

When it was that bishops first formed the habit of coming together in council, we do not know. It is such an obvious act, on the part of officials with like problems and responsibilities and authority, that to do this was second nature surely. What we do know is that as early as the second century (100-200 A.D.) it was the custom for the bishops who came together for a bishop's funeral to take charge of the election of his successor. Here is one likely source, it is suggested, from which came the council of bishops as a recurring feature of ordinary Christian life.

About the year 190 a furious controversy as to the date at which the feast of Easter should be kept, shook the whole Church, and the pope, St. Victor I, sent orders to the places most troubled that the bishops should meet and report to him their findings. And a series of councils were then held, in Palestine, in Asia Minor, and in Gaul. Sixty years later when, with the great career of St. Cyprian, the mists clear away from Roman Africa, we perceive that the bishops' council is already a long-established practice there. The bishops of Africa meet in council, indeed, twice every year. What they decreed on these occasions was law for the whole of Christian Africa. These councils were well attended; in 220 there were seventy-one bishops present, and at another council, ninety. At St. Cyprian's council of Carthage in 256, there were eighty-seven. There was a similar, systematic conciliar action in Egypt and in Syria and Palestine.

In the early years of the next century we have records of councils in Spain (Elvira, 300) and in France (Arles, 314) with the names of bishops present and a list of the laws they enacted. The Catholic Church may, indeed, be a Church made up of churches (i.e., dioceses) but never, so this history seems to show, of dioceses where each bishop acts without any reference to the rest.

When the emperor Constantine publicly became a follower of Christ (312) he was immediately faced with the grave African problem known to history as the Donatist Schism. Necessarily, and in a very brief space of time, he was familiarised with the function of the council of the bishops, as an instrument of church government. It was natural, inevitable indeed, that when a few years later the Arian crisis arose, all concerned, the emperor and the bishops, should think of a great council as the first move in the restoration of order. The novel feature in 325 was that not only the bishops of the locality affected were convoked, but the bishops of the whole Catholic world.[2] This was to be not a regional or provincial council, but a council for the church in general--a General Council.

The universal belief that the Church of Christ, in its day-to-day business of teaching the doctrine of Christ, is divinely preserved from teaching erroneously, entailed the consequence that (to use a modern terminology) the General Council is considered infallible in its decisions about belief. If the official teachers as a body are infallible as they teach, scattered about the world in their hundreds of sees, they do not lose the promised, divine, preserving guidance once they have come together in a General Council. And once General Councils have taken place we begin to meet explicit statements of this truth. The councils themselves are explicitly conscious of it when, making their statement of the truth denied by the innovator, they bluntly say of those who will not accept their decision, Let him be anathema. St. Athanasius, who as a young cleric was present at Nicaea, can refer to its decree about Arianism as something final, the last all-decisive word: "The word of the Lord, put forth by the Oecumenical Council at Nicaea is an eternal word, enduring for ever." [3] Eighty years or so later than this the pope, St. Leo I, warning the bishops assembled at the General Council of Chalcedon to leave untouched the decisions of Nicaea about the rank of the great sees of the East, speaks of Nicaea as "having fixed these arrangements by decrees that are inviolable," and says, "These arrangements were made by the bishops at Nicaea under divine inspiration." [4] This was in the year 451. His successor, St. Gregory the Great, writing about 594 to the patriarch of Constantinople, has a reference to the special prestige of the first, doctrine-defining General Councils which equates their work with that of Holy Scripture: "I profess that as I receive and venerate the four books of the Gospels, so I do the four councils," which he proceeds to list: Nicaea in 325, Constantinople in 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451. These, he says, "are the four squared stone on which the structure of the holy faith arises." [5]

