catholic Church , any of a group of Eastern Christian churches that trace their origins to various ancient national or ethnic Christian bodies in the East but have established union (hence, Eastern rite churches were in the past often called Uniates) or canonical communion with the Roman Apostolic See and, thus, with the Roman Catholic Church.Â The Congregation is competent for the Eastern churches in all matters (except certain specified)Â The term rite in the phrase Eastern Catholic rite signifies not only liturgical ceremonies but the whole organization of particular churches.Â  in union with Rome (Eastern Catholics) are recognized as being in full apostolic succession. Pope: The Bishop of Rome and the leader of the worldwide Catholic Church, and the traditional successor to Saint Peter, to whom Jesus is supposed to have given the keys of Heaven, naming him as the   rock  upon which the church would be built. missionaries: Members of a religious group sent into an area to evangelize or offer ministries of service, such as education, literacy, social justice, health care, and economic development. Early History and the Fall of Rome.Â After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, the Catholic faith competed with Arianism for the conversion of the barbarian tribes. The 496 conversion of Clovis I, pagan king of the Franks, saw the beginning of a steady rise of the Catholic faith in the West. Saint Remigius baptizes Clovis. This article or section needs a cleanup to bring it to a higher standard of quality. Recommendation: See talk page. More detailed comments may be noted on the talk page. You can help OrthodoxWiki by editing it, especially to conform to the Style Manual and the suggestions in How to write a great article. The Eastern Catholic Churches Churches are churches that follow the ancient liturgical traditions of the East, while being in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church and placing themselves under The Eastern Catholic Churches or Oriental Catholic Churches, also called the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches, Eastern Rite Catholicism, or simply the Eastern Churches and in some historical cases referred to as Uniates, are twenty-three Eastern Christian sui iuris (autonomous) particular churches of the Catholic Church, in full communion with the pope in Rome. Although they are distinct from the Roman Catholic Church, they are all in full communion with it and with each other. Eastern Orthodox Catholics and Roman Catholics are the result of what is known as the East-West Schism (or Great Schism) of 1054, when medieval Christianity split into two branches. The Byzantine split with Roman Catholicism came about when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, King of the Franks, as Holy Roman Emperor in 800.Â The Eastern Church became the Greek Orthodox Church by severing all ties with Rome and the Roman Catholic Church    from the pope to the Holy Roman Emperor on down. Over the centuries, the Eastern Church and Western Church became more distant and isolated for the following reasons