

The Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church

The Great Feasts of the Church are solemn celebrations that honor our Lord and His Mother. Orthodox Christians are expected to participate in these feasts by attending Vespers, Matins, and Liturgy to receive communion. However, due to the fact that some of these feasts occur during the weekdays, it may not be feasible to attend all three services. In such cases, it is advisable to attend the Great Vespers the evening preceding the feast and, if possible, visit a church to light a candle on the day of the feast en route to work or school.

Additionally, it is imperative to keep your calendar updated to ensure that you are aware of the dates of the Great Feasts.

Fixed Feasts

- **The Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8)**¹— In this Feast, we commemorate the nativity of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

The Apolytikion: “Your birth, O Theotokos, brought joy to the whole world, for from you dawned the sun of righteousness, Christ our God. Freeing us from the curse, He gave us His blessings. Abolishing death, He granted us eternal life.”



¹ Please note that the Church Year begins on September 1st, not January 1st.

- **The Elevation of the Cross (September 14)**—This is the celebration commemorating the discovery of the cross by St. Helen in the 4th century. Upon its discovery, St. Macarius, Archbishop of Jerusalem, elevated it.

Apolytikion: “Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance, granting our rulers to prevail over adversaries, and protecting Your commonwealth by Your Cross.”



- **The Entrance of the Theotokos (November 21)**—This feast, commemorating the 40th day after the birth of the Theotokos, celebrates her entry into the Temple as a young maiden. She resided there until she was betrothed to Joseph.

Apolytikion: “Today is the prelude of God's pleasure and the proclamation of man's salvation. The Virgin is clearly made manifest in the temple of God and foretells Christ to all. Let us also cry out to her with mighty voice, ‘Hail, fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation.’”



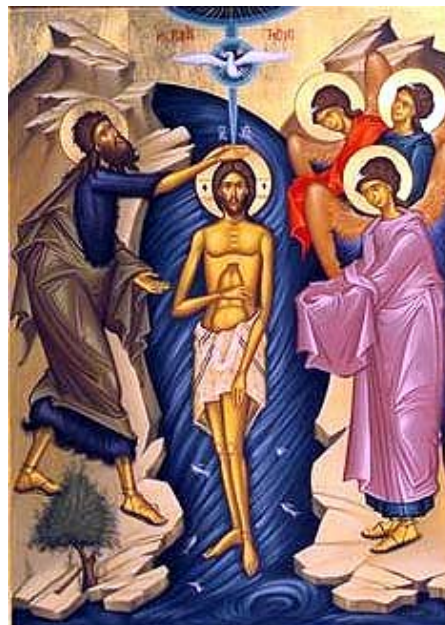
- **The Nativity of Christ (December 25)**—This is the celebration of the birth of our Lord.

Apolytikion: “Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; for thereby they that worshipped the stars were instructed by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee.”



- **Theophany (January 6)**—This feast is sometimes referred to as Epiphany. For Orthodox Christians, it commemorates the baptism of Christ and the revelation of the Trinity.

Apolytikion: “Lord, when You were baptized in the Jordan, the veneration of the Trinity was revealed. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You Beloved, and the Spirit, in the guise of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. Glory to You, Christ our God, who appeared and enlightened the world.”



- **The Presentation of Christ (February 2)**—This feast, which takes place 40 days after Christmas, commemorates the occasion when Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to the Temple following his birth. During this visit, he encountered Saints Simeon and Anna.

Apolytikion: “Hail Virgin Theotokos full of Grace, for Christ our God, the Sun of Righteousness, has dawned from you, granting light to those in darkness. And you, O Righteous Elder, rejoice, taking in your arms, the Deliverance of our souls, who grants us Resurrection.”



