

ECCLESIOLOGY OF MYSTICAL TIME AND THE PATRIOTIC HOLY RESISTANCE



From the Catacombs of 1927 to
Apostolic Freedom in the Southern Cone



+ Basil

Archbishop of Santiago and All Chile

True Orthodox Church of the Diaspora
Diocese of Santiago and All Chile

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FOREWORD

Time is not a simple astronomical coordinate or a utilitarian resource; it is the sacred canvas where God unfolds the salvation of the human race and, tragically, the stage where the mystery of iniquity tries to disfigure the Mystical Body of Christ. As we enter the third millennium of the Christian era, the Orthodox Church is going through one of the deepest and most heartbreaking crises in its universal history. We are faced with a silent guerrilla war that does not attack with the physical weapons of pagan tyrants or totalitarian regimes, but corrodes ecclesiastical structures from within fed by the lamentable capitulations of their official pastors.

These pages spring from an imperative need, with a deep pastoral and prophetic sense: to lift the veil of institutional bureaucratic rhetoric and to examine honestly the wounds that today bleed in the fabric of our Church. Far from the accommodating complacency that prevails in patriarchal palaces and completely removed from the sterile blindness of fanaticism, this text stands as a manifesto that aims to show the situation from different angles.

Through rigorous theological analysis and sustaining a living historical memory, we address the crossroads that define Orthodox resistance in the contemporary world. We immerse ourselves in the drama of the Old Calendar, understanding it not as a mere astronomical dispute over dates, but as the active defense of mystical and liturgical time against the secularized and homogenizing clock of the modern world. We analyze with deep reverence the witness of the True Russian Church, born of the martyrdom and silence of the Soviet catacombs in the fateful year of 1927. The blood and fidelity of those confessors severely judge the current geopolitical submission of the Moscow Patriarchate to the temporary thrones of the Kremlin, as well as the ecumenical betrayal of the official seats of world Orthodoxy.

In a very special way, these reflections project their gaze towards the missionary horizon of our America, embodied in the canonical and pastoral work of the True Orthodox Church of the Diaspora (TOC-D / RTOC-MM). In an

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era where the great official ecclesiastical structures seem to have exchanged the universality of the Gospel for the delimitation of state boundaries and the petty interests of chancelleries, the existence of free altars in the diaspora – from our Metropolitan See in the United States to the archbishop's pastoralism in the southern lands of Chile – stands as an authentic miracle of apostolic freedom. It is the irrefutable demonstration that the Church of Christ does not belong to the earthly empires or to the ideological dictates of this century, but only to its Divine Founder and to the Holy Martyrs.

This writing does not intend, in any way, to light the fire of hatred or bitter division, but that of diakrisis or spiritual discernment. Our purpose is to offer an unshakable theological and canonical justification to those faithful and pastors who, having legitimately applied Canon 15 of the Holy Fathers or Decree 362 of the Holy Patriarch Martyr Tikhon, bear with dignity the stigma of being labeled as 'non-canonical' by the worldly establishment, also suffering the misunderstanding and persecution of fanatical priests who believe they have the absolute truth and who sadly only demonstrate a great ignorance and stubbornness. In reality, those who are attacked are those who guard the uncontaminated purity of Tradition.

May these pages serve as a consolation to the exiled, as a sure guide for the confused, and as an unshakable witness that, even if the great golden cathedrals capitulate to the spirit of the age, the True Church will always survive in the sacred desert of the catacombs of our hearts, where the eternal Liturgy is celebrated in Spirit and in Truth.

Where the Truth shines without compromise or duplicity, there the authentic freedom of the children of God is manifested. There, and only there, dwells the Church.

Receive the blessing of this humble servant of God's servants, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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The Ecclesiological Deviation of Contemporary Ecumenism

In order to understand the nature of the current crisis, it is indispensable to draw up a formal and systematic theological analysis that exposes the traditional arguments of the Orthodox Church in the face of the drifts of modern ecumenism – particularly embodied by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This argument does not respond to personal visions, but is strictly based on patristic ecclesiology, the Apostolic Canons and the venerable conciliar tradition of the universal Church.

Facing the Patristic Tradition and the Consensus of the Holy Fathers

The notion of the gradation of heterodoxy constitutes one of the most profound, subtle, and, unfortunately, most misunderstood ecclesiological and canonical principles in contemporary Christianity. Far from the monolithic and simplistic view that perceives the non-Orthodox universe as a homogeneous mass of absolute error, the Holy Fathers and Ecumenical Councils developed over the centuries a highly nuanced system for assessing the theological distance of groups separated from the communion of the Church.

This concept was not born of relativism or a modern spirit of compromise, but of an imperative pastoral need: that of determining with theological precision how to interact with those who are outside and how to receive canonically those who wish to return to the bosom of the Church.

The Patristic Foundation: The Canon Letter of St. Basil the Great

The foundational text that structures this vision is the First Canonical Epistle (Letter 188) of St. Basil the Great (fourth century), addressed to Bishop Amphilochus of Iconium. In this magisterial document, St. Basil classifies communities outside ecclesial communion into three descending levels of rupture:

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1. Heresies (Aireseis): Groups whose rupture with the Church is absolute, profound and dogmatic, directly affecting faith in God, the mystery of the Holy Trinity or the divine and human nature of Christ. In these cases, the deviation alters the very essence of the Gospel. Historical examples of this are the Arians, the Manichaeans, and the Gnostics. The canonical consequence for them was total alienation from the Church; Their baptism was not recognized at all, since they invoked a distorted Trinity. To be received, they had to be baptized as if they were pagans.

2. Schisms (Schismata): Separations motivated by ecclesiastical, disciplinary, liturgical or governmental reasons, but which keep intact the fundamental dogmatic doctrine of the Church. A historical example is represented by the Novatians or the Donatists. St. Basil explained that, since there was no deviation in dogma, these communities retained the external 'form' of the Church. Although charismatic fullness was gravely compromised by the rupture of unity, the Church, by *oikonomia* (pastoral condescension), could recognize the outward validity of her rites and receive them through the profession of faith and Chrismation, without repeating baptism.

3. Illegal Assemblies (Parasynagogai): Congregations constituted by insubordinate priests or bishops and their faithful, motivated exclusively by indiscipline or disputes of a personal nature (for example, a priest suspended by his bishop who decides to continue celebrating on his own). In the absence of dogmatic deviation or a mature alternative ecclesial structure, they were restored simply through sincere repentance and penance.

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The Conciliar Codification: The Council of Trullo (692)

This wise principle of gradation was formally adopted by the universal legislation of the Church in Canon XCV (95) of the Quinisext Council, known as the Council of Trullo. This synod did not invent new laws arbitrarily, but functioned as the great organizer of existing law. Through his celebrated Canon 2, he compiled centuries of scattered traditions, formally validating the 85 Apostolic Canons, the decrees of previous regional councils (such as Carthage and Laodicea), and the canonical epistles of the great Fathers.

