



FEASTS AND FASTS

of the Orthodox Church



CENTER FEAST

At the center of all feasts celebrated in the Orthodox Church is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, called Pascha (or Easter).



GREAT FEASTS

- There is a group of Twelve Great Feasts
- Together with Pascha, these are the most significant dates on the Orthodox liturgical calendar
- Eight of the great feasts celebrate events in the life of Jesus, while the other four are dedicated to His Mother, the Virgin Mary



CHRONOLOGY

In the Orthodox Church, we follow the Byzantine annual calendar which starts on September 1. Here is the list of the Great Feasts according to this calendar:

1. The Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8)
2. The Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14)
3. The Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple (November 21)
4. The Nativity of Christ (December 25)
5. The Baptism of Christ (January 6)
6. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (February 2)
7. The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary (March 25)
8. Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Pascha)
9. Ascension of Christ (40 days after Pascha)
10. Pentecost (50 days after Pascha)
11. The Transfiguration (August 6)
12. The Dormition of the Theotokos (August 15)

Η ΓΕΝΝΗΣΙΣ Τῆς ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ



THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS (SEPTEMBER 8)

- The Feast commemorates the Virgin Mary's miraculous birth.
- The birth and early life of the Virgin Mary is not recorded in the Gospels or other books of the New Testament, however this information can be found in a work dating from the second century known as the Book of James or Protevangelion

Η ΓΕΝΝΗΣΙΣ Τῆς ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ



THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

(SEPTEMBER 8)

- According to the story found in this book, Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, were childless for many years. They remained faithful to God, but their prayers for a child were unanswered.
- As Joachim was praying, his wife Anna was praying at the same time at their house in Jerusalem. An angel appeared to both of them and announced that Anna would have a child whose name would be known throughout the world. Anna promised to offer her child as a gift to the Lord.
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/nativity-theotokos



THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

(SEPTEMBER 14)

- The Feast commemorates the finding of the True Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by Saint Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine
- Apolytikion - Save, O Lord, Your people and bless Your inheritance; grant victory to the faithful over their adversaries. And **protect Your commonwealth, by the power of Your Cross**
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/exaltation

ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE



THE PRESENTATION OF THE THEOTOKOS IN THE TEMPLE (NOVEMBER 21)

- The Feast commemorates when as a young child, the Virgin Mary entered the Temple in Jerusalem
- This information comes to us from the St. James' Protoevangelion, as well
- According to tradition, the event took place when the child of the righteous Joachim and Ana turned three years old

ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE



THE PRESENTATION OF THE THEOTOKOS IN THE TEMPLE (NOVEMBER 21)

- 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, "Rejoice, fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation."
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/entrance-theotokos



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

(DECEMBER 25)

- The Feast of the Nativity of Christ is one of the most joyful days of the Orthodox Church.
- It ranks next to the greatest Feastday, His Resurrection.
- The Feast is also known as the "Incarnation of Christ."
- This means that the Son of God came into the world and became man to save us.
- We also refer to this joyous feast as Christmas.



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

(DECEMBER 25)

- The news comes from the Scripture: "Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior; which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12)



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

(DECEMBER 25)

- Apolytikion: Your Nativity, O Christ our God, **has caused the light of knowledge to rise upon the world**. For therein the worshippers of the stars were by a star instructed to worship You, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know You as Orient from on high. Glory to You, O Lord.
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/-/feast-of-the-nativity



THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

(JANUARY 6)

- The feast commemorates the Baptism of Christ and the divine revelation (manifestation) of the Holy Trinity
- That's why it is also known as The Feast of the Holy Theophany (Epiphany) = manifestation of God
- The Biblical story of the Baptism of Christ is recorded in all four of the Gospels: Matthew 3, Mark 1:1-9, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:31-34.



THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

(JANUARY 6)

- Apolytikion: As You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, then **the worship of the Trinity became manifest**, for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, naming You the Beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, **confirmed the certainty of the word**. O Christ God, who appeared and illumined the world, glory to You.
- Learn more: <https://www.goarch.org/epiphany>



THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

(FEBRUARY 2)

- The story of the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29
- This feast commemorates the time when Jesus was brought to the Temple by His mother, the Virgin Mary, and Joseph. This happened on the 40th day after His birth.
- We still do this today when babies are brought to church by their parents on the 40th day after birth (called Churching or 40-Day Blessing)



THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

(FEBRUARY 2)

- Apolytikion - Rejoice 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.
- <https://www.goarch.org/presentation>



THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS (MARCH 25)

- The Feast commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she will give birth to Christ in the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-39)
- In faith and obedience to the will of God, Mary replied to the angel, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word.”



THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS (MARCH 25)

- 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, "Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you."
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/annunciation



PALM SUNDAY (SUNDAY BEFORE PASCHA)

- The commemoration of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem following His glorious miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead
- Related in all Gospels: Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; and John 12:12-18



PALM SUNDAY (SUNDAY BEFORE PASCHA)

- Apolytikion - By raising Lazarus from the dead before Your passion, You did **confirm the universal resurrection**, O Christ God! Like the children with the palms of victory, we cry out to You, O Vanquisher of death: **Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!**
- Hosanna = “Save, we pray”
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/palmsunday-learn



THE RESURRECTION

(MOVABLE FEAST)

- The Central Feast of Christianity, celebrates the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- Apolytikion - Christ is **risen from the dead**, by **death trampling down upon death**, and to those in the tombs **He has granted life**.
- Learn more: <https://www.goarch.org/pascha-learn>

HOLY

ASCENSION



THE ASCENSION

(40 DAYS AFTER PASCHA)

- Commemorates when, on the fortieth day after His Resurrection, Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives, and after blessing them and asking them to wait for the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:3-11)
- 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.
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/ascension



THE PENTECOST

(50 DAYS AFTER PASCHA)

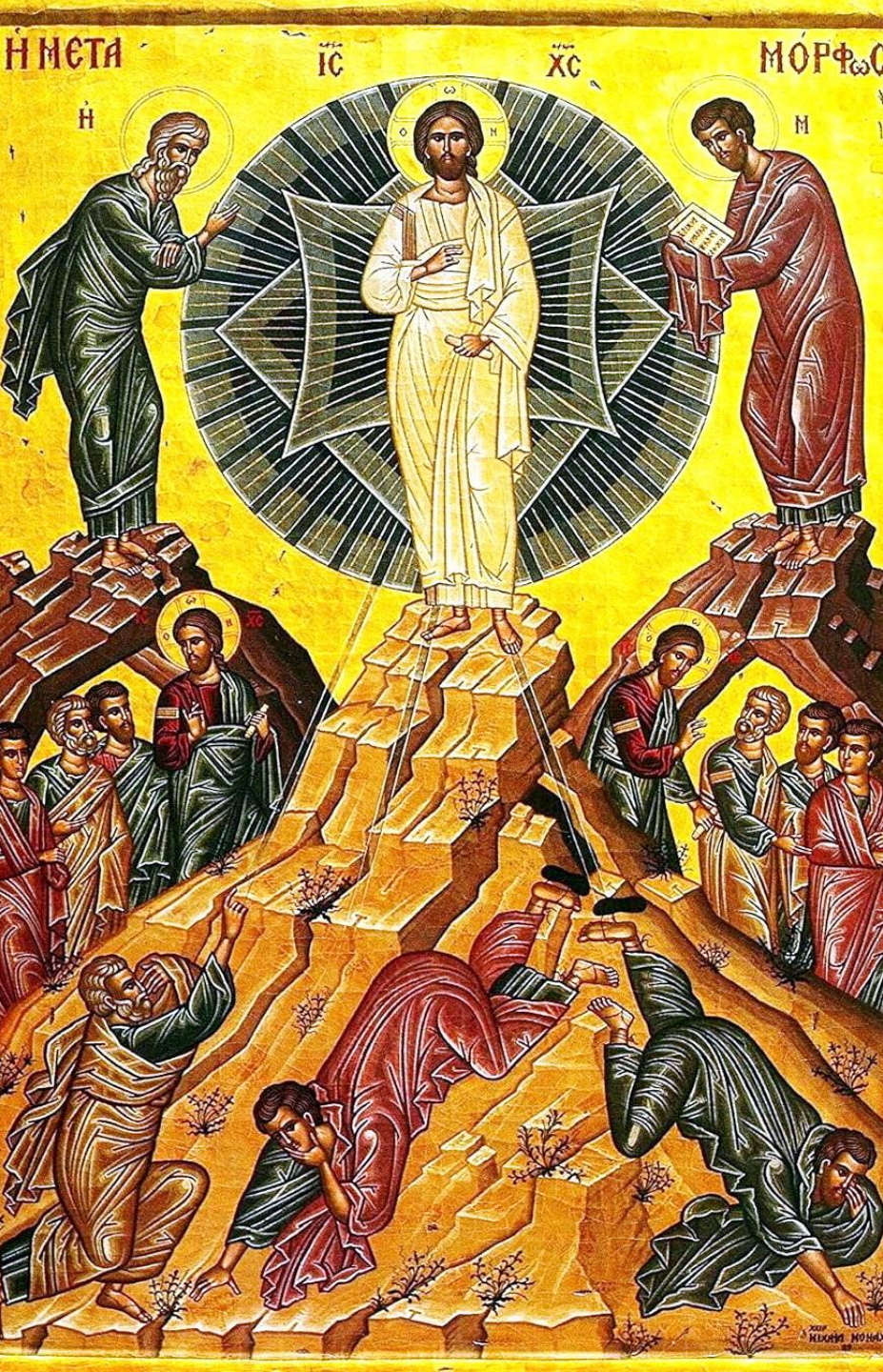
- The Feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, a feast of the Jewish tradition
- It also celebrates the establishment of the Church through the preaching of the Apostles and the baptism of the thousands who on that day believed in the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ
- The Feast is also seen as the culmination of the revelation of the Holy Trinity



THE PENTECOST

(50 DAYS AFTER PASCHA)

