

The Second Ecumenical Council

Emperor Theodosius the Great ascended to the imperial throne of the eastern part of the Roman Empire in 379. As a fervent advocate of the Nicene Faith, he aimed to resolve the persisting issues of Arianism that had emerged since the Council of Nicea. Recognizing the challenges posed by Macedonianism and Apollinarianism, he convened a Church council in Constantinople in 381, which would be recognized as the Second Ecumenical Council.

This council robustly condemned all variations of Arian doctrines, reaffirming the creed established at the Nicene Council. It also addressed Macedonianism by affirming the divinity of the Holy Spirit through an addition to the Nicene Creed. This Creed, a product of the first two Ecumenical Councils, holds paramount importance in Orthodox Christianity, recited during baptismal services and the Divine Liturgy, and is revered as the Symbol of Faith. The council further denounced the teachings of Apollinaris.

Canons and Church Organization:

The council's canons reiterated the essential structure of Church governance, asserting the autonomy of each ecclesiastical region:

- Bishops are restricted to their dioceses to prevent ecclesiastical interference. Specific provisions were made for the Bishops of Alexandria, the East, Asia, Pontus, and Thrace, underscoring the principle that each province should self-govern, in alignment with the decisions of the Nicene Council (Canon 2).
- Canon 3 highlighted the prominence of the Bishop of Constantinople, granting him honor after the Bishop of Rome due to Constantinople's status as "New Rome." This

designation aimed to reflect the imperial capital's significance while maintaining the traditional precedence of Old Rome.

Ecclesiastical Tensions and Leadership:

The era's ecclesiastical politics were marked by Pope Damasus's ambition to expand his see's influence, leading to his rejection of Canon 3 despite the acknowledgment of Rome's honorary status. This disagreement signaled the deepening divide in the Church's understanding between the East and West, contributing to the eventual Great Schism in 1054.

Distinguished figures like Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, and Saint Meletios of Antioch led the council, representing the theological and spiritual leadership essential to its outcomes. Their contributions, along with the council's doctrinal affirmations and organizational canons, have left a lasting legacy on the Christian faith, particularly within Orthodox Christianity.