

# Catholic particular churches and liturgical rites

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A **particular church** (Latin: *ecclesia particularis*) is an ecclesiastical community of faithful headed by a bishop (or equivalent), as defined by Catholic canon law and ecclesiology. A **liturgical rite** depends on the particular church the bishop (or equivalent) belongs to. Thus "particular church" refers to an institution, and "liturgical rite" to its practices.

Particular churches exist in two kinds:

1. An **autonomous particular church *sui iuris***: an aggregation of particular churches with distinct liturgical, spiritual, theological and canonical traditions.<sup>[1]</sup> The largest such autonomous particular church is the Latin Church. The other 23 Eastern Catholic Churches are headed by bishops, some of which are titled Patriarch or Major Archbishop. In this context the descriptors *autonomous* (Greek: αὐτόνομος, romanized: *autónomos*) and *sui iuris* (Latin) are synonymous, meaning "of its own law".
2. A **local particular church**: a diocese (or eparchy) headed by a bishop (or equivalent), typically collected in a national polity under an episcopal conference. However, there are also other forms, including apostolic vicariates, apostolic prefectures, military ordinariates, personal ordinariates, personal prelatures, and territorial abbaies.<sup>[2]</sup>

Liturgical rites also exist in two kinds:

1. **Liturgical rite**: a liturgical rite depending on the tradition of an autonomous particular church *sui iuris*
2. Catholic order liturgical rite: a variant of a liturgical rite exceptionately depending on a specific religious order

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## Churches

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### List of churches sui iuris

	Name	Est.	Rite	Seat	Polity	Jurisdictions	Bishops	Members
	<u>Latin Church</u>	1st c.	<u>Latin</u>	Archbasilica of Saint John Lateran, Rome, Italy	<u>Patriarchate</u>			1,295,000,000
	<u>Coptic Catholic Church</u>	1741	<u>Alexandrian</u>	Cathedral of Our Lady, Cairo, Egypt	<u>Patriarchate</u>	8	13	187,320
	<u>Eritrean Catholic Church</u> <sup>[3]</sup>	2015		Kidane Mehret Cathedral, Asmara, Eritrea	<u>Metropolitanate</u>	4	4	167,722
	<u>Ethiopian Catholic Church</u>	1846		Cathedral of the Holy Saviour, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	<u>Metropolitanate</u>	4	4	70,832
	<u>Armenian Catholic Church</u>	1742	<u>Armenian</u>	Cathedral of Saint Elias and Saint Gregory, Beirut, Lebanon	<u>Patriarchate</u>	18	16	757,726
	<u>Albanian Greek Catholic Church</u>	1628	<u>Byzantine</u>	Pro-Cathedral of Saint Mary and Saint Louis, Vlora, Albania	<u>Apostolic administration</u>	1	2	4,028 <sup>[4]</sup>
	<u>Belarusian Greek Catholic Church</u>	1596		<i>none</i>	<i>none</i> <sup>[note 1]</sup>	0	0	9,000 <sup>[5]</sup>
	<u>Bulgarian Greek Catholic Church</u>	1861		Cathedral of the Dormition, Sofia, Bulgaria	<u>Apostolic exarchate</u>	1	1	10,000
	<u>Greek Catholic Church of Croatia and Serbia</u> <sup>[6]</sup> (p1140)	1611		<i>several</i> <sup>[note 2]</sup>	<i>no unified structure</i> <sup>[note 2]</sup>	2	2	42,965
	<u>Greek Byzantine Catholic Church</u>	1911		<i>several</i> <sup>[note 3]</sup>	<i>no unified structure</i> <sup>[note 3]</sup>	2	2	6,016
	<u>Hungarian Greek Catholic Church</u>	1912		Cathedral of Hajdúdorog, Debrecen, Hungary	<u>Metropolitanate</u>	3	4	262,484
	<u>Italo-Albanian Catholic Church</u>	1784		<i>several</i> <sup>[note 4]</sup>	<i>no unified structure</i> <sup>[note 4]</sup>	3	2	55,812
	<u>Macedonian Greek Catholic Church</u>	2001		Cathedral of the Assumption, Strumica, North Macedonia	<u>Eparchy</u>	1	1 <sup>[note 5]</sup>	11,374
	<u>Melkite Greek Catholic Church</u>	1726		Cathedral of the Dormition, Damascus, Syria	<u>Patriarchate</u>	29	35	1,568,239