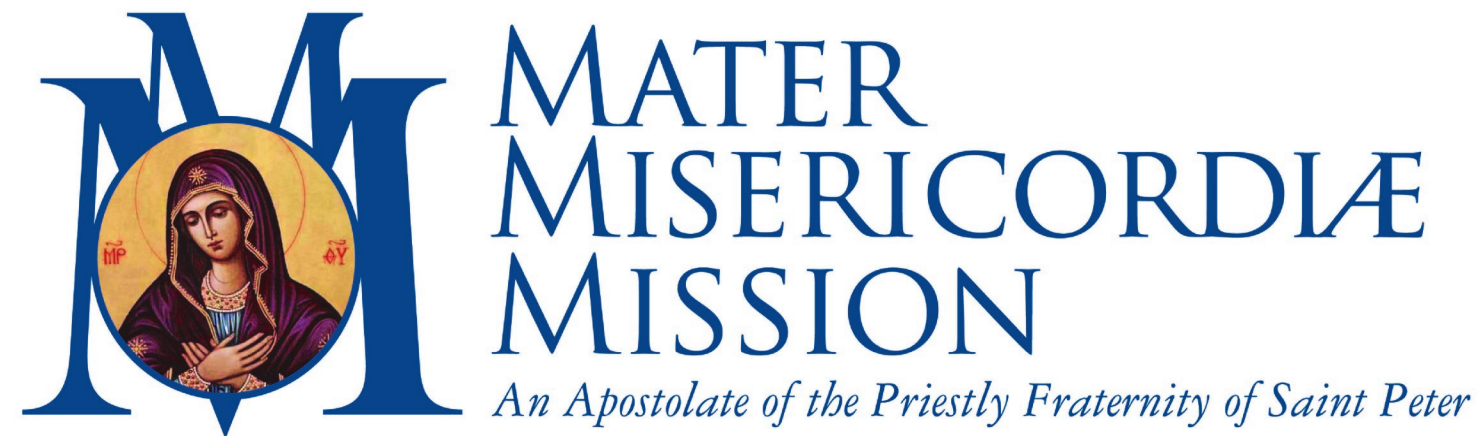
Nowhere in these early centuries, in fact, do we find any member of the Church questioning the truth as the General Councils have defined it. What they teach as the truth is taken to be as true as though it were a statement of Scripture itself. The question was never raised, seemingly, that the greater or smaller number of bishops who in response to the summons attended, in any way affected the peculiar authority of the General Council; nor the fact that all but all of these bishops were from the Greek-speaking East.

How these fundamental, primitive notions developed, how all that they seminally contained matured and expanded through the centuries, this is the very subject-matter of the chapters that follow. And here will be found, in its due place, some account of the controversies that later arose as to the relation (the constitutional relation, so to speak) of the General Council to its president the pope. What the role of the pope has been in the General Council is, necessarily, a main topic of all these chapters. But it may be useful to say a word about this here, and something also about the nature of the bishops' role.

Excerpt from Introduction of *The Church in Crisis: A History of the General Councils, 325 - 1870*.
By Mgr. Philip Hughes. Recommended by Fr. Rickert at Lenten Mission. Complete text available at
<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/CDHN/coun0.html> (public domain)

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Mater Misericordiae (Mother of Mercy) Mission glorifies God, uniting its members in faith, hope and charity through confession of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Faith and through participation in the Sacraments and Traditional Rites of the Missale Romanum of 1962, under the governance of the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix and the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter.



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Notitiæ March 26, 2017

Sunday Masses	
Propers: Readings:	Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday in Lent), Class I, Rose <i>Galatians 4: 22-31; St. John 6: 1-15</i>
Intentions:	7:00 am Low Mass; 9:00 am Low Mass; 11:00 am High Mass 7:00 am: Pro Populo; 9:00 am: Teresa Sevun +; 11:00 am: Edward Slinsky +

Weekday Masses	
Monday: 6:30 am; Tuesday and Thursday: 6:30 am and 12:00 pm; Wednesday and Friday: 6:30 am and 6:30 pm; Saturday: 6:30 am and 8:00 am	
Monday, March 27	Thursday, March 30
Propers: Monday of the Fourth Week in Lent Class III, Violet Readings: <i>3 Kings 3: 16-28</i> <i>St. John 2: 13-25</i> Intentions: 6:30am: Barbara K. Nelson + No Evening Mass on Monday.	Propers: Thursday of the Fourth Week in Lent Class III, Violet Readings: <i>4 Kings 4: 25-38</i> <i>St. Luke 7: 11-16</i> Intentions: 6:30am: Elena Elise Gefer 12:00pm: Poor Souls in Purgatory +
Tuesday, March 28	Friday, March 31
Propers: Tuesday of the Fourth Week in Lent Class III, Violet Readings: <i>Exodus 32: 7-14</i> <i>St. John 7: 14-31</i> Intentions: 6:30am: Dominick Jendrisak + 12:00pm: Maceo Brown	Propers: Friday of the Fourth Week in Lent Class III, Violet Readings: <i>3 Kings 17: 17-24</i> <i>St. John 11: 1-45</i> Intentions: 6:30am: Norma Nydia Altumirano 6:30pm: Terry Williams +
Wednesday, March 29	Saturday, April 1
Propers: Wednesday of the Fourth Week in Lent Class III, Violet Readings: <i>Ezechiel 36: 23-28; Isaias 1: 16-19</i> <i>St. John 9: 1-38</i> Intentions: 6:30am: Dominick Jendrisak + 6:30pm: Elizabeth Chonka +	Propers: Saturday of the Fourth Week in Lent Class III, Violet Readings: <i>Isaias 49: 8-15</i> <i>St. John 8: 12-20</i> Intentions: 6:30am: Poor Souls in Purgatory + 8:00am: Jodi Wicker

