



Profession of the Old Catholic Faith

formulated by the
Old Catholic Communion of North America Bishops
Assembled in synod on August 16th, 2019

1. We faithfully adhere to the Rule of Faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lerins in these terms: “*Id teneamus, ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.*” (We hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and of all people; for that is truly and properly Catholic.) For this reason, we persevere in professing the faith of the primitive Church, as formulated in the ecumenical symbols and specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Ecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years of which there were seven.
 - a. Therefore, we reject the decrees of the First Vatican Council which were promulgated July 18th, 1870, concerning the infallibility and the universal Episcopate of the Bishop of Rome. These decrees contradict the Faith of the ancient Church and which destroy its ancient canonical constitution by attributing to the Pope the plenitude of ecclesiastical powers over all dioceses and over all the faithful. By denial of his primatial jurisdiction we do not wish to deny the historic primacy which several Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the ancient Church have attributed to the Bishop of Rome by recognizing him as the *Primus inter pares* (first among equals).
 - b. Therefore, we reject the dogma of the Immaculate Conception promulgated by Pius IX in 1854 as being in contradiction to the Tradition of the first centuries in that Dogma could only be declared by an Ecumenical Council. In the time of the undivided church the East and Latin churches had differing understandings of the consequences of the fall of Adam (Ancestral and Original Sin) and as such the necessity of the Holy Virgin being Immaculate from conception, or becoming Immaculate when the Holy Spirt descended upon Mary were both accepted and being debated. While the OCCNA professes the teaching of the Eastern Church we also acknowledge that only an Ecumenical council could decree as dogma one belief or the other and therefore will not stand in judgment of a church which chooses to profess the Immaculate Conception.
 - c. Therefore, reject the dogmatization of the Catholic teaching of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Pius XII in 1950 as being in defiance of the Tradition of the first centuries in that Dogma could only be declared by an Ecumenical Council. However, we do profess the belief in the Dormition, and Assumption of Mary was commonly held in the Undivided Church and as such consider this to be a matter of personal piety and devotion and not a Dogma of the Faith.



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2. We believe that what defines Catholicism as a religion is the Nicene Creed, and the different ways of its interpretation constitutes a denomination within the catholic religion. Old Catholicism is defined by the apostolic interpretation of the definition of catholic, not in the sense of universality, but based on a qualitative action that embodies the concept of a total love, (1 Corinthians 13) as depicted by the price paid on the cross for our salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:13-15)
3. Considering that the Holy Eucharist has always been the true central point of Catholic worship, we consider it our right to declare that we maintain with perfect fidelity the ancient Catholic doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, by believing that we receive the Body and Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ under the species of bread and wine. The Eucharistic celebration in the Church is neither a continual repetition nor a renewal of the expiatory sacrifice which Jesus offered once for all upon the Cross: but it is a sacrifice because it is the perpetual commemoration of the sacrifice offered upon the Cross, and it is the act by which we represent upon earth and appropriate to ourselves the one offering which Jesus Christ makes in Heaven, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:11-12, for the salvation of redeemed humanity, by appearing for us in the presence of God (Heb. 9:24). The character of the Holy Eucharist being thus understood, it is, at the same time, a sacrificial feast, by means of which the faithful, in receiving the Body and Blood of our Saviour, enter into communion with one another (1 Cor. X. 17).
 - a. As in the Early Church the Old Catholic Church teaches that every bishop, "the living icon of Christ," and his flock constitute the Church in a certain place; or, as St. Ignatius the God-bearer says, the Church of Christ is in the bishop, his priests and deacons, with the people, surrounding the Eucharist in the true faith. All bishops and their flocks so constituted, together composing the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In other words, there can be no Church without a bishop, no bishop without the Eucharist, and no bishop or Eucharist without the true faith, the Apostolic Faith, "the faith once delivered to the saints." (Jude 3) "The Church is in the bishop and the bishop in the Church," wrote St. Cyprian of Carthage.
 - b. Also, there can be no Church without the Eucharist, the Sacrament of unity, because the Church is formed through it. The Body and Blood of Christ unites the Faithful to God: This fellowship or koinonia is the whole purpose of Christianity. At the same time, there can be no Eucharist - and no other Mysteries - without a bishop who teaches the true faith to the baptized.



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4. We believe there are seven sacraments or mysteries of the Catholic Church, which were instituted by Jesus and entrusted to the Church. Sacraments are visible rites seen as signs and efficacious channels of the grace of God to all those who receive them with the proper disposition. The sevenfold list of sacraments is often organized into three categories: the sacraments of initiation (into the Church, the body of Christ), consisting of baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist; the sacraments of healing, consisting of reconciliation and anointing of the sick; and the sacraments of service: holy orders and matrimony.
5. The Old Catholic Church believes Apostolic Succession which is the unbroken line of succession beginning with the apostles and perpetuated through bishops by laying on of hands with proper ritual and intent is essential for Holy Orders and Sacraments to be valid. We only recognize the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Church of the East, and Old Catholic Churches which do not ordain females as having valid Apostolic Succession and even then the succession must be tested by the bishop having a church in which the fruits of his labor of ministry to the laity is present for just as there can be no church without the bishop there can be no bishop without the church.
6. We exhort the priests under our jurisdiction: to teach the essential Christian truths by the proclamation of the Word of God and by the instruction of the faithful; to seek and practice charity when discussing controversial doctrines; and in word and deed to set, in accordance with on the foundations of Scripture, Apostolic Doctrine, and the magisterium of the Apostolic Tradition. (Ephesians 2:19) And based on this foundation we reject the contemporary innovations promulgated by many Anglican and Old Catholic Churches, namely: the ordination of women to the Holy Priesthood, the consecration of women to the Episcopate, the blessing of same-sex unions, and baptism in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier. We also regard these innovations as being in defiance of the Holy Scriptures and in contradiction to the Tradition of the first centuries.
7. By maintaining and professing faithfully the doctrine of Jesus Christ, by refusing to admit those errors which by the fault of men have crept into the Catholic Church, by laying aside the abuses in ecclesiastical matters, together with the worldly tendencies of the hierarchy, we believe that we shall be able to combat efficaciously the great evils of our day, which are unbelief and indifference in matters of religion.



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Ceremonial

Old Catholic ceremonial follows the general tradition and practice of Western Catholic Christendom. Any person familiar with the ceremonial of the Roman Catholic Church will, therefore, have no difficulty in following an Old Catholic Mass. Eucharistic Vestments are worn, and the Celebrant is attended by Servers. The Altar and its ornaments are similar to those in a Roman Catholic. A Sanctus Bell is rung generally. Incense is in common use.

There are no silent Masses. Said Masses, without music, and Sung Masses will be found. In some Parishes the congregation answers with the Server. Various settings of music are employed for parts of the Liturgy.

Communion in Both Kinds is the general Old Catholic custom. In some churches Communion is given by Intinction.

Accepted and Sealed by our signatures on August 16th, 2019.


Bishop Michael G. Nesmith


Bishop Robert Burgess


Bishop Thomas Mercer


Bishop Peter Seebold