	<b>Romanian Greek Catholic Church</b>	1697		Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Blaj, Romania	Major archiepiscopate	7	8	498,658
	<b>Russian Greek Catholic Church</b>	1905		<i>none</i> <sup>[note 6]</sup>	<i>none</i> <sup>[note 6]</sup>	2	0	3,200
	<b>Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church</b>	1646		Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist, Pittsburgh, United States	Metropolitanate <sup>[note 7]</sup>	6	8	417,795
	<b>Slovak Greek Catholic Church</b>	1646		Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist, Prešov, Slovakia	Metropolitanate	4	6	211,208
	<b>Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church</b>	1595		Cathedral of the Resurrection, Kiev, Ukraine	Major archiepiscopate	35	50	4,471,688
	<b>Chaldean Catholic Church</b>	1552	East Syriac	Cathedral of Our Lady of Sorrows, Baghdad, Iraq	Patriarchate	23	23	628,405
	<b>Syro-Malabar Catholic Church</b>	1663		Cathedral of Our Lady, Ernakulam, Kerala, India	Major archiepiscopate	35	63	4,251,399
	<b>Maronite Church</b>	4th c.	West Syriac	Church of Bkerke, Bkerke, Lebanon	Patriarchate	29	50	3,498,707
	<b>Syriac Catholic Church</b>	1781		Syriac Catholic cathedral, Damascus, Syria	Patriarchate	16	20	195,765
	<b>Syro-Malankara Catholic Church</b>	1930		Cathedral of Saint Mary, Pattom, Kerala, India	Major archiepiscopate	12	14	458,015
	Other		<i>various</i> <sup>[note 8]</sup>	<i>several</i> <sup>[note 9]</sup>	<u>Ordinariates</u>	6	6 <sup>[note 10]</sup>	47,830
<b>Total</b>						<b>2,851</b> <sup>[note 11]</sup>	<b>5,304</b>	<b>1.313 billion</b>

## Ecclesiology

In Catholic ecclesiology, a church is an assembly of the faithful, hierarchically ordered, both in the entire world (the Catholic Church), or in a certain territory (a particular church). To be a sacrament (a sign) of the Mystical Body of Christ in the world, a church must have both a head and members (Col. 1:18).<sup>[7]</sup> The sacramental sign of Christ the head is the sacred hierarchy – the bishops, priests and deacons.<sup>[8][9]</sup> More specifically, it is the local bishop, with his priests and deacons gathered around and assisting him in his office of teaching, sanctifying and governing (Mt. 28:19–20; Titus 1:4–9). Thus, the church is fully present sacramentally (by way of a sign) wherever there is a sign of Christ the head, a bishop and those who assist him, and a sign of Christ's body, Christian faithful.<sup>[10]</sup> Each diocese is therefore considered a particular church.<sup>[11]</sup> On the worldwide level, the sign of Christ the head is the Pope, and, to be Catholic, particular churches, whether local churches or autonomous ritual churches, must be in communion with this sign of Christ the head,<sup>[12]</sup> Through this full communion with Saint Peter and his successors the church becomes a universal sacrament of salvation to the end of the age (Mt. 28:20).<sup>[11]</sup>

The word "church" is applied to the Catholic Church as a whole, which is seen as a single church: the multitude of peoples and cultures within the church, and the great diversity of gifts, offices, conditions and ways of life of its members, are not opposed to the church's unity.<sup>[13]</sup> In this sense of "church", the list of churches in the Catholic Church has only one member, the Catholic Church itself (comprising Roman and Eastern Churches).

Within the Catholic Church there are local particular churches, of which dioceses are the most familiar form. Other forms include territorial abbeys, apostolic vicariates and apostolic prefectures. The Code of Canon Law states: "Particular Churches, in which and from which the one and only Catholic Church exists, are principally dioceses. Unless the contrary is clear, the following are equivalent to a diocese: a territorial prelate, a territorial abbacy, a vicariate apostolic, a prefecture apostolic and a permanently established apostolic administration."<sup>[14]</sup> A list of Catholic dioceses, of which on 31 December 2011 there were 2,834,<sup>[15]</sup> is given at List of Catholic dioceses (alphabetical).