Confessions

Monday-Saturday: 30 minutes before each Mass. **Other times by arrangement.**
Sundays: Before the 7am Mass, between the 7am, 9am, and 11am Masses, and after the 11am Mass.

SUNDAY COLLECT

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds justly deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved. Through our Lord.

SUNDAY EPISTLE: Galatians 4: 22-31

Brethren: It is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman and the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh: but he of the free woman was by promise: which things are said by an allegory. For these are the two testaments. The one from Mount Sina, engendering unto bondage: which is Agar: for Sina is a mountain in Arabia, which hath affinity to that Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother. For it is written: Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born according to the flesh persecuted him that was after the spirit: so also it is now. But what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

SUNDAY GOSPEL: St. John 6: 1-15

At that time Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias: and a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain: and there He sat with His disciples. Now the pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this He said to try him: for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him: Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him: There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two what fishes: but what are these among so many? Then Jesus said: Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were set down: in like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above to them that had eaten. Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him king, fled again into the mountain, Himself alone.



PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

❖ **Lenten Mission, 2017:** We express our gratitude to Fr. John Rickert, FSSP, for delivering the edifying talks of recollection this past week. Thanks to those of you who attended this past Wednesday and Friday.

❖ **Fridays in Lent:** We will have Stations of the Cross at 6:00pm, prior to the 6:30pm evening Mass on March 31 and April 7. Please plan on attending.

❖ **CCD Classes Today:** Religious education classes continue today between the 9am and 11am Masses.

Please Note Well: Between the 9am and 11am Masses, we acknowledge the need for complete quiet while the children are learning their lessons. You may enjoy coffee and donuts in the courtyard. Please enter and exit the courtyard via the front gate outside.

❖ **Lenten Water Drive:** The Knights of Columbus are collecting cases of water bottles to donate to a local food bank. Please bring your donations to church and place them in the outside breezeway.

❖ **K of C Charity Raffle:** The Knights have begun selling tickets for their annual charity raffle, which will be held on May 20. All proceeds from the raffle will be given to charity. Half of each ticket sold directly benefits our parish, and the other half benefits the State Council's charities.

❖ **No First Saturday Breakfast:** There will be no first Saturday breakfast in April.

❖ **Meals for New Mothers:** We are re-establishing a Mater Misericordiae Mission email list for the purpose of preparing and delivering meals for mothers who have newly-delivered babies. Those interested in helping provide meals for moms with newborn babies, please email Elisabeth Moore at lissieraemoore@gmail.com or text/call at 530-356-2960.

❖ **Pilgrim Statue:** Our Lady of Fatima pilgrim statue is available for families to take home on a weekly basis. If you would like to reserve a date to take her please contact Laura at 313.590.4940 or via email lauraghurtubise@yahoo.com.

Pray for Our Parish Vocations

Please pray for our young men: Fr. Caleb Insko, FSSP, and seminarians Martin Garcia, Rick Wallace, Elijah Mundattuchundayil, and Andrew Miller.

Pray also for Sr. Mary Thomas O.Praem of the California Norbertines.

Pray also for those who are still discerning their vocation.

FSSP PRAYER REQUESTS

March 26: Fr. Chris Hathaway
March 27: Fr. Robert Fromageot
March 28: Fr. Simon Harkins
March 29: Fr. Joseph Hearty
March 30: Fr. James Gordon
March 31: Fr. Daniel Heenan
April 1: Pope Francis



❖ **During Lent,** the organ is played only to accompany singing, except on the fourth (Laetare) Sunday, feasts, and at Benediction.