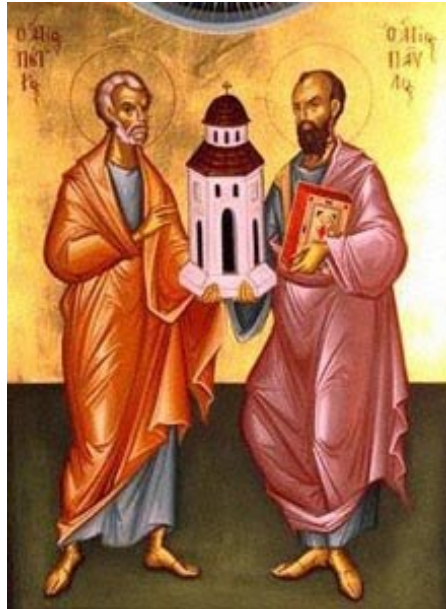
- **The Annunciation (March 25)**—This Feast commemorates the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, who was subsequently asked by Gabriel to bear the Son of God. Mary’s affirmative response, “Yes,” is the foundation of this sacred celebration.

Apolytikion: “Today marks the crowning of our salvation and the revelation of the mystery before all ages. For the Son of God becomes the son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaims the grace. Wherefore, we also cry out with him, ‘Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with you.’”



- **Ss. Peter and Paul (June 29)**—In this feast, we celebrate the two great saints of the church: Ss. Peter and Paul. I added them to this list because we fast in preparation for this feast.

Apolytikion: “First in prominence among the Apostles, and teachers to the Universe, intercede to the Master of all for peace in the world and for our souls great mercy.”



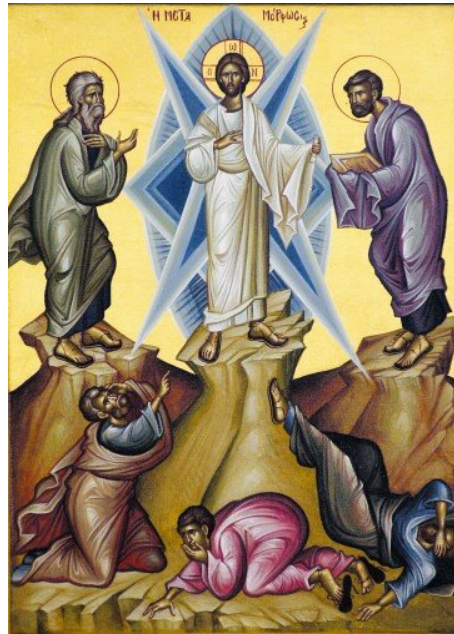
- **Holy Apostles (June 30)**—This is our Patronal Feast Day. We celebrate the 12 Holy Apostles.

Apolytikion: “O Holy Apostles, we ask your prayers before the merciful God, that he grant unto our souls forgiveness of our transgressions.”



- **The Transfiguration of Christ (August 6)**—In this Feast, we witness Christ’s divine light unveiled to his apostles as he stands between Elijah and Moses.

Apolytikion: “You were transfigured on the Mount, Christ God revealing Your glory to Your disciples, insofar as they could comprehend. Illuminate us sinners also with Your everlasting light, through the intercessions of the Theotokos. Giver of light, glory to You.”



- **The Dormition (August 15)**—This feast is sometimes referred to as the Assumption. In this celebration, we commemorate the peaceful repose of the Mother of God and her corporeal ascent to heaven.

Apolytikion: “In birth, you preserved your virginity; in death, you did not abandon the world, O Theotokos. As mother of life, you departed to the source of life, delivering our souls from death by your intercessions.”

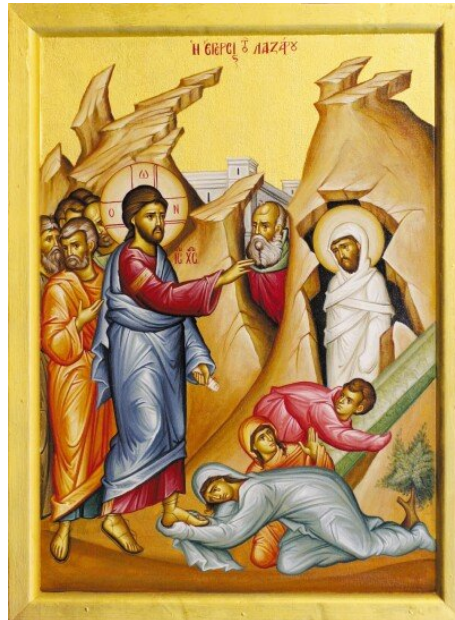


Movable Feasts

These feasts fall on different dates, depending on when Pascha is celebrated. Please consult a calendar for specific dates.

