



## THE SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

## **I. Council of Nicaea I - 325 A.D.**

First general council of the Christian Church convoked by Emperor Constantine I. Arian-minded bishops proposed a formula of faith (not extant) that was rejected. Eusebius of Caesarea proposed the baptismal creed of his own Church, the oldest eastern creed now known. The word "homoousios" was introduced which affirms that the Word of God (Jesus) is the Father's true Son. The Nicene Creed was composed, defining the divine nature of the Son. The Creed proclaims numerical identity of the Father's nature and the Son's. First dogmatic definition of the Christian Church. Declared Arias a heretic.

The Council also addressed the Easter Question - Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox.

## **II. Council of Constantinople I - 379-395 A.D.**

Defined the divine nature of the Holy Spirit and made an addition to the Nicene Creed. Again dealt with the Arian heresy. Gregory of Nazianzus presided over the Council. Accepted the Nicene Creed, proclaimed Constantinople as the second see in the Empire after Rome. Accepted the consubstantiality and coeternity of the three divine Persons in the Trinity and clarified the perfect humanity of the word against those who deny the soul or the manhood of Christ.

## **III. Council of Ephesus - 408-450 A.D.**

Condemned Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria was one of the main participants. Defined the divine motherhood of the Virgin Mary. Cyril, who represented the Bishop of Rome, maintained that the Being of the Word has not undergone any change in becoming flesh. The Word is united according to the substance (hypostasis) to flesh animated by a rational Soul. Formulation of the theology and dogma of the Incarnation.

## **IV. Council of Chalcedon - 451 A.D.**

Condemned the Robber Council of Ephesus (449) which was dominated by the Monophysite Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria and defined the person of Christ as having two natures, divine and human. It opposed those who would destroy the mystery of the Incarnation by partitioning Christ and refusing to call Mary

Theotokos (the Nestorians), to those who claim that divine nature is capable of suffering, and to those who confuse or amalgamate the two natures and speak of only one nature after the union (Eutyches). The Council defined one Christ, perfect God and man, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with man, one sole being in two natures, without division or separation and without confusion or change. The union does not suppress the difference in natures. However, their properties remain untouched, and they are joined together in one Person or hypostasis.

## **V. Council of Constantinople II - 553 A.D.**

Council affirmed the dogma of Christ put forth in the Council of Ephesus.

## **VI. Council of Constantinople III - 681 A.D.**

Tried to deal with the Monothelism (one will) and Monophysite (one natures or energies) heresies. Proclaimed the doctrine of the two wills and the two natural energies in Christ, undivided, inseparable, and without confusion.

## **VII. Council of Nicaea II - 787 A.D.**

The seventh ecumenical council of the Church and the last to be recognized by the Eastern Church. The legitimacy of the veneration of icons was established. It proclaimed the efficacy of the intercession of the saints. Not really accepted by the West.

The seven great councils are regarded as ecumenical by both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The primary doctrines or dogmas of our faith were defined: The Trinity; the true nature of Christ; the divinity of the Holy Spirit; the role of Mary, the Mother of God; the date of Easter; and, indirectly, the idea of Councils establishing the faith.