Despite its universal scope, Trullo was composed mainly of Eastern bishops, which caused the code to reflect the ecclesiastical praxis and culture of Constantinople, clashing on several points with the customs of the See of Rome. Among the hotbeds of historical tension were the permissibility of marriage for clergy before ordination (Canon 3), the prohibition of Saturday fasting during Lent (Canon 55), and the equating of the political privileges of Constantinople with those of Rome (Canon 36).

The Three Categories of Canon XCV

Canon XCV directly addressed the problem of the readmission of dissenters. Instead of applying a uniform rule, he systematized three specific methodologies based on the sacramental theology of the source group:

- *Reception by Libel and Chrismation:* Applied to Arians, Novatians and Nestorians. Having been baptized with the correct Trinitarian formula, baptism was not repeated. They were required to deliver a libel (a signed retraction of their previous errors) and anointed with the Holy Chrism to seal their entry into visible communion.
- *Reception by Rebaptism:* Intended for Paulians, Montanists or Sabellians. His Trinitarian theology being completely corrupted, his baptism was declared null and void. They were treated like pagans, putting them through a rigorous

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process of catechesis, exorcisms, and instruction before administering baptism from scratch.

- *Reception by Written Retraction*: The special case of the Monophysites (Severians and Jacobites). Because their Trinitarian theology and sacramental structure remained impeccable, they were not baptized or anointed with chrism; it was enough for them to present their formal retraction and anathematize the leaders of their faction.

Canon XCV is the definitive monument of ecclesiastical Oikonomia: it demonstrates how the Church balances the rigidity of dogmatic truth with pastoral mercy, avoiding both blind rigorism and relativism that dilutes the faith.

The main reasons for this Council and its historical and ecclesiastical importance

1. Completing ecclesiastical legislation

Previous ecumenical councils (the Fifth in 553 and the Sixth in 680-681) had focused exclusively on resolving difficult theological debates about the nature of Christ, but had not issued laws or practical decrees (canons) to regulate the daily life of the Church. The Council of Trullo was convened specifically to address this, issuing **102 disciplinary canons**. That is why it is called "Quinisexto" (the complement of the fifth and sixth).

2. Basis of Orthodox Canon Law

For the Orthodox Church, the 102 canons approved at Trullo constitute the backbone of its canon law. These decrees regulated everything from the administration of the sacraments and the organization of bishops, to the conduct of the faithful and fasting.

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3. The consecration of the differences with Rome

The council openly exposed that the customs of the Church in East and West were separating. Constantinople used the council to explicitly condemn several traditional practices of the Church of Rome. For example:

- **The marriage of the clergy:** Trullo ratified that priests and deacons could be married before their ordination and maintain their marriages (absolute celibacy was already required in Rome). However, he determined that bishops should be celibate.
- **The Sabbath Fast:** He condemned the Roman custom of fasting on Saturdays during Lent.
- **Depictions of Christ:** Canon 82 forbade painting Christ symbolically as a lamb (common practice in the West) and mandated that he be depicted strictly in his human form, setting a key precedent for Eastern icon art.

4. The political conflict with the pope

Emperor Justinian II sent the acts of the council to Rome for signature by Pope Sergius I. The pope flatly refused because of the attacks on Western customs and because the council reaffirmed that the Patriarch of Constantinople had privileges equal to those of the Pope of Rome.

The emperor attempted to arrest the pope in order to force him to sign, but militias in Ravenna and Rome itself protected the pontiff, demonstrating the decline of Byzantium's real political power on Italian soil.

While the Church of the East regards this council as a legitimate extension of ecumenical councils, the Catholic Church of the West never fully accepted it. It was a crucial and irreversible step on the road to the Great Schism of 1054 that definitively divided Catholics and Orthodox.

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The Real Center of Gravity of Orthodox Theology of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

In the contemporary scenario, the gradation of heterodoxy is at the very core of the debate that divides official Orthodoxy (represented by the ecumenism of the Phanar) from the rigorist sectors. In the face of these two extremes, the so-called 'Ecumenism of Witness' or the 'Neopatristic Synthesis' emerges with academic and spiritual force, whose main intellectual architect was the famous orthodox theologian of the twentieth century, the protoiereus Georges Florovsky (1893–1979).

This intermediate position is situated in a prophetic balance: it denounces the relativistic diplomacy of the Phanar that compromises the Truth for worldly interests, and at the same time corrects the rigorist drift that seeks to reduce the Church to an isolated sect in a spiritual bunker.

The 4 pillars of the 'Middle Way'

This theological current is solidly based on four fundamental principles:

1. The distinction between canonical and charismatic boundaries

In his landmark 1933 essay, "The Limits of the Church," Florovsky untied the Gordian knot of ecclesiology. While the rigorist affirms that where the juridical boundaries of the Orthodox Church end, the action of the Holy Spirit ceases completely, and the Phanar maintains that the presence of Christian elements confers on heterodox communities the status of 'sister Churches' in ontological equality, the Middle Way clarifies: the sacramental (charismatic) boundaries of the Church do not necessarily coincide with its visible jurisdictional boundaries. God is not chained by Canon Law, although the Church is. The Holy Spirit can operate beyond visible borders, but that grace does not belong to communities separated in their own right, but is an irradiation of the one true Church.

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2. Dialogue understood as Martyria (Testimony), not as negotiation

For the Neopatristic Synthesis, entering into conversations with Rome or Protestantism is not a sin of treason, but an apostolic imperative. However, the purpose changes radically. A diplomatic convergence based on linguistic ambiguity is not sought to sign a superficial agreement, nor is the sterile anathema resorted to from isolation. Dialogue is called upon for a pedagogical and missionary responsibility: to offer with charity and firmness the fullness of the Truth, inviting separated Christians to return to their common patristic roots.

3. Akriveia at the Altar, Oikonomia in the Public Square

This position establishes a clear demarcation between the liturgical mystery and civil action. On the sacramental level, the strictest akriveia (rigor) applies: concelebration and joint liturgical prayer are forbidden, since communion at the altar must be the consummation of a fully shared faith, not a tool of political correctness. However, in the public square, total cooperation is encouraged: collaboration with Catholics and Protestants to defend Christian morality, combat abortion, debate bioethics and help the dispossessed is an unavoidable moral duty.

4. The reception of converts without 'magical sacramentalism'

In the face of relativism that validates everything automatically and the extremist rigorism that treats historical baptism as simple running water, the Middle Way maturely applies Canon 95 of Trullo. By receiving a convert by Chrismation, the Church exercises its sovereign power to validate and fill with ontological charismatic content that which in the exile of heterodoxy already possessed the correct Trinitarian form.