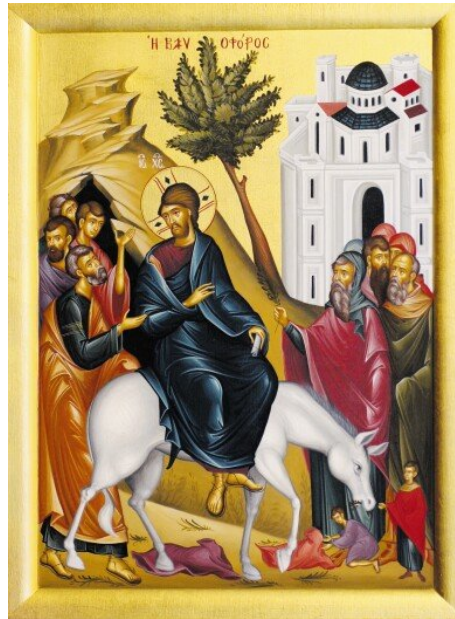
- **Soul Saturdays**—On these days, we offer prayers for our departed loved ones. You may submit a list of names to Fr. Dustin, and bring Koliva. Soul Saturdays are observed on the Saturday preceding Meat-fare Sunday and the Saturday preceding Pentecost.
- **Saturday of Lazarus**—This Feast commemorates Jesus’s resurrection of Lazarus and anticipates his own resurrection. It is celebrated on the Saturday before Palm Sunday.

Apolytikion: “O Christ our God, before Your Passion, You raised Lazarus from the dead to confirm the common Resurrection for all. Therefore, we carry the symbols of victory as did the youths, and we cry out to You, the victor over death, ‘Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”



- **Palm Sunday**—In this feast, we witness Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, marking the commencement of his preparations for his crucifixion. It is commemorated on the Sunday preceding Easter.

Apolytikion: “O Christ our God, before Your Passion, You raised Lazarus from the dead to confirm the common Resurrection for all. Therefore, we carry the symbols of victory as did the youths, and we cry out to You, the victor over death, ‘Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”



- **Holy Week:** This week precedes Pascha, during which numerous services are held, including Bridegroom Matins, Unction, Vespers, the Twelve Passion Gospels, the Royal Hours, and the Lamentations.

- **Pascha (Passover), the Feast of Feasts**—This feast, sometimes referred to as Easter, commemorates the resurrection of Christ. On Saturday morning, we partake in a Vespers Liturgy, the First Resurrection Service. Subsequently, we celebrate with the Anastasi (Resurrection) service in the late hours of the night. On Sunday, we conclude the festivities with the Agape (Love) Vespers.

Apolytikion: “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.”



- **Bright Week**—This week marks the commemoration of the resurrection. In certain years, the Feast of St. George is observed on Bright Monday. The culmination of the week is typically the Feast of the Life-Giving Font, which is celebrated on Bright Friday.

- **The Ascension**—This feast, which invariably occurs on a Thursday (40 days following Easter), commemorates the ascension of our Lord into Heaven, where, seated at the right hand of God, we find our ultimate destination.

Apolytikion: “O Christ our God, You ascended in Glory and gladdened Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Your blessing assured them that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.”



- **Pentecost Sunday**—This feast, which is always 50 days after Easter, commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church.

Apolytikion: “Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who made fishermen all-wise, sending upon them the Holy Spirit and, through them, netting the world. O Loving One, glory to You.”

