



A JOURNAL OF ORTHODOX FAITH AND CULTURE

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ORTHODOX PARISHES AND COMMUNITIES IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

Orthodoxy in Spain has increased dramatically in the past few decades with an influx of approximately 1.5 million Orthodox immigrants from Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova, and other parts of Europe. Romanian Orthodox account for over a million of these newcomers. The number of native Spanish converts is unknown, but one estimate numbers them at less than 2000, usually converting upon marriage to an Orthodox spouse.

However, today's Orthodox communities were not solely established by immigrants. For example, according to Maria Montserrat Ocaña, a founding member of one of the earliest Eastern Orthodox parishes in Spain, the first Orthodox community in Barcelona (Catalonia) was established over forty years ago, when a group of twelve people including native Catalonians and a few Romanian immigrants began an active search for a bishop who would accept them as a parish. "Before 1979, there was only a single Orthodox presence in Spain, a Greek community in Madrid, that held services once a month when a priest came from abroad. We had a priest who was ready to serve, but in 1979, Romania was under the totalitarian control of Communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu and the Romanian Synod could not accept us. After a few years with the Western-rite *l'Eglise Orthodoxe de France*, we understood that they were drifting into canonical difficulties following the death of their advocate, St. John Maximovitch, so we searched elsewhere

*Opposite: Russian Orthodox Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Madrid, 2018.
Courtesy Uriel1022*

and were received by the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate in 1988. Since then we have had a living and active parish in Barcelona. We serve in Slavonic with the Gospel and some prayers also in Catalanian.”

In addition to the recently-formed Assembly of Bishops of the Orthodox Church of Spain and Portugal, the Patriarchates of Serbia, Moscow, Bulgaria, Rumania, Georgia and Constantinople all have Spanish and/or Portuguese dioceses.

A wonderful online resource to locate these churches and communities is the World Orthodox Directory, which began in 2006 with the aim of developing a complete online directory of worldwide Orthodox Christian institutions. The directory currently includes more than ten thousand listings of cathedrals, monasteries, churches, chapels, missions, sketes, seminaries, schools, orphanages, nursing homes, and museums from approximately fifty countries from all over the world.

The directory currently lists seventy-seven churches and two monasteries in Spain, including the cities and towns of: Alva, Albacete, Alicante, Almeria, Asturias, Avila, Badajoz, Baleares, Barcelona, Burgos, Cadiz, Cantabria, Castellon, Ciudad Real, Cordoba, Cuenca, Girona, Granada, Guadalajara, Guipuzcoa, Huesca, La Coruna, La Rioja, Leon, Lleida, Madrid, Malaga, Murcia, Navarra, Pontevedra, Salamanca, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Segovia, Seville, Soria, Tarragona, Tervel, Valencia, Valladolid, Vizcaya, and Zaragoza.

All of the above have one or two churches or missions, with more in Alicante (5), Balcares (4), Barcelona (5), Castellon (3), Girona (6), Madrid (6), and Valencia (4).

Portugal has two churches, in Lisbon and Faro.

Many of these churches and mission chapels operate in church buildings or on territories provided for the Orthodox communities by Catholic hierarchs of the eighty-seven Roman Catholic dioceses of Spain and Portugal. Some have been built by the Orthodox themselves. Following the directory's links from the towns, to maps, to parish information will provide the church's address, jurisdiction, and other pertinent information.

The location of the two Spanish monasteries is unclear from the website. One is listed as being in Segovia, and the other, from another internet source, seems to be the Villaler Monastery in Alta Ribagorça, given to the Romanian Orthodox Diocese by the local Roman Catholic bishop. ✝

The World Orthodox Directory can be found at: <https://orthodox-world.org/en/index>

Opposite: Interior of Greek Orthodox Church of Sts. Andrew and Demetrius, Madrid.

