

## **Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris* (616 – 622)**

The policies in this section are based on those laws set out in the Code of Canon Law (CIC) and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) that relate to the determination of membership for Christ's faithful in a particular ritual Church (Appendix 619A).

At one time, a Church *sui iuris* was referred to as a rite. With the promulgation of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, it is necessary to distinguish between these two terms.

A rite represents the entire tradition of a group of Christian people, including its liturgy, its laws and customs, its theological heritage and its spirituality. There are six rites: Roman, Byzantine, Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, and Chaldean.

A Church *sui iuris* is a juridically distinct community of the faithful with its own hierarchy, which may share its rite with others. The Byzantine rite, for example, is common to fourteen churches *sui iuris*.

The Roman Catholic Church consists of 23 distinct Churches *sui iuris*: the Latin Church, and 22 Eastern Catholic Churches. The 22 Eastern Catholic Churches are:

- the Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Church which observe the Alexandrian rite
- the Syro-Malankara, Maronite, and Syrian Churches which observe the Antiochene rite
- the Albanian, Belarussian, Bulgarian, Greek, Hungarian, Italo-Albanian, Krinevci, Macedonian, Melkite, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Slovak, and Ukrainian Churches that follow the Byzantine rite
- the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Churches that follow the Chaldean rite
- the Armenian Church that follows the Armenian rite

Membership in (also known as *ascription to*) a Church *sui iuris* is determined by baptism, by a formal transfer of rite, or by reception into full communion.

The custom of receiving sacraments according to the rite of another Church *sui iuris* does not cause membership in that Church (CIC c.112, §2). For example, many Eastern Catholics practice their faith in a Latin Catholic parish. This practice does not cause a change in their ascription to their own Eastern Church. This fact has important consequences:

- In the case of confirmation, Eastern Catholics may have been chrismated (confirmed) as infants at the time of their baptism and are not to be confirmed again.
- In the case of marriage, an Eastern Catholic who enters marriage with someone other than another Eastern Catholic may marry validly in a Latin Catholic parish with a Latin Catholic priest acting as official witness only when delegation has been given from the Eastern hierarch.