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The Identity of the Church and the Frontiers of Truth

The contemporary ecclesiastical map is polarized around three clearly differentiated visions:

- *The position of the Phanar* (Bartholomew I): He advocates a model of 'Sister Churches', suggesting that, although Orthodoxy has fullness, the other historical confessions share a real ecclesiality and a co-responsibility on the plane of salvation.
- *The Middle Way* (Florovsky, Stăniloae, Ware): It categorically maintains that the Orthodox Church is the only, true and exclusive Church of Christ on earth. He rejects the theory of branches. However, he warns that separate bodies retain amputated or fragmented orthodox truths that cry out to be reintegrated into the main body.
- *The Rigorist position* (traditional Mount Athos, St. Justin Popovich): Maintains a dualistic vision in black and white. Outside the visible canonical limits of Orthodoxy there are no nuances, degrees of truth or charismatic action whatsoever; there is only error and spiritual darkness.

The great faces of the Middle Way

This current finds its maximum expression in three colossi of modern theology:

1. Dumitru Stăniloae (Romania): Who coined the concept of 'Open Sobornost', explaining that the truths preserved in the West are fragments of Orthodoxy that must return to their spiritual home.
2. Jean Meyendorff (France/USA): Eminent scholar of hesychasm who participated in international forums acting as the incorruptible theological conscience of Orthodoxy.
3. Kallistos Ware (United Kingdom): Metropolitan of Diokleia, who embodied a style characterized by exquisite pastoral kindness combined with an iron and immovable firmness with respect to conciliar dogma.

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The ecclesiology of healing versus the ecclesiology of customs

Radical rigorism tends to conceive of the Church's border as a militarized customs office: a rigid wall that divides the kingdom of light from that of enemies. On the contrary, the liberal ecumenism of Constantinople dissolves it into a diffuse and irrelevant zone for the sake of a supposed global fraternity. The Middle Way proposes a vision that goes beyond: the Church is a spiritual hospital.

A hospital has well-defined walls – dogmas and canons – indispensable to prevent the treatment of souls from being contaminated by worldly philosophies. However, the doctors of this hospital do not remain secluded in their offices waiting for the dying to come on their own; they send ambulances, establish aid stations on the periphery and attend to emergencies in the streets of history. The dialogue with heterodoxy is precisely that task of medical emergency.

The Mysticism of Theological Patience

Supporting the Middle Way constitutes an authentic theological and spiritual cross, exposed to a constant double misunderstanding. The liberal wing brands it as archaic and exclusivist for refusing to use ambiguous rhetoric that camouflages the substantial differences between the Papal Primacy or the Filioque. For its part, the rigorist wing accuses it of cowardice and complicity for the mere fact of sitting down to dialogue, exhibiting a neurotic fear of spiritual contamination, as if error were more contagious than the Truth.

Faced with the geopolitical impatience of the Fanar, eager to achieve historical photographs and hasty unions, and the paralysis of rigorism that gives the world for lost and locks itself up to wait for the end, the Middle Way cultivates the patience of the sower. He knows that millennial fractures will not be healed in five-year theological commissions, but neither will they be healed by

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ignoring them. Every strong and charitable dialogue is a seed planted in the subconscious of the Christian world.

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The Question of Calendars

The fracture of the Old Calendar, which arose in the wake of the introduction of the reformed Julian calendar in the 1920s, represents one of the most painful wounds in the body of contemporary Greek Orthodoxy. Traditionally, this conflict has been raised from two irreconcilable extremes:

- *The neo-calendarist extremism of the state*: Which dismisses the reform as a simple scientific or administrative update devoid of theological implications, denigrating those who resist as liturgical illiterate or fanatics anchored in the astronomical past.
- *The radical Greek Old Calendarist extremism*: Which elevates the astronomical calculation to the category of a fundamental dogma of faith, absurdly affirming that the change of calendar meant a total apostasy that emptied all official patriarchates of sacramental grace.

The Via Intermedia addresses this wound by applying identical principles of patristic discernment: it unswervingly defends traditional liturgical integrity, but flatly rejects the theological folly of invalidating the holy mysteries for a mere matter of temporal reckoning.

The diagnosis: A legitimate reform executed in a disastrous way

The balanced perspective recognizes that the reform introduced by the controversial Patriarch Meletius IV of Constantinople in 1924 did not constitute a dogmatic heresy in itself, but it did represent a very serious pastoral error and a flagrant violation of the conciliar spirit. The Holy Fathers taught that the Church must manifest her unity not only in doctrine, but in the rhythm of her mystical and liturgical life. The Julian calendar, with all its astronomical imperfections, endowed global Orthodoxy with a unified liturgical breath. By imposing change in a hasty, unilateral and fragmented way (since Russia, Jerusalem, Serbia and Mount Athos kept the Julian one), Constantinople broke the visible unity of the Church and initiated unjustifiable state persecutions against the traditional faithful.

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The rejection of 'Astronomical Sacramentalism'

At the same time, the Middle Way severely refutes the magical nominalism of extreme Greek Old Calendarism. The mysteries of the Church do not depend on the rotational motion of the Earth or on the mathematical calculations of Julius Caesar or modern astronomers. The Holy Spirit descends upon holy gifts by virtue of right faith and apostolic succession, not because the astronomical clock strikes one date or another. In addition, it should be remembered that all Orthodox Churches, including the Neo-Calendarist Churches, continue to strictly use the Julian reckoning for the calculation of Easter (the Paschal), so that unity in the feast of feasts remains safeguarded.

The paradox of Mount Athos as a model of equilibrium

The greatest practical example of this intermediate posture is found on Mount Athos. The Holy Mountain is officially an old calendarist in its daily liturgical praxis and categorically rejects the reform of 1924. Nevertheless, the Athonite monasteries (with isolated radical exceptions) remain in full and perfect communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and with the churches of the new calendar, demonstrating that Catholicity is broad enough to accommodate the diversity of temporal rhythms, provided that the heart beats with the same and identical dogmatic faith.

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The historical currents of the orthodox resistance

In order to understand the complexity of contemporary traditional Orthodoxy, it is essential to distinguish the various historical and theological currents that make it up, avoiding simplistic generalizations.

1. Traditional geopolitical structuralism (the fourth position)

Beyond liberal ecumenism, rigorism and the middle way, there is a fourth position that we can call 'Traditional Geopolitical Structuralism' or 'Ecclesiology of Defensive Autocephaly', historically embodied by the official line of the Moscow Patriarchate and seconded by national churches such as Serbia or Georgia. This current does not approach the debate from mystical theology or pastoral discernment, but from institutional preservation, canonical sovereignty and ecclesiastical geopolitics. For this vision, the Church is the strength and identity of an alternative civilization to the secularized West. It participates in ecumenical forums for strictly strategic and diplomatic reasons, and defends the old calendar as a bulwark of cultural resistance against globalist assimilation.