❖ 9:00AM Low Mass Today:

*828 Lord, Who throughout These Forty Days
639 Prayers at the Foot of the Altar
120 Introit, Collect, Epistle, etc.
648 Creed
123 Offertory
*837 O Sacred Head, Surrounded
650 Suscipe, etc.
686 Preface
657 Sanctus, Canon, etc.
124 Communion and Postcommunion
680 Dismissal, etc.
*951 Ave Regina caelorum

❖ 11:00AM High Mass Today:

*831 The Glory of These Forty Days
*0 Asperges
120 Introit
*762 (bottom) Kyrie
120 Collect, Epistle, etc.
*780 Creed
123 Offertory
*971 Lauda, Jerusalem
686 Preface
*763 Sanctus
603 Consecration, etc.
*763 Agnus Dei
617 Prayers before Communion
124 Communion and Postcommunion
*764 Dismissal
621 Blessing and Last Gospel
*951 Ave Regina caelorum

THE CHURCH IN CRISIS: A History of the General Councils: 325-1870

INTRODUCTION - ON THE COUNCILS AND GENERAL COUNCILS

The history of the General Councils of the Church is a fascinating subject, and to those unfamiliar with the history of the Church a subject which bristles with difficulties of all kinds. This, I think, ought to be understood from the beginning. Some of the problems raised by this or that particular council will be considered in the chapter devoted to it. About difficulties general to the subject I would like to say something in this

Introduction.

It is hardly possible to write the history of these twenty General Councils as though they were sections hewn from the one same log. They are not a unity in the sense in which successive sessions of Congress are a unity. Each of the twenty councils is an individual reality, each has its own special personality. This is partly due to the fact that each had its origin in a particular crisis of Church affairs, partly to the fact that they are strung out over fifteen hundred years of history, and that, for example, the human beings who constitute the council can be as remote from each other as the

victims of the persecution of Diocletian in the fourth century from the victims of Bismarck in the nineteenth. It is not through any mechanical, material similarity of action, then, that the history of such an institution, and its significance, can be understood. Where the total action is spread over such vast spaces of time, and is discontinuous, whoever attempts to relate the whole of the action is faced with problems of a very special kind. And this speciality is, of course, bound up with the fact that the body which threw up this device called the General Council--the Church of Christ-- is itself unique in this, viz., its possession of a recorded, continuous activity of nearly two thousand years.

Some, perhaps superficial, consideration of this vast timetable, 325-1870, may be helpful at the outset, even to the reader who is not, by nature, chronologically minded. Reading the list of the General Councils we can see immediately two obvious groupings: the first eight were all held in eastern Europe or in Asia Minor; all the rest in western Europe, in Italy, France, and Germany. The eastern councils were Greek-speaking, the others Latin. General Councils are frequent in some ages, and in others the centuries go by without a single one. Thus, for the seventy years 381-451 there are three General Councils, then one every hundred years down to 869. For 254 years there is now not a single General Council; then, in 190 years there are seven (1123-1311). Another century goes by without a council, and in the next hundred years (1414-1512) three are summoned. The Council of Trent is called less than thirty years after the last of these three, and then 306 years go by before the twentieth council meets in 1869 ninety-two years ago nearly.

Each of these councils has a history and a character all its own. The history of the next council--how matters will go once the bishops meet--can never be foretold from the history of the last. The powers and the authority of the new council are, it is recognised, the same as its predecessors possessed. The procedure may, and will, vary. One thing is never constant: the human reaction of the council's component parts.

The first General Council met in 325. The Church had then been an established fact for nearly three hundred years. How did councils begin-- i.e., meetings of bishops to discuss matters of common interest? When and where did the first church councils take place? And what about the beginnings of the "prestige" of these councils? That is, of the idea that what bishops collectively agree is law has a binding force that is greater than any of their individual instructions to their own see.

To begin with the last point, it is a safe statement that from the moment when history first shows us the Church of Christ as an institution, the exclusive right of the Church to state with finality what should be believed as Christ's teaching is manifestly taken for granted. To bring out a theory of belief, or to propose a change in morals which conflicts with what the Church universally holds is, from the very beginning, to put oneself fatally in the wrong. The immediate, spontaneous reaction of the Church to condemn thinkers with new and original views of this kind is perhaps the most general, as it is the most striking, of all the phenomena of the Church's early history, so far back as the record goes.[1]