



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

26 May 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Ecumenical Council

ˈe-kyə-ˈme-ni-kəl ˈkaun(t)-səl

From the Greek for the “inhabited earth”; gatherings of Roman Catholic bishops and other church leaders from around the world, called at the discretion of the pope to determine doctrine, address problems, and make pastoral recommendations for the whole church.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-ecumenical-council>

CONTEXT

The Nicene Creed was originally formulated at the first **Ecumenical Council** of the Catholic Church held in Nicea in 325.

—*Catholic Identity, Brisbane Catholic Education*

The church itself can be called in a profound theological sense the “**ecumenical council** formed in response to the divine convoking.”

—*Hans Küng*

WHY IT MATTERS

The church's unity is one of its four essential elements or marks (“one, holy, catholic, and apostolic”). Holding a worldwide institution together on the same page across millennia involves collegiality on the part of its leadership. **Ecumenical Councils** play a vital role in making that unity real.

From Pope John XXIII’s opening speech to the Second Vatican Council: “**Ecumenical Councils**, whenever they are assembled, are a solemn celebration of the union of Christ and His Church, and hence lead to the universal radiation of truth, to the proper guidance of individuals in domestic and social life, to the strengthening of spiritual energies for a perennial uplift toward real and everlasting goodness.”

RELATED WORDS

Marks of the church | Synod | Vatican II | Trent

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

How many councils have there been?

Twenty-one **ecumenical councils** are recognized by the church. Only two are called Vatican councils since the rest were held elsewhere. Five gathered in the Lateran Basilica in Rome. Four convened in Constantinople. Two took place in Nicaea, and two in Lyons. The longest council was held in Trent. Other locations include Ephesus, Chalcedon, Vienne, and Constance. The curious Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence-Rome migrated through all four cities.

What did all these councils decide? The first seven (from 325 to 787) condemned divergent theologies about Jesus and iconoclasm, a movement that destroyed icons used in veneration. The eighth council divided the church into East (Constantinople) and West (Rome).

Later councils attempted to restore unity to the Eastern and Western churches—without success. The Council of Trent (1545-63, with several interruptions) confronted the Protestant Reformation. Vatican I (1869-70) declared papal infallibility. The most recent Vatican Council II (1962-65) promoted engagement with the broader world.

—*Alice Camille, from Questions Catholics Ask <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-councils>*

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

MEMORIAL OF PAUL VI, POPE (MAY 29)

A Pentecostal pope

The ecumenical movement received a much-needed boost during the papacy of Saint Pope Paul VI (1963-78). After the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul went out of his way to promote ecumenical dialogue and partnership. He issued formal approval of a joint Catholic-Protestant translation of the Bible on Pentecost Sunday, when the church commemorates the Holy Spirit’s gift of understanding to all peoples.

READINGS: 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Matthew 16:13-19 (571A <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/0529-paul-vi.cfm>).
“*Upon this rock I will build my Church.*”

FAITH IN ACTION

Continue Pius’ work in forging better communication among all God’s people.