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Large Orthodox delegations at Pope's funeral

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Vatican, Apr. 08 (CWNNews.com) - Orthodox Church leaders were extremely well represented at the funeral of Pope John Paul II ([bio - news](#)), in an unmistakable testimony to the late Pope's efforts to restore unity between Christians of the East and West.

The Archbishop of Canterbury led a large Anglican delegation to the funeral, and there were many prominent Jewish religious leaders (including the late Pope's good friend, Rome's former chief Rabbi Elio Toaff) and delegations of Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim clerics. But the most noteworthy representations came from the Eastern churches.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople was the senior Orthodox prelate in attendance-- as, indeed, he is the leading figure in the Orthodox world. Despite frequent clashes with the Holy See during the past decade, the Russian Orthodox Church sent Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk, the top ecumenical official of the Moscow patriarchate. The Greek Orthodox patriarchates of Alexandria and Jerusalem were represented, respectively, by Metropolitan Petros and Bishop Theoktist. A total of 36 prelates represented the 12 autocephalous churches of the Orthodox world: the Orthodox churches of Ukraine, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Finland, Bulgaria, the Czech and Slovak republics, Cypress, Greece, Poland, Albania, and America.

There were also many representatives from the Oriental Orthodox churches-- those Christian bodies that broke with Rome in the 5th century after the Council of Chalcedon. Among them were the Coptic patriarch of Egypt and the Syriac patriarch of Antioch. Catholicos Karekin II led a substantial group from the Armenian Apostolic Church, which had drawn very close to Rome during the latest pontificate. Also present were Patriarchs Abba Paulos of Ethiopia; Mar Dinkha IV of the Assyrian Church, and an envoy from the Eritrean Orthodox Church.

Glossary Terms: [Metropolitan](#), [prelate](#), [Oriental Orthodox](#)

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