

DIVERSITY AMONG GUIDES AND SCOUTS OF EUROPE

Christine is French, Johannes is German, Maria is Portuguese, Mircea is Rumanian, Violeta is Lithuanian. Each one has pronounced his promise in his own language. Each one belongs to a country which has a history, a culture, its own identity, a way of living its faith, of practising its religion...

Like every European scout or guide, each local Church has its own aspect, its face. Today, I would like you to discover the diversity of these Churches in which European Guides and Scouts are living. Do you know that 16 associations are now composing the International Union of European Guides and Scouts? And that our movement includes:

- Roman Catholics, of Latin rite,
- Greco-catholic groups – of Catholic confession, of Oriental rite – (in the Rumanian association)
- Orthodox groups (in the Rumanian and Russian associations)
- Lutheran groups (in the German Evangelic association)
- Reformed groups, of Evangelic confession (in the Evangelic association of Quebec)

In link with the general commissioners of the 16 member associations, the international leaders of the FSE have understood the ecumenical stake offered by the Church. This is why our international statutes define the position of the movement as follows : *“With an open mind towards ecumenism, and the hope for a return to Europe’s unity, the Union welcomes associations or guilds which belong to other Christian confessions, under the conditions stated in the F.S.E. Religious Directory attached to these statutes”*.¹

As regards the “conditions stated in the F.S.E. Religious Directory”, please consult the document itself (available on this site).

This Church, that we have promised to “serve doing our best” on the day of our promise, deserves our attention for a while, by reading what follows, in order to know it better.

There are 3 main “monotheist” religions (“monotheist” means “believing in one God” only). The Council Vatican II has promulgated a “Declaration on the relationships of the Church with the non Christian religions” (*Nostra Aetate*) that you can study (in the acts of the Council) in order to understand better this subject. Chronologically, these religions are:

1. **JUDAISM:** it was the religion of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. This religion appeared long before our era. Here is what the Council tells us about the attitude that we should have towards Judaism: *“The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles”*.² In Judaism we find our common roots.
2. **CHRISTENDOM:** this religion was instituted two thousand years ago by Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church and many other ecclesial communities confess their faith in Jesus Christ, as it is presented in the New Testament and declared in the Creed.
3. **ISLAM:** this religion was instituted in the 7th century by Mahomet and based on the Koran. The Fathers of the Council tell us, in the same declaration, item 3 : *“The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men... This sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.”*

¹ Item 1.3.2. of the civil statutes of the International Union.

² See *Nostra Aetate*, « Declaration about the relationships between the Church and non Christian religions », § 4.

Between these three main religions, a dialogue called “inter-religious” dialogue, leads to a better mutual knowledge.

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Among the Christians (which corresponds to point 2, above), we may distinguish three main confessions, also presented chronologically.³

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, instituted on the day of Pentecost. We know it but we still have to discover and love it more and more as long as our faith grows. During the first millennium, this Church was “undivided” : faith was common to all, but rites and languages varied according to cultures and mentalities. In a way, the same seed, the Gospel, was growing in different soils. Long before the Council of Chalcedon (in 451), this Church was divided into 5 apostolic patriarchates (which means directly founded by the apostles). Here are the five names:

1. the patriarchate of Jerusalem, founded by saint James
2. the patriarchate of Antiochus, founded by saint Peter and Paul
3. the patriarchate of Alexandria, founded by saint Marcus
4. the patriarchate of Rome, founded by saint Peter and Paul
5. the patriarchate of Constantinople (formerly “Byzantium”, a town now called Istanbul), founded by saint Andrew.

During the second millennium, the diversities of cultures and rites have become divisions, rather for political reasons (the power of the emperors, for instance) than for religious reasons.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES appeared in 1054, during the Great Schism between the Eastern and the Western Worlds. In his Apostolic Letter, *Orientalis Lumen*, at item 5, Pope John-Paul II speaks of it in moving terms: “*The Christian tradition of the East implies a way of accepting, understanding and living faith in the Lord Jesus. In this sense it is extremely close to the Christian tradition of the West, which is born of and nourished by the same faith. Yet it is legitimately and admirably distinguished from the latter, since Eastern Christians have their own way of perceiving and understanding, and thus an original way of living their relationship with the Saviour. Here, with respect and trepidation, I want to approach the act of worship which these Churches express, rather than to identify this or that specific theological point which has emerged down the centuries in the polemical debates between East and West*”.

