

RELIGION IN GREECE AND ACHAIA...

97% of the population is Orthodox Christians. The remaining 3% includes Muslims, Catholics and Jews. Such a high percentage of Orthodox Christians is found only in Russia. The Orthodox Church is the third largest branch of Christianity.

According to Orthodox history, the very first preacher of Christianity in Greece, was Apostle Paul (49m.Ch.), and the one who instituted the Orthodox doctrine was Emperor Constantine the Great. Emperor Constantine embraced Christian faith in the 4th century, after experiencing a vision of the Cross, on which the words "En touto Nika" (With this you win) were written.

During the 8th century, differences between the Pope of Rome and Patriarch of Constantinople sharpened. Actually, they disagreed on the question of the celibacy of the clergy (priests in Rome were to remain single, while Orthodox priests were allowed to marry before ordained), fasting, and also the nature of the Holy Spirit: for the Orthodox the Holy Spirit originates from the Father, while for Catholics it originates from the Son also (the so-called «Filioque»). Disputes between the two spiritual leaders peaked in 1504, when the schism occurred among the two churches.

Hellenism and Orthodoxy are two concepts tight together due to the particular history of the country. During the Turkish occupation from 1453 until 1821, the Church held a key role in maintaining and determining the identity of Greeks. The Church, strived to save the Greek language, culture, manners, and of course the Orthodox faith. Most importantly, it was able to rally the Greeks and to keep alive the national feeling.

Greece, until 2001 was the only EU country that labelled the religion of its citizens over to the police identities. But since then it has been removed. There is still no official separation of church and state. The Orthodox Church continues to have great influence in Greek society and political life of the country. Greece, in the years of globalization remains a country with deep religious roots, traditions and customs.