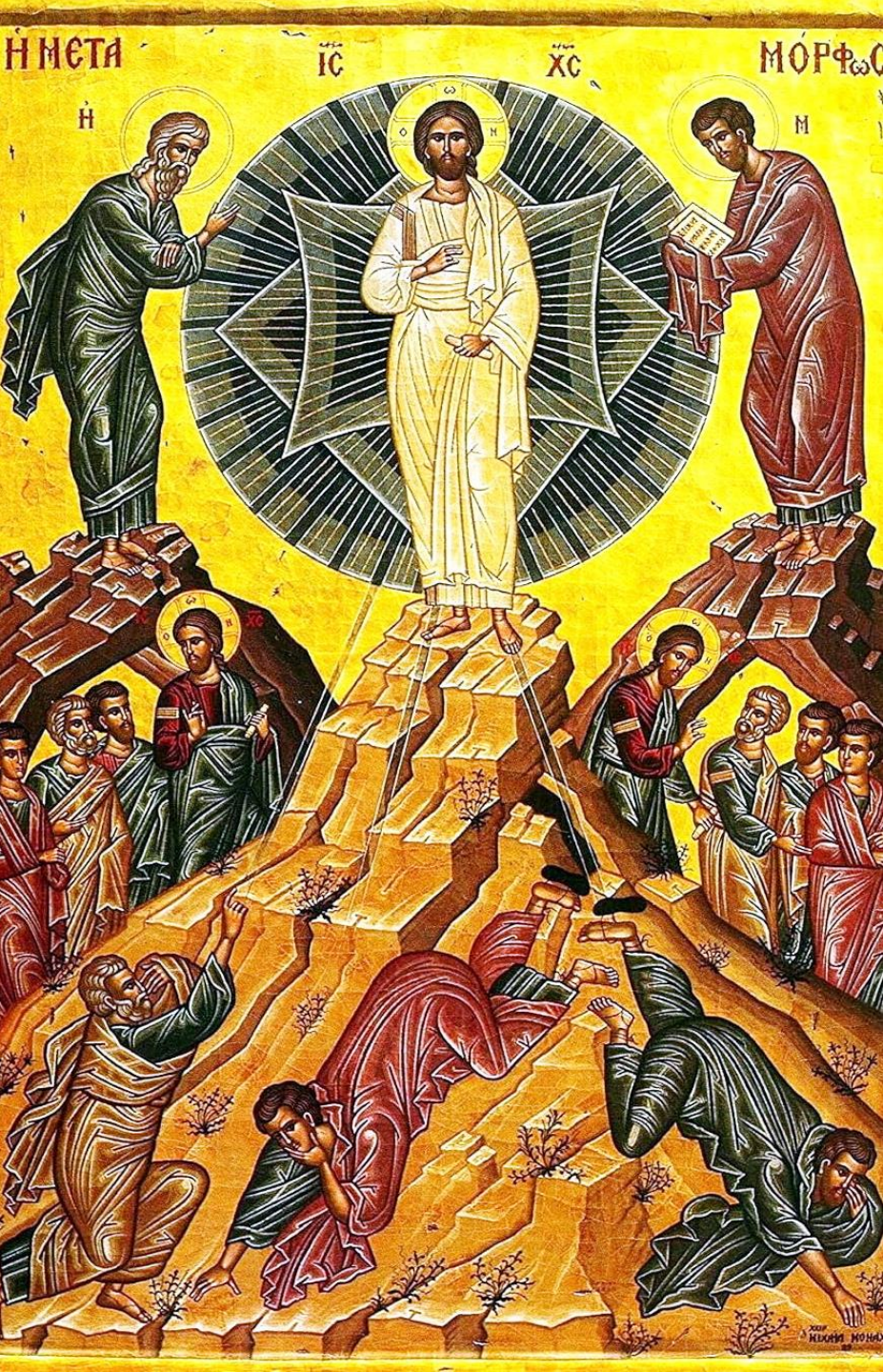
- Apolytikion - Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who made fisherman all-wise, by **sending down upon them the Holy Spirit**, and through them, **drawing all the world into Your net**. O Loving One, glory be to You.
- Learn more: <https://www.goarch.org/pentecost>



THE TRANSFIGURATION

(AUGUST 6)

- Commemorates the Transfiguration (change in appearance or metamorphosis) of Christ on Mount Tabor, when He revealed His divine glory before the Apostles Peter, James, and John.
- Recorded in all Gospels: Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36
- God the Father affirms Christ before the Apostles: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."



THE TRANSFIGURATION

(AUGUST 6)

- 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.
- Learn more: <https://www.goarch.org/transfiguration>



THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS (AUGUST 15)

- Commemorates the repose (dormition, in Greek Kemesis) or "falling-asleep" of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. The Feast also commemorates the translation or assumption of her body into heaven.
- There are no scriptural references of the Dormition, it is derived only from Holy Tradition (Protoevangelion of St. James)



THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS (AUGUST 15)

- 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**
- Learn more: www.goarch.org/dormition



MOVABLE & FIXED

Notice that three of the Twelve Great Feasts depend on the date