2. Moderate Old Calendarism: The Theology of Resistance

Historically represented by currents such as that of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili in Greece, moderate Old Calendarism is not uselessly based on sectarian pride, but on a legitimate canonical protest. Relying on the second part of Canon 15 of the First-Second Council of Constantinople (861), these synods decided to interrupt the liturgical commemoration of the official patriarchs who publicly preached ecumenical syncretism. They did not intend to found a new Church nor did they declare invalid the sacraments of the official churches – which they consider 'sick churches' but still alive; they simply erected a spiritual quarantine wall to safeguard their flock while waiting for a future free ecumenical council to heal the situation.

3. The Russian Old Believers (Starovery)

This trend can be traced back to the tragic Great Schism (Raskol) of the Russian Church in the seventeenth century (1653-1666), brought about by

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the liturgical reforms of Patriarch Nikon, who altered by royal decree the ancestral ritual customs to bring them into line with the Greek books of the time. The non-fanatical perspective of the Old Believers understands that the rite is not a secondary wrapping, but dogma in action (*lex orandi, lex credendi*). Their resistance was a courageous protest against the intrusion of tsarist state absolutism and European rationalist secularism into the mystery of the liturgy. Its theological legitimacy was fully ratified with the creation of the Edinoverie (Unity in the Faith), which allows traditional parishes to be in direct communion with the official Church while keeping intact their millenary rites.

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The True Russian Church (IPT) and the End of Sergianism

Born in the 20th century in the crucible of the Bolshevik Revolution, the True Russian Church or Church of the Catacombs emerged in 1927, when Metropolitan Sergius signed the infamous Declaration of Allegiance to the atheistic Soviet regime. Russia's most eminent bishops and theologians rejected this statement, typifying 'Sergianism' as a profound moral heresy: the attempt to subject the Mystical Body of Christ to a militantly satanic state. Thus the Church of the Catacombs was born in the clandestine forests and prisons of Siberia, maintaining a close mystical communion with the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR) led by figures of the stature of St. John Maximovitch.

When we talk about the "True Russian Orthodox Church" (also known by its acronym TOC, RTOC, or in Russian, IPTs), we are not talking about the official Russian Orthodox Church headed by the Patriarch of Moscow. Reference is made to a historical resistance movement that was born in clandestinity and that today encompasses several independent ecclesiastical branches.

To understand what it is, you have to travel to the darkest years of the Soviet Union.

1. The origin: The "Church of the Catacombs"

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Soviet regime began a brutal persecution against Christians. The final breaking point came in 1927, when Metropolitan Sergius (leader of the official church at the time) signed a controversial Declaration of Allegiance to Soviet power.

Many bishops, priests and faithful considered that subjecting the Church to an officially atheistic and martyr-murdering state was a betrayal and an apostasy. Refusing to collaborate with communism, they broke with the official hierarchy in Moscow and went completely underground, creating the Church of the Catacombs.

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2. Why are they called the "True" Church?

Those who were part of this movement adopted the name True Orthodox Christians to differentiate themselves from the official state-controlled Church (which they derogatorily called the "Red Church" or "Sergianist").

For decades in the USSR, they operated as follows:

- ❖ They celebrated secret liturgies in basements, forests and private homes.
- ❖ They refused any kind of Soviet registration, passport or document.

Many of its members ended up in the Gulag concentration camps or simply dead.

3. The schism in exile and the "Lazarists"

At the same time, outside the USSR there was the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR), made up of exiles fleeing communism. During the Cold War, ROCOR financially supported and gave legitimacy to the Church of the Catacombs that resisted inside Russia.

However, after the fall of the USSR, things changed:

In 2007, part of the church in exile (ROCOR) decided to reconcile and formally unite with the Moscow Patriarchate, arguing that communism had already fallen.

A radical sector, led internally in Russia by Archbishop Lazar (Zhurbenko), categorically refused this union. They argued that the official church in Moscow was still corrupted by its Soviet past and its openness to other religions (ecumenism).

This splinter group was formally organized in 2002 under the official name of the True Russian Orthodox Church.

The "True Russian Church" is not the church of the great cathedrals that you see on today's television. She is the heiress of the Christians who decided to live like the ancient Romans hidden in catacombs, rather than make a pact

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with the Soviet regime, and who today prefer to remain in ecclesiastical isolation to preserve what is considered the absolute purity of the faith.

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Theological Justification of the Canonicity of the True Russian Churches

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the complex ecclesiastical events of 2007, when most of the ROCOR was unified with the Moscow Patriarchate, important sectors of traditional Orthodoxy considered such a union to be premature and fraudulent, since the official structures had not formally renounced ecumenism and their historical submission to the state apparatus. which now serves the Kremlin's geopolitical interests. From this remnant of faithfulness emerges the True Orthodox Church of the Diaspora (TOC-D / RTOC-MM).

In 2002, hierarchs such as Archbishop Lazar and Bishop Benjamin founded the RTOC, rejecting ecumenism and affirming fidelity to the confessing Church. The RTOC-MM emerged in North America under the leadership of His Beatitude Metropolitan Alexy, spreading this witness across cultures and borders.

These jurisdictions not only preserve tradition, but live it. This is how these churches are maintained:

- In apostolic succession, not only historically but also spiritually.
- On conciliar governance, inspired by the Ecumenical Councils and Ukaz no. 362.
- In liturgical fidelity, maintaining the Old Calendar and the typikon as pillars of confession.
- In multilingual mission, echoing Cyril and Methodius in our work of evangelization.
- In pastoral courage, ministering in exile and fragmentation with clarity and love, and enduring the unjustified persecution of patriarchates that promote "ecumenism."

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Theological-Canonical Foundations of Its Legitimacy

The existence and canonical work of the TOC/TENOC does not constitute an irregularity or an arbitrary parallelism; It stands firmly on three solid pillars of ecclesiastical law:

1. Canon 15 of the First-Second Council of Constantinople (861): This canon exempts from all punishment and fills with honor those pastors who interrupt communion with an ecclesiastical leader who publicly teaches errors contrary to Tradition, explicitly stipulating that they do not divide the Church, but preserve it from schisms.

