

ST BASIL GREEK MELKITE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
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## EARLY CHURCH

ON THE SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION, our Church remembers the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council which met at Nicaea in AD 325. It was convoked by the first Christian Roman emperor, St Constantine the Great, in response to an appeal by a synod of Spanish bishops. Its principal task was to promote the unity of the Churches in the Empire by insuring that all the Churches believed the same faith and observed the same practices.

**Before the Council of Nicaea:** We might ask, “Why did it take three centuries for the Church to address these issues?” In fact, it was only in the fourth century that Christians received toleration and then recognition as an “institution” in the Roman Empire. Prior to the time of St Constantine, matters of concern to the Churches were addressed locally. When issues arose which affected more than one local Church, they were dealt with by Church leaders coming together in council.

The first such gatherings are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The first issue addressed by the disciples after Christ’s ascension was the defection of Judas (Acts 1:15-26). The Church at that time was simply the community of believers in Jerusalem around the Apostles and it was this community which nominated two men to replace Judas. “*Then they prayed, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.’*”

“*Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles*” (Acts 1:24-26). As the Church grew and spread beyond Palestine to places like Cyprus and Asia Minor, it was forced to address a potentially divisive issue – through a council of the Apostles and elders (Acts 15:1-31). Some Jewish Christians were opposed to the practice at Antioch where converts were not obliged to be circumcised or to follow Jewish dietary rules. The council decided to affirm this practice and informed “*the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia*” (Acts 15:23) of their support by letter.

From the middle of the second century regional councils became common, particularly in Christian centers such as Italy and Asia Minor. These councils addressed suspect teachings (such as Montanism) and conflicting practices (such as observing Pascha on a fixed date) which were felt to affect the unity of the Churches. Regional councils often established common policies on questions such as penances for returning apostates or rules for clerical marriages. While these policies directly affected the participating local Churches, they were communicated to Churches in other regions which often adopted them as well.

**The Ecumene:** St. Constantine’s council brought together bishops from throughout the Roman Empire (the “Ecumene”) and hence was called an Ecumenical Council. Its decisions were given the force of law throughout the empire. Representatives from the Kingdom of Greater Armenia (a Roman vassal state) and from the Persian Church attended also. Since the Roman and Persian Empires had been rivals for centuries, it was only in AD 410 that the Persian Church (the Church of the East) formally adopted the creed and canons of the First Council of Nicaea. Our liturgy speaks of the Council Fathers as 318 in all. This number actually refers to the 318 trained men of Abram’s household who fought the kings of Sodom and Gemmorah (Gen 14:14). The Council Fathers were seen as the “trained men” of the Church.

**Arianism and the Creed:** The Spanish bishops who had proposed the council were struggling against Arianism, a view that Christ was like the Father, but was not of the same essence. Arians believed Him to be the first of God’s creatures. This doctrine had been articulated by an Alexandrian teacher named Arius and opposed by another teacher, St Athanasios of Alexandria, who pointed out the fallacy of Arius’ teaching: “If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not.” The council examined several creeds used in local Churches then prepared its own, reflecting an anti-Arian Christology. Although this creed was widely accepted, Arianism persisted, particularly in the West, for some time. (*JuneLeaflets2019*)

### WEEKLY SERVICES

**Daily Liturgy:** Monday-Friday at 8:30AM      **Holy Confession:** Every Monday at 4-6PM  
**Holy Liturgy:** Saturday at 4:30PM, Sunday at 11:00AM      **Vespers:** Every Saturday at 3:00PM  
**Matins/Orthos:** Every Sunday at 9:00AM      **Holy Rosary:** Every Sunday at 10:30AM

### SPEEDY RECOVERY

Please continue to pray for our convalescing friends, including Rt. Rev. Edward Kakaty, Archdeacon George Yanni, Jordan Barahmeh, Michael Klockowski, Lawrence Bleiberg, Maggy Attalah, Nancy Gazzal, Rose Pawlinga, and Jean Benoit. Please notify Fr. Shofany in case of illness.

### WEEKLY OFFERINGS: THANK YOU!

Weekly Collection May 25/26: \$ 261.00      Cheese Sale: \$30. 00  
Memorial Offering: \$ 65.00      PayPal- Donation: 193.90

† MEMORIAL MASSES †

### THIS SATURDAY, JUNE 1

† **Rose Mary Trevisani**, By Robert Lalli

### THIS SUNDAY, JUNE 2

† **William Chanatry**, 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his birth, By Robert Lalli

### NEXT SATURDAY, JUNE 8

† **William Chanatry**, By Regina Taylor  
† **James Edward Astour**, 54<sup>th</sup> Memorial Anniversary, By the Astour Family  
† **Andrew Astour**, 17<sup>th</sup> Memorial Anniversary, By the Astour Family  
† **Agnes Astour**, 9<sup>th</sup> Memorial Anniversary, By the Astour Family

### NEXT SUNDAY, JUNE 9

† **William Chanatry**, By Louis & Julie Shkane

### \* ANNOUNCEMENT \*

The next Parish Pastoral Council meeting will be held on Mon June 3, 6:30 PM, Rectory Meeting Rm