

## ***The Ecumenical Throne in the Phanar***

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**The Ecumenical Throne has been the symbol** of the Great Church of Christ and the Pan–Orthodox ecumenical family, and the sole institution that has persisted, throughout the history of Hellenism from the time of the First Ecumenical Synod held at Nicaea in 325 and the Second held at Constantinople in 381 down to the dawn of the third millennium;

the symbol of the Church of Constantinople, the "first throne" among the earliest Patriarchates of Eastern Christendom and the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches;

the symbol of Patriarchal jurisdiction, with no geographical frontiers, over the Christian communities of the diaspora as laid down in the 28th canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod held at Chalcedon in 451;

the symbol of the Mother Church of the Slav world and of other peoples who have embraced the Christian faith in consequence of the missionary work of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;

the symbol of the unique institutional entity that endured after the overthrow of the Byzantine Empire and constituted the supreme spiritual, ecclesiastical and civil expression of Orthodox Christians both within and without the Ottoman Empire;

the symbol of the self–sacrifice and martyrdom suffered for the Faith of Christ by thousands of Neomartyrs;

the symbol of the maintenance of the historical conscience and traditional national memory of the variously named Orthodox peoples before the grant of Autocephalous status to the local Churches of Russia in 1589, of Greece in 1850, of Serbia in 1879, of Romania in 1885, of Albania in 1937, of Bulgaria in 1945 and of Georgia in 1990;

and the symbol of the absolute independence enjoyed by all Orthodox Churches, both local, such as of Cyprus, and national, such as of Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Finland.

**The Ecumenical Throne –a walnut wood throne** dedicated in 1577 by Patriarch Jeremias II Tranos and standing since 1600 in the main aisle of the Patriarchal Church of Saint George in the Phanar– cannot be described in its totality because its significance and radiance as a spiritual entity greatly exceed its recorded institutional and juridical structure laid down over sixteen centuries.

The gravity of this sublime symbol is attributed, in perhaps the most idealistic manner, to the ancient tradition that links the sumptuous throne with the holy person of Patriarch John Chrysostom and holds that the people of Constantinople rescued the patriarchal treasure from Saint Sophia during the popular uprising against

imperial heresy in 404 when Emperor Honorius exiled the unyielding John. Twice every year the Phanar solemnly reveres this tradition: on the 21th of January and the 13th of November the Patriarch stands to one side of the throne, while on the throne itself are placed the icon of the Hierarch honoured on those days, the patriarchal cope and the pastoral staff.

**Subject to the Ecumenical Throne and the Holy Synod** in the present day are the Synodical Committees, the Chancery of the Great Church of Christ with responsibility for the patriarchal church, the Church of Constantinople with the Archdiocese of Constantinople and the Metropolises of Chalcedon, Derkoi and Prinkiponissa (the Princes' Islands) that surround the Archdiocese, the Metropolises of the Aegean Islands of Imvros (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada) and the ten Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monasteries in the area of Istanbul.

Subject, too, are: the Monastic State of Mount Athos, the Patriarchal Exarchate of Patmos, the Holy Metropolises of the Dodecanese, the semi-autonomous Church of Crete, the thirty-six Holy Metropolises of the 'New Territories' (Northern Greece and the Eastern Aegean Islands), the administration of which was assigned by Patriarchal Committee to the Church of Greece in 1928; the Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of Saint Anastasia the Pharmakolytria in Chalcediki, the Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of Vlatadon in Thessaloniki and the Patriarchal Foundation for the Study of the Fathers of the Church, and the Virgin Pammakaristos Brotherhood of the Archons of the Holy Great Church of Christ;

the Holy Archdiocese of America with eight metropolitan areas; the Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of the Presentation of the Mother of God in Alabama; and the Patriarchal Orthodox Institution in Berkeley.

Subject to the Patriarchate are the Ukranian Orthodox Church of the Diaspora with Metropolises in the United States of America, Canada, Latin America, Australia and New Zealand, Great Britain, Germany, France and Belgium;

the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese in the United States of America; the Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America; the Byelo-Russian Council of Orthodox Churches in North America;

the Holy Metropolis of Toronto and all Canada;

the Ukranian Orthodox Church in Canada;

the Holy Metropolis of Buenos Aires and South America;

the Holy Metropolis of Panama and Central America, which includes the Caribbean Islands, the Bahamas, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo and Jamaica;

the Holy Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain with four Metropolises and including Ireland and Malta; and the Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, Essex;

the Holy Metropolis of France with three metropolitan dioceses and including Monaco and the Exarchate of the Iberian Peninsula;

the Holy Archdiocese of the Orthodox Russian Parishes of Western Europe, subject firstly to the Holy Metropolis of France and so to the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and the Orthodox Theological Institute of Saint Sergius;

the Holy Metropolis of Germany with four dioceses and eleven Romanian Orthodox parishes;

the Holy Metropolis of Austria with the Exarchy of Hungary;

the Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia;

the Holy Metropolis of Belgium with the Exarchate of the Low Countries and Luxembourg;

the Holy Metropolis of Switzerland; the Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarcat Oecuménique, Chambésy, Geneva; the Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe d' Etudes Supérieures; the Secretariat for the Preparation of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church; and the Permanent Representation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the World Council of Churches;

the Holy Metropolis of Italy with the three hieratic regions and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia;

the Holy Archdiocese of Australia with five prelatric dioceses; and Saint Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College;

the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of New Zealand with the Exarchate of Korea and Japan;

and the Holy Archdiocese of Hong Kong and the Far East which includes the Philippines, China, Singapore, Indonesia and the Exarchate of India; and the Patriarchal Foundation of Orthodox Missions to the Far East (with its headquarters in Athens).

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From the courtyard of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (or *the Phanar*), in the Fener neighbourhood on the shore of the Golden Horn.