2. Canon Decree No. 362 of the Holy Patriarch Martyr Tikhon (November 20, 1920): Promulgated in anticipation of the Bolshevik advance, this mandate orders the local bishops to organize themselves autonomously and to constitute self-managed provisional synods in case the administrative center loses its freedom or is unable to communicate the truth without state coercion. ***This directive has never been revoked by a free council.***

3. The historical precedence of the great Saints: Ecclesiastical history shows that real canonicity resides in the preservation of the Truth, not in the number of temples or in imperial favor. St. Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century remained practically alone in the face of the capitulation of all the patriarchates in the Monothelite heresy, and St. Athanasius the Great was repeatedly stripped of his official seat for defending the Nicene faith, consecrating bishops in the periphery without the authorization of capitulating hierarchs.

The current deviation of the Moscow Patriarchate

The need for the legitimate use of Decree 362 is alarmingly substantiated by analyzing the contemporary drift of the official Moscow church under the leadership of Patriarch Kirill and the government of Vladimir Putin. Historical sergianism did not disappear; it mutated from a submission by terror to a strategic alliance of geopolitical convenience. The official Patriarchate has instrumentalized the faith through the doctrine of Russkiy Mir (The Russian

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World), a clear manifestation of the heresy of ethnophylletism condemned in 1872, which subordinates the catholicity of the Gospel to the territorial ambitions of a secular State, dressing contemporary military conflicts with the character of a 'holy war' and judicially persecuting clerics who cry out for evangelical peace.

Historical Fidelity and Pastoral Mission

The TOC/ROTC Jurisdictions, guided by their Saint, are ecclesiastical jurisdictions whose identity is based on the loving and firm preservation of the Orthodox Tradition and on a deep sense of pastoral responsibility towards souls.

Far from the rigid definitions that are often imposed on them from outside, these jurisdictions are not defined by confrontation, but by their fidelity to the spiritual heritage of the Holy Fathers and the New Martyrs.

Pillars of its Identity and Community Life

- Custody of the Liturgical Season and Doctrine: For these jurisdictions, the use of the traditional ecclesiastical calendar (Julian) and the rejection of modernist or ecumenical currents *they are not political positions*, but an act of love and obedience to the conciliar harmony of the historic Church. Its aim is to maintain the Orthodox faith in its original purity, as delivered by Christ and protected by ecumenical councils.
- A Missionary and Welcoming Church: Through its churches in various parts of the world, the Church manifests itself as an accessible and close spiritual refuge. Its absolute priority is local parish life: the reverent celebration of the Divine Liturgy, community prayer (the Orthros) and the spiritual accompaniment of each faithful.
- The Gospel Made Charity: The theology of these churches is, above all, a living theology. Following the directives of her pastors, the Church understands that faith without works is dead; therefore, it places a central

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emphasis on works of mercy, service to those in need, compassion and love of neighbor as a tangible reflection of Christ's love.

- Call to Personal Holiness: In the letters and messages of your hierarchy, the constant message is not conflict with the world, but the call to introspection, repentance, constant prayer, and frequent participation in the Holy Mysteries (sacraments) for the healing and salvation of souls.

These jurisdictions represent the continuity of a faith that does not bow to the fashions or pressures of current secularism. It is a community where the historical past of the Orthodox resistance meets the present of a church that is alive, warm and committed to its local environment, which seeks, above all, to guide its flock towards the Kingdom of God in peace, humility and unwavering fidelity.

Where the Truth is confessed without compromise and the legitimate Apostolic Succession is safeguarded, there shines the Canonical Church of Christ, mystically connected with the blood of the New Martyrs.

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Is it possible to unite today's Orthodoxy?

This represents the most pressing and painful question of ecclesiology in the present year 2026. If we respond from profound mystical theology, the Union of Orthodoxy already exists ontologically: the Body of Christ is indivisible and the One Church remains intact in those who guard the faith of the Fathers. On the historical and institutional level, however, the visible unification of Orthodox structures constitutes an eschatological mystery that will require an authentic spiritual purification and the dissolution of three great contemporary idols:

- *The definitive death of Ethnophylletism:* It implies that the official patriarchies renounce blind nationalism and cease to operate as ministries of cultural and political identity at the service of the chancelleries of this world.
- *The renunciation of the 'Eastern Papacy':* It demands that the Patriarchate of Constantinople abandon its self-proclaimed doctrine of being a 'first without equals' that intervenes unilaterally in foreign jurisdictions, returning to the conciliar humility of *primus inter pares*.
- *Healing the wound of resistance:* It requires that the great structures recognize the historical sin of the haste and pastoral violence with which they imposed the liturgical reforms in the last century, condemning sergianism and syncretistic ecumenism, and allowing the free canonical coexistence of the Old Calendar and the True Russian Church (RTOC, TOC-D, Catacombs).

Many contemporary saints and theologians have intuited that the unification of Orthodoxy will not come from patriarchal palaces or worldly diplomatic commissions. It will happen in the desert. When the pressures of radical secularism or persecution deprive the official structures of their golden cathedrals, their state privileges and their economic subsidies, the false bureaucratic borders will fall under their own weight. In the shared need of the catacombs, true pastors and faithful will recognize each other by the unmistakable aroma of patristic orthodoxy.

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To deepen this vision, we can break it down into three major theological and spiritual axes:

1. The "Desert" and the "Catacombs" as spaces of purification

In the Orthodox tradition, the desert (we shall be) and the catacombs are not just physical or historical places; they are spiritual states.

Stripping of institutional idols: When the Church is united to the State (the Byzantine model of the symphony), it is usually filled with privileges, bureaucracy and temporal power. The text suggests that this "gold" sometimes acts as an anesthetic or a wall separating local churches (Moscow, Constantinople, Antioch, etc.).

Persecution as a filter: Twentieth-century figures such as St. John Maximovich, St. Paisios of Mount Athos, or the theologian Alexander Schmemmann, pointed out that when the world persecutes the Church (as it did under the Soviet yoke or as it happens under modern radical secularism), worldly motivations for being Christian disappear. Only those who are willing to lose everything remain. In the desert there are no titles, no state budgets, no vacant seats to fight for; only the cross remains.

2. The fall of "false bureaucratic borders"

Currently, canonical Orthodoxy is experiencing painful jurisdictional tensions (such as the rupture between the Patriarchate of Moscow and that of Constantinople). These divisions are often fueled by ecclesiastical nationalism (filetismo) and the geopolitical politics of "patriarchal palaces."

The intuition of the quote is that these divisions are superficial. They do not touch dogma or the heart of faith, but the administration of power. If official structures collapse due to external pressures:

A Russian bishop and a Greek bishop persecuted in a concentration camp would not argue over who has primacy in the diaspora.

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They would break bread, celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the breast of a dying person and recognize each other as brothers. Common suffering reveals that unity in faith already existed, only it was buried by bureaucracy.