In the XVIth century, REFORMED CHURCHES appeared. The main ones are:

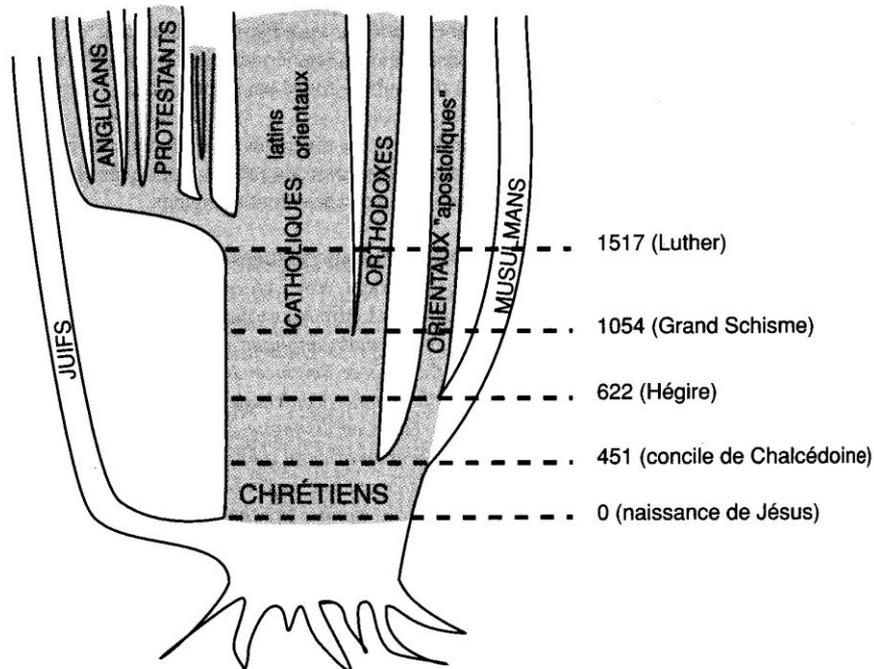
- the Lutheran Church, founded by Luther in Germany in 1521,
- the Anglican Church, founded by Henry VIII in England in 1534,
- the Calvinist Church, founded by Calvin in Switzerland in 1536.

“*Other divisions arose more than four centuries later in the West, stemming from the events which are usually referred to as “The Reformation.”... In the great upheaval which began in the West toward the end of the Middle Ages, and in later times too, Churches and ecclesial Communities came to be separated from the Apostolic See of Rome. Yet they have retained a particularly close affinity with the Catholic Church as a result of the long centuries in which all Christendom lived together in ecclesiastical communion.*”⁴

The research of unity between these confessions is not called “inter-religious dialogue” but “ecumenical dialogue”.

³ See Acts of the Council Vatican II, « Decree about ecumenism » (*Unitatis Redintegratio*).

⁴ See *Unitatis Redintegratio*, § 13 and 19, “Decree on ecumenism” of Council Vatican II.



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In the end, among the Catholics, two main families have to be distinguished:

1. the Roman Catholics, Latin. Most of us belong to this family.
2. The Eastern Catholics, 21 Churches (Maronite, Coptic, Syriac...). It is interesting to mention the Greco-Catholic Church of Rumania, of Byzantine rite, for some of its faithful belong to the FSE. Once again, you may study "*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*", which is the Decree on Catholic Eastern Churches, of Council Vatican II.

So the Catholics of Byzantine Eastern rite are a bridge between the Roman Catholic Church, thanks to their attachment to the Pope, and the Orthodox Church, for sharing quite the same rite (with very slight differences). The Pope sees a very specific situation for them : "*These Churches carry a tragic wound, for they are still kept from full communion with the Eastern Orthodox Churches despite sharing in the heritage of their fathers. A constant, shared conversion is indispensable for them to advance resolutely and energetically towards mutual understanding. And conversion is also required of the Latin Church, that she may respect and fully appreciate the dignity of Eastern Christians, and accept gratefully the spiritual treasures of which the Eastern Catholic Churches are the bearers, to the benefit of the entire catholic communion*" *Orientalium Lumen*, § 21). These Catholic people feel often torn between their situation of "double belonging" which often led them to be rejected by the ones and the others.

Even if these explanations are a bit difficult, you should try to understand and know better these realities that we experience in our movement, for yourself, but also to be able to explain our specificity to those who will ask you some information.

In the continuity of the Eurojam 94, the motto of which was "Ut omnes unum sint" (= may all be one") and of the Euromoot 2007, the motto of which was "Surgite, eamus" (= stand up, let's go), let us enter into Jesus' sacerdotal prayer (in chapter 17 of saint John's Gospel), so that "very soon, Christ, the "Orientalium Lumen", may allow us to discover that, in fact, in spite of the numerous centuries of separation, we are very close because together, without knowing it, we are walking towards the unique Lord, so towards each other".⁵

⁵ *Orientalium Lumen*, § 28.