Within the Catholic Church there are also aggregations of local particular churches that share a specific liturgical, theological, spiritual, and canonical heritage, distinguished from other heritages on the basis of cultural and historical circumstances. These are known as autonomous ("*sui iuris*") churches. The 1990 Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches defines such a church as follows: "A group of Christ's faithful hierarchically linked in accordance with law and given express or tacit recognition by the supreme authority of the Church is in this Code called an autonomous Church."<sup>[16]</sup> There are 24 such autonomous Catholic churches: One Latin Church (i.e., *Western*) and 23 Eastern Catholic Churches", a distinction by now more historical than geographical. Although each of them has its own specific heritage, they are all in full communion with the Pope in Rome.

Unlike "families" or "federations" of churches formed through the grant of mutual recognition by distinct ecclesial bodies,<sup>[17]</sup> the Catholic Church considers itself a single church ("full communion, "one Body") composed of a multitude of particular churches, each of which, as stated, is an embodiment of the fullness of the one Catholic Church. For the particular churches within the Catholic Church, whether autonomous ritual churches (e.g., Coptic Catholic Church, Melkite Catholic Church, Armenian Catholic Church, etc.) or dioceses (e.g., Archdiocese of Birmingham, Archdiocese of Chicago, etc.), are seen as not simply branches, divisions or sections of a larger body. Theologically, each is considered to be the embodiment in a particular place or for a particular community of the one, whole Catholic Church. "It is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists."<sup>[18][19]</sup>

## Particular churches *sui iuris*

There are 24 autonomous churches: one Latin Church and twenty-three Eastern Catholic Churches, a distinction by now more historical than geographical. The term *sui iuris* means, literally, "of its own law", or self-governing. Although all of the particular churches espouse the same beliefs and faith, their distinction lies in their varied expression of that faith through their traditions, disciplines, and canon law. All are in communion with the Holy See.

For this kind of particular church, the 1983 Code of Canon Law uses the unambiguous phrase "autonomous ritual Church" (Latin: *Ecclesia ritualis sui iuris*). The 1990 Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, which is concerned principally with what the Second Vatican Council called "particular Churches or rites", shortened this to "autonomous Church" (Latin: *Ecclesia sui iuris*).<sup>[20]</sup>

## Local particular churches

In Catholic teaching, each diocese (Latin Church term) or eparchy (Eastern term) is also a local or particular church, though it lacks the autonomy of the autonomous churches described above:

A diocese is a section of the People of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the assistance of his clergy so that, loyal to its pastor and formed by him into one community in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes one particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active.<sup>[21]</sup>

The 1983 Code of Canon Law, which is concerned with the Latin Church alone and so with only one *autonomous* particular church, uses the term "particular Church" only in the sense of "local Church", as in its Canon 373:

It is within the competence of the supreme authority alone to establish particular Churches; once they are lawfully established, the law itself gives them juridical personality.<sup>[22]</sup>

The standard form of these local or particular churches, each of which is headed by a bishop, is called a diocese in the Latin Church and an eparchy in the Eastern churches. At the end of 2011, the total number of all these jurisdictional areas (or "sees") was 2,834.<sup>[23]</sup>

### **Local particular church of Rome**

The Holy See, the Diocese of Rome, is seen as the central local church. The bishop, the Pope, is considered to be, in a unique sense, the successor of Saint Peter, the chief (or "prince") of the apostles. Quoting the Second Vatican Council's document Lumen gentium, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, 'is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.'"<sup>[24]</sup>

All the Catholic particular churches, whether Latin or Eastern, local or autonomous—are by definition in full communion with the Holy See of Rome.

## **Rites**

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The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches defines "rite" as follows: "Rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary heritage, distinguished according to peoples' culture and historical circumstances, that finds expression in each autonomous church's way of living the faith."<sup>[25]</sup>

As thus defined, "rite" concerns not only a people's liturgy (manner of worship), but also its theology (understanding of doctrine), spirituality (prayer and devotion), and discipline (canon law).

In this sense of the word "rite", the list of rites within the Catholic Church is identical with that of the autonomous churches, each of which has its own heritage, which distinguishes that church from others, and membership of a church involves participation in its liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary heritage. However, "church" refers to the people, and "rite" to their heritage.<sup>[26]</sup>

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches states that the rites with which it is concerned (but which it does not list) spring from the following five traditions: Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, Chaldean, and Constantinopolitan.<sup>[27]</sup> Since it covers only Eastern Catholic churches and rites, it does not mention those of Western (Latin) tradition.