3. The "unmistakable aroma of patristic orthodoxy"

This is perhaps the most beautiful sentence in the fragment. What does the orthodoxy of the Fathers of the Church smell like? It does not smell of expensive incense from a metropolitan cathedral; Smells like:

Humility (kenosis): The emptying of oneself in imitation of Christ.

Fidelity without compromise: Theology lived, not just intellectualized. The Fathers of the Church (such as Maximus the Confessor or John Chrysostom) wrote their greatest works in exile, often persecuted by the same ecclesiastical authorities of their time who had sold themselves to the emperor.

Spiritual discernment (diakrisis): In the catacombs, the faithful do not follow a leader because of the position he occupies in an organizational chart, but because they recognize in him the holiness and spirit of the Gospel. It is the *sensus fidelium* (the meaning of the faithful) at its best.

The Church is not stronger when it is rich, influential and respected by governments; it is stronger when it is free. And spiritual freedom is often bought at the price of social marginality. Unification will not come from signing a document at a pan-Orthodox ecumenical summit, but from the embrace of those who, having lost everything in the world, discover that in Christ they have everything in common.

The phenomenon of the denigration or virulent attack that communities of the TOC-D (True Orthodox Church of the Diaspora) sometimes suffer from priests or sectors of the so-called "Official Orthodoxy" (the great world patriarchates) has very deep roots.

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If we leave aside human passions or vulgar insults, and raise our gaze to the theological, ecclesiological and canonical reasons that these radical sectors usually use to justify their hostility, we find three main arguments:

1. The concept of Canonical Ecclesiology and "Canonicity"

For mainstream Orthodox theology, the Church is not just an invisible community of believers, but a visible reality structured in a communion of autocephalous (mutually recognized) patriarchates.

The isolation argument: The presbyters of the great patriarchates (such as Moscow or Constantinople) accuse the churches of "True Orthodoxy" or churches of the catacombs/diaspora of being in "schism" (schisma). Theologically, they argue that by not being in communion with the historical sees, they have separated themselves from the "visible body" of the universal Church.

The rigidity of structures: For more institutional thinking, being outside the official diptych (the list of mutually recognized churches) is tantamount to lacking legitimate sacramental grace. The fanatical sectors radicalize this, using harsh epithets and denying even the validity of the sacraments of the diaspora, **wrongly treating them** as "sects", ignoring the history of suffering and persecution that gave rise to these communities.

2. The debate on "Sergianism" and submission to the world

This is where two opposing theological visions collide on the relationship between the Church and the temporal world.

The position of TOC-D

Historically, the churches of the catacombs and of true Orthodoxy were born of the rejection of Sergianism (the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927 in Russia, which subordinated the Church to the Soviet atheist state in order to "save" the structure). The TOC-D defends that the Church must maintain absolute canonical freedom in the face of the political powers of the world.

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The reaction of the official clergy: The most fanatical clerics of the official structures feel theologically questioned by this position. If the TOC-D is right that "cathedral gold" and state subsidies corrupt the faith, then official structures are at fault. To defend their own institutional legitimacy and their alliance with civil or national powers, these presbyters attack the periphery, labeling diaspora resistance as "pride," "disobedience," or "purist fanaticism."

3. Ecumenism as a theological frontier

The dialogue of the great patriarchates with other Christian confessions (ecumenism) or with world organizations is another point of doctrinal friction.

Traditional diaspora churches often see certain ecumenical openings of official orthodoxy as a danger of dilution of the patristic faith.

Official priests who defend these global policies often see the TOC-D's stance as an "anachronistic" and closed obstacle to dialogue. Instead of debating the theology of the boundaries of the Church in a fraternal way, the most intolerant sectors prefer to revile the very existence of these local communities.

The Spiritual Paradox

Ironically, the furious attack and verbal denigration by these clerics contradicts the very patristic phronema (mind/spirit) they claim to defend. The Holy Fathers unanimously teach that theological truth is defended with meekness, prayer, and charity, never with hostility or contempt toward fellow believers. *As we said before, the palace bureaucracy tends to forget that it is in the desert that false borders fall, revealing who truly guards the love of Christ.*

THE UNITY OF FAITH AS THE SUPREME CRITERION OF ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

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"It is necessary to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29

The Orthodox Church has never understood unity as a simple administrative agreement. Since apostolic times, visible communion has been considered the natural consequence of a much deeper communion: communion in revealed truth. Christ did not pray simply that the disciples would remain united, but that they would be sanctified "in the truth; your word is truth" (Jn. 17: 17-21). Unity, therefore, is not a value independent of truth, but its fruit.

For this reason, any reflection on ecumenism must begin by asking what is the very foundation of ecclesial unity.

I. The Church is built on the confession of faith

St. Irenaeus of Lyons affirms that the Church, scattered throughout the world, preserves the same faith as if it inhabited a single house:

"Though scattered throughout the whole world, it carefully guards the same faith, as if it dwelt in one house." (*Adversus Haereses*, I, 10, 2).

The criterion of unity was not geographical or administrative, but doctrinal.

In the same way, St. Vincent of Lerins establishes the famous principle: Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est.

What is Catholic is that which is believed everywhere, always and by everyone. It does not mention jurisdictions. He does not mention patriarchies. It does not mention administrative precedence. He speaks exclusively of the preservation of the apostolic deposit.

II. The canons exist to protect the faith

One of the most frequent errors is to consider the canons as if they constituted the foundation of the Church.

The Fathers teach exactly the opposite, the canons exist because the Church exists. The Church does not exist because the canons exist.

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The canons regulate the life of a living organism, they do not create that organism.

St. Basil the Great, in his First Canon Letter (Letter 188), establishes a fundamental distinction:

- ❖ heresies;
- ❖ schisms;
- ❖ illicit assemblies (*παρασυναγωγά*).

He does not consider them identical, each one has different gravity, each one requires a different treatment.

If the Fathers had understood every separation as an absolute denial of the sacramental life, this classification would be completely meaningless.

Precisely because they carefully distinguished the causes of separation, they were able to apply pastoral economy according to each case.

III. Economics never destroys truth

St. Basil introduces one of the most profound principles of the Orthodox tradition.

The "akribeia" represents the strict application of the norm.

The "oikonomia" represents pastoral medicine.

Both serve salvation, neither can become an absolute principle.

Economics never transforms error into truth, but neither can acrivia become an instrument of destruction when its purpose is to heal.

It is therefore legitimate to ask whether the economy is applied today with the same patristic criteria.

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IV. St. Theodore Studite and Communion Founded on Truth

During the iconoclastic persecution, St. Theodore Studite suffered banishment, imprisonment and persecution. He never accepted a false peace.

He writes:

"There is nothing more precious than the truth." (Epistles, PG 99).

For him, visible communion could never be separated from the Orthodox confession, however, he did not turn every disciplinary irregularity into heresy. His thought carefully distinguishes between those who alter the faith and those who fall into disciplinary errors, this distinction is essential to understand the entire subsequent tradition.

V. St. Mark of Ephesus

In Florence all the political pressure sought an immediate union.

St. Mark answered:

"The Fathers never accepted a union at the expense of the truth."

Their resistance did not come from Pride, it came from the conviction that the Church cannot negotiate the apostolic deposit.

Paradoxically, the same principle also invites us to ask whether those who preserve that faith in its entirety should not be the object of a priority effort at reconciliation.

VI. The Contemporary Problem

Here appears the difficulty pointed out by many critics of modern ecumenism.

In many places we observe that theological commissions are developed with Rome; official dialogues are held with protesters; liturgical greetings are exchanged; fraternal meetings are held; there is constant talk of the restoration of unity.

All of this can be understood as part of a legitimate dialogue.

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But at the same time it can happen that a traditional Orthodox priest is considered a complete outsider to the Church. There are even cases in which baptism, ordination, or both, are again required.

The question that arises is not only canonical, it is profoundly ecclesiological.

Why does the greatest severity seem to be directed precisely at those who preserve the same Liturgy, the same Creed, the same Fathers and the same Councils?

VII. The Inversion of the Patristic Order

The Fathers fought heresies, they did not begin by fighting administrative differences.

St. Athanasius was persecuted for defending the divinity of the Word.

St. Maximus the Confessor lost his tongue for defending the two natures of Christ.

St. Mark of Ephesus remained alone for rejecting the Filioque.

We never find the Fathers affirming that the main issue of the Church was administrative dependence on a particular patriarchal see. His constant concern was the integral preservation of the faith.

When that priority is reversed, the patristic order is also reversed.

Then administrative membership begins to take the place that previously belonged to the apostolic confession.

VIII. St. Cyprian and Unity

St. Cyprian states:

"The Church is one." (*De Unitate Ecclesiae*).

But this unity does not consist only in a visible structure, it consists in remaining inseparably united to Christ, every ecclesiastical authority receives its legitimacy precisely from this unity, it does not produce it, it serves it.

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IX. An Open Question for the Orthodox Conscience

The criticism formulated by various traditionalist sectors can be summed up in a single question:

If a bishop retains in its entirety:

- ❖ the Nicene faith;
- ❖ the seven Ecumenical Councils;
- ❖ the apostolic succession that he recognizes as valid;
- ❖ the traditional Divine Liturgy;
- ❖ patristic spirituality;
- ❖ orthodox morality;

Should he be treated more severely than a minister belonging to a community that has substantial doctrinal differences with Orthodoxy?

Those who answer in the negative consider that the patristic response requires a careful distinction between the rupture of faith and the disciplinary rupture, not because the two are irrelevant, but because they have never been considered identical.

X. The True Beginning of Reconciliation

Dialogue with the world is a missionary obligation, but the Church's peace begins within the Church herself.

If those who profess the same faith remain separated without serious efforts at reconciliation, it is inevitable that many faithful will perceive a tension between the proclaimed ideal and ecclesial practice.

The patristic tradition teaches that truth can never be separated from charity, and charity finds its first expression in the sincere recognition of those who remain united in the same apostolic confession.

Only a Church that manifests this internal coherence will be able to present to the world a fully convincing witness to the unity for which Christ prayed the

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night before his Passion: "that they may all be one; as thou, O Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; so that the world may believe that you sent me." (Jn. 17:21).

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Ecumenism in the Holy Fathers and Its Counterpart in Ecumenism Today

The contrast between the vision of the Holy Fathers and the geopolitical line of the Phanar (the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople) regarding ecumenism represents one of the most profound theological and ecclesiological clashes within the contemporary Orthodox world. To understand this clearly, we must analyze how the Fathers conceived of the limits of the Church and how the diplomacy of the Phanar has reconfigured that vision in the last century.

- 1. *The Position of the Holy Fathers:*** Unity in Unanimous Truth For traditional patrology, the unity of the Church is not an organizational agreement or a federation of denominations that "agree to disagree." The Fathers maintain that the Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, and that she possesses the fullness of Truth without the need for external complements. Without dogmatic commitment: St. John Chrysostom or St. Maximus the Confessor taught that altering a single tittle of the dogma destroys communion. Saint Maximus preferred to have his tongue and hand cut out rather than sign a document of theological commitment (the Typos) promoted by the Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople to "unify" Christians politically.
- 2. *The definition of heresy:*** The Fathers do not see division as "two broken branches of the same tree that must be united," but as the detachment of a group from the living trunk of the Church. Contemporary saints of a purely patristic spirit, such as St. Justin Popovich, formally called modern ecumenism "**panheresy**," because it relativizes the exclusivist truth of the Gospel by treating doctrinal deviations as mere "different traditions."
- 3. *The prohibition of common prayer:*** Apostolic and conciliar canons (such as Canon XLV of the Apostles) explicitly prohibit liturgical or

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ritual co-prayer with those outside of Orthodox communion. The purpose of this norm is not hatred, but spiritual honesty, a liturgical unity cannot be simulated on the altar if there is no absolute unity in the faith.

- 1. *The Phanar (Constantinople) Position:*** Global EcumenismThe policy of the Phanar took a radical historical turn from the 1920 Encyclical issued by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. That document addressed "To all the Churches of Christ throughout the world" explicitly proposed the founding of a "League of Churches" (which would later inspire the World Council of Churches), calling heterodox (Protestants and Catholics) "not as strangers and aliens, but as relatives and members of the house of Christ". From then on, the Phanar agenda has been characterized by the implicit "**Theory of the Branches**": Although formally stated otherwise, the Phanar praxis operates under the premise that Christianity is fragmented and that Constantinople has the ecumenical mission of "reunifying" it. This translates into joint declarations that dilute dogmatic boundaries with Rome or liberal Protestantism. Transgression of patristic praxis: It is common to see contemporary Ecumenical Patriarchs actively participating in ecumenical prayer services, exchanging liturgical embraces, bestowing joint blessings, and signing theological agreements (such as the 1993 Balamand Document, which recognized the Roman Catholic Church as possessing valid and identical sacraments, something that **contradicts** strict **patristic ecclesiology**).
- 2. *Diplomacy on Dogma:*** As the Phanar is geographically reduced to a small neighborhood in secular Istanbul (Turkey), with very few local faithful, its survival and international relevance depend on its global status. High-level ecumenism and alignment with Western organizations give it a geopolitical shield that patriarchal palaces prioritize over the canonical zeal of the Fathers. The Essential

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Theological Contrast, the Abyss between both positions can be summarized in the following critical points:

Axis of Analysis:

How do you heal the division?