The word "rite" is sometimes used with reference only to liturgy, ignoring the theological, spiritual and disciplinary elements in the heritage of the churches. In this sense, "rite" has been defined as "the whole complex of the (liturgical) services of any Church or group of Churches".<sup>[28]</sup>

Between "rites" in this exclusively liturgical sense and the autonomous churches there is no strict correspondence, such as there is when "rite" is understood as in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. The 14 autonomous churches of Byzantine tradition have a single liturgical rite, but vary mainly in liturgical language, while on the contrary the single Latin Church has several distinct liturgical rites, whose universal main form, the Roman Rite, is practised in Latin or in the local vernacular).

### **Latin (Western) rites**

## Extant

- Roman Rite
  - Ordinary Form (1969 revision)
  - Glagolitic Rite
  - Extraordinary Form (According to the 1962 Roman Missal)
  - Personal Ordinariates (celebrate Divine Worship, a liturgy adapted from Anglican tradition)
  - Zaire Use
- Gallican Rites
  - Ambrosian Rite (in Milan, Italy, and neighbouring areas)
  - Braga Rite
  - Hispanic Rite (in Toledo and Salamanca, Spain)
  - Lyonese Rite (in Lyon, France, maintained in a few parishes)
- Catholic order liturgical rites
  - Benedictine Rite
  - Carmelite Rite (only by some communities or members of the order)
  - Carthusian Rite (a Western rite of the Gallican family)
  - Cistercian Rite
  - Dominican Rite (only by some communities or members of the order)
  - Premonstratensian (Norbertine) Rite
  - Rites in a broad sense (not distinct from the Roman Rite)
    - Capuchin Rite
    - Franciscan Rite
    - Servite Rite

## Defunct

- Pre-Tridentine Mass (the various pre-1570 ordinary forms of the Roman Rite)
- Gallican Rite ('Gaul', i.e. France)
- Celtic Rite (British Isles)
- African Rite
- Aquileian Rite (northeastern Italy)
- Durham Rite (Durham, England)
- Sarum Rite (England)
- Use of York (England)
- Cologne Use (Cologne, Germany)
- The Esztergom Use
- Benevente and Sizilian Use

## Eastern rites

### Extant

- Byzantine Rite<sup>[note 12]</sup>
- Antiochene family
  - Maronite Rite
  - West Syriac Rite
  - Syro-Malankara Rite
- East Syriac or Chaldean tradition
  - Chaldean Rite
  - Syro-Malabar Rite
- Armenian Rite
- Alexandrian Rite
  - Coptic Rite
  - Ge'ez Rite

## See also

- Catholic Church by country
- Index of Catholic Church articles

- [List of Catholic dioceses \(structured view\)](#)

## References

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### Notes

1. The Belarusian Greek Catholic Church is unorganized and has been served by [Apostolic Visitors](#) since 1960.
2. The Byzantine Catholic Church of Croatia and Serbia comprises two jurisdictions: [Greek Catholic Eparchy of Križevci](#) covering [Croatia](#), [Slovenia](#), and [Bosnia-Herzegovina](#), and [Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Ruski Krstur](#) covering [Serbia](#). The Eparchy of Križevci is in foreign province, and the Eparchy of Ruski Krstur is immediately subject to the Holy See.
3. The Greek Byzantine Catholic Church comprises two independent [apostolic exarchates](#) covering [Greece](#) and [Turkey](#) respectively, each immediately subject to the Holy See.
4. The Italo-Albanian Greek Catholic Church comprises two independent eparchies (based in [Lungro](#) and [Piana degli Albanesi](#)) and one [territorial abbacy](#) (based in [Grottaferrata](#)), each immediately subject to the Holy See.
5. [Kiro Stojanov](#) serves as bishop of the Macedonian Eparchy of the Assumption in addition to his primary duties as the Latin-rite bishop of Skopje, and so GCatholic only counts him as a Latin Rite bishop.
6. The Russian Greek Catholic Church comprises two [apostolic exarchates](#) (one for [Russia](#) and one for [China](#)), each immediately subject to the Holy See and each vacant for decades. Bishop [Joseph Werth](#) of [Novosibirsk](#) has been appointed by the Holy See as ordinary to the Eastern Catholic faithful in Russia, although not as exarch of the dormant apostolic exarchate and without the creation of a formal ordinariate.
7. The Ruthenian Catholic Church does not have a unified structure. It includes a Metropolia based in Pittsburgh, which covers the entire United States, but also an eparchy in Ukraine and an apostolic exarchate in the Czech Republic, both of which are directly subject to the Holy See.
8. Five of the ordinariates for Eastern Catholic faithful are multi-ritual, encompassing the faithful of all Eastern Catholic rites within their territory not otherwise subject to a local ordinary of their own rite. The [sixth](#) is exclusively Byzantine, but covers all Byzantine Catholics in Austria, no matter which particular Byzantine Church they belong to.
9. The six ordinariates are based in Buenos Aires (Argentina), Vienna (Austria), Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Paris (France), Warsaw (Poland), and Madrid (Spain).
10. Technically, each of these ordinariates has an ordinary who is a bishop, but all of the bishops are Latin-rite bishops whose primary assignment is to a Latin see.
11. more 640 [Archdioceses](#)
12. This rite, though used by 14 Eastern [particular churches](#) has preserved, apart from the diversity of [languages](#) used, its uniformity and remained a single liturgical rite, though there is a Slavonic Use among Ukrainian and other Slavic churches.