The Patristic Stance (Held by the Diaspora/TOC-D) Through repentance, conversion, and the return of the wayward to Orthodox Truth.

The Position of the Phanar (Official Ecumenism). Through diplomatic dialogue, worldly theological commissions, and declarations of mutual recognition.

The limits of the Church:

The Patristic Stance (Held by the Diaspora/TOC-D): The Church ends where the dogma or patristic apostolic succession is altered.

The Phanar Position (Official Ecumenism) There are "degrees of ecclesiality" outside of Orthodoxy; Grace acts invisibly in other branches.

Ecclesial Priority:

The Patristic Stance (Held by the Diaspora/TOC-D): Preserve the purity of the faith (Orthodoxia) to ensure the salvation of souls, whatever the cost.

The Phanar Stance (Official Ecumenism) Maintain geopolitical relevance, global dialogue, and international influence on world structures.

The Conclusion from the Catacombs: For communities like the TOC-D, the ecumenical drift of the Phanar is living proof that the official structures have preferred the applause of global elites and international secularism to the rigorous veracity of the Holy Fathers. From this arises the prophetic intuition with which this dialogue was opened: **true**

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Orthodoxy survives in the silent fidelity of the desert, immune to the ideological concessions of the imperial palaces of yesterday or today.

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Final Words

The real debate between those who support the ecumenism of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and those who firmly reject it is not a simple fight over formalities, diplomacy or timetables. It is a profound disagreement about the very nature of the Church and the Truth, touching on three crucial doctrinal and spiritual points:

1. What is the Church? (The ecclesiological debate)

This is the crux of the problem.

- **The position of ecumenism (Bartholomew):** Under the so-called "Theology of Reconciliation," the patriarchate of Constantinople argues that, due to historical divisions, Christianity has fragmented, but that dialogue seeks to heal those wounds. The most open-minded sectors flirt with the idea that grace and ecclesial identity can exist, in imperfect or partial ways, outside the visible limits of Orthodoxy.
- **The position of those who reject it):** For traditionalists, the Church is **One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic**, and that Church is, solely and exclusively, the Orthodox Church. There are no "fragments" of the Church. Those who separated from it throughout history by false dogmas (such as Roman Catholicism with the papacy, or Protestantism) fell into heresy or schism. Therefore, a union cannot be "negotiated" as if it were two equal parts; the only possible union is the return and conversion of those who have strayed to the original Truth.

2. Dogmatic Truth vs. "Relativistic Love"

Opponents of Bartholomew's ecumenism denounce what they call the "**heresy of ecumenism**," which they accuse of putting a false diplomacy based on sentimentality above theological truth.

- **The traditionalist claim:** They point out that holding joint prayers, issuing ambiguous theological statements with the Vatican or the World Council of Churches, and treating each other as "sister churches" dilutes the dogmas for which the Holy Fathers and martyrs gave their lives. They maintain that true love of neighbor does not consist in validating the error of the other in order to be at peace with the secular world, but

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in witnessing to the Truth with clarity and humility. To unite in liturgy or prayer with those who do not share exactly the same faith is seen as a betrayal of the apostolic canons.

3. The Role of the Patriarch: A "Pope" in the East?

The rejection of Bartholomew's position also has a root of hierarchical order and conciliar fidelity.

- **Constantinopolitan centralization:** In recent decades, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has adopted an ecclesiological stance that its critics call *Eastern Papism* or *Protos sine paribus* (First without equal). Bartholomew has acted on the premise that his see has superior juridical authority to intervene in the affairs of other local churches and dictate the global ecclesiastical line.
- **The conciliar response:** Those who resist this line affirm that Orthodoxy is intrinsically conciliar (synodal). No bishop, not even the Patriarch of the "New Rome," has the authority to drag the entire Church toward modernist reforms, liturgical changes, or agreements with Rome that violate the Sacred Tradition received from the Holy Fathers.

The real problem is that, for ecumenists, interreligious dialogue is a duty of peace and brotherhood in the modern world; while for those who reject it, it is a dangerous path of secularization that relativizes dogma, confuses the faithful and puts at risk the intact preservation of the Gospel and of the Church of Christ.

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His Most Reverend Excellency +Basilio was born in the city of Santiago de Chile, into a family with a deep-rooted Roman Catholic tradition. It was at home, under the protection, guidance and witness of his grandparents, that he was baptized and educated in the first rudiments of the Christian faith, sowing in his soul an early love for the mysteries of God.

He completed his primary education in prominent North American schools established in Santiago, which allowed him to acquire a fluent command of the English language. Subsequently, he completed his high school education and entered university. During a period of his youth, he served successfully as a judicial prosecutor in various public companies; however, he soon understood within himself that the legal exercise did not coincide with the purpose that God had designed for his existence. He then decided to reorient his professional activity towards the field of Computer Science and Technology, achieving an outstanding corporate career that led him to consolidate, at an early age, as Technology Manager for the Marriott corporation in Chile.

At the age of 29, responding to an unequivocal inner call towards the search for evangelical perfection, he made the determination to leave the corporate world and embrace the monastic life, entering the Benedictine Monastery of the Holy Trinity of Lliu-Lliu. There he devoted himself intensely to the study of theology and to regular asceticism. However, the profound experiences and misunderstandings lived in this institutional environment caused him a deep disappointment with the direction of the Western ecclesiastical structure. With pain, he decided to retire and temporarily return to the field of technology, once again assuming senior management positions.

The longing for faith and the thirst for unaltered patristic truth continued to beat in his heart, guiding him providentially to the sources of universal

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Orthodoxy. After a rigorous process of spiritual maturation, he was formally accepted into the Holy Orthodox Church, receiving Holy Baptism with the name of Basil. He devoted the following years to the profound study of Orthodox Theology, being initially ordained to the order of the Diaconate. Later, he received the monastic tonsure and priestly ordination. After several years of proven ascetic and pastoral fidelity, he was granted the Great Monastic Scheme and was elevated to the dignity of Archimandrite.

On January 13, 2020 (according to the calculation of the traditional ecclesiastical calendar), he was canonically consecrated as Bishop of Santiago and all of Chile. Subsequently, on November 17, 2025, he was formally received through Chirotesia and elevated to the rank of Archbishop of Santiago and all Chile, fully incorporating himself into the Holy Synod of the True Orthodox Church of the Diaspora (TOC-D).

At present, Archbishop Basilio resides in the solitude and tranquility of the Skete de San Basilio, a community of which he is its founding Abbot, located in the commune of Curacaví, Metropolitan Region of Chile. From this monastic corner in the southern lands, he dedicates his entire life to uninterrupted prayer, to manifesting with simplicity the unfading beauty of Holy Orthodoxy and to the spiritual direction of the faithful who seek to guard the faith in the desert of the contemporary world.