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2. Particular Churches, in which and from which the one and only Catholic Church exists, are principally dioceses. Unless the contrary is clear, the following are equivalent to a diocese: a territorial prelature, a territorial abbacy, a vicariate apostolic, a prefecture apostolic and a permanently established apostolic administration. (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 368 ([http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/\\_P1B.HTM#N](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/_P1B.HTM#N)))
3. "Erezione della Chiesa Metropolitana sui iuris eritrea e nomina del primo Metropolita" (<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/de/bollettino/pubblico/2015/01/19/0048/00098.html>). Holy See Press Office. January 19, 2015. Retrieved January 19, 2015.
4. "Apostolic Administration of Southern Albania, Albania (Albanese Rite)" (<http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/diocese/salb0.htm>). *gcatholic.org*. Retrieved 2019-07-09.
5. "Belarussian Church (Catholic)" (<http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/rite-BI.htm>). *gcatholic.org*. Retrieved 2019-07-09.
6. Catholic Church (2012). *Annuario Pontificio*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. ISBN 978-88-209-8722-0.
7. "Catholic Culture Church Definition" (<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=32533>). *CatholicCulture.org*. Retrieved 2011-02-14.
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11. "CATHOLIC RITES AND CHURCHES" ([http://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/catholic\\_rites\\_and\\_churches.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/catholic_rites_and_churches.htm)). *EWTN*. Retrieved 2011-02-14.
12. "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church understood as communion" ([http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_28051992\\_communioni\\_s-notio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communioni_s-notio_en.html)). *Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger*. Retrieved 2011-02-14.
13. "Catechism of the Catholic Church, 814" ([http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P29.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P29.HTM)). Vatican.va. 1975-12-14. Retrieved 2018-04-18.
14. "Code of Canon Law, canon 368" ([http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/\\_P1B.HTM#N](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/_P1B.HTM#N)). Intratext.com. 2007-05-04. Retrieved 2018-04-18.
15. Vatican, *Annuario Pontificio* 2012, p. 1142.
16. "Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, canon 27" ([http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_19901018\\_codex-can-eccl-orient-1\\_lt.html#TITULUS\\_II](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19901018_codex-can-eccl-orient-1_lt.html#TITULUS_II)). Vatican.va. Retrieved 2018-04-18.
17. Also unlike the situation of those countries within the Commonwealth that consider the British monarch to be their head of state, but are nonetheless fully independent and quite distinct states, not just one state.
18. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Decree on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 23 ([http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html))
19. "The particular Churches, insofar as they are 'part of the one Church of Christ' (Second Vatican Council: Decree *Christus Dominus*, 6/c), have a special relationship of mutual interiority with the whole, that is, with the universal Church, because in every particular Church 'the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active' (Second Vatican Council: Decree *Christus Dominus*, 11/a). For this reason, the universal Church cannot be conceived as the sum of the particular Churches, or as a federation of particular Churches. It is not the result of the communion of the Churches, but, in its essential mystery, it is a reality ontologically and temporally prior to every individual particular Church" (*Communio notio*, 9 ([http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_28051992\\_communio-notio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communio-notio_en.html))).
20. Canon 27, quote: "A group of Christ's faithful hierarchically linked in accordance with law and given express or tacit recognition by the supreme authority of the Church is in this Code called an autonomous Church."
21. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 11 ([http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_christus-dominus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html))
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24. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 882 (<http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/pt1sect2chpt3art9p4.htm#>)
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## Further reading

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Press.

## External links

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- [GigaCatholic Catholic Rites/Particular Churches \(http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/rites.htm\)](http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/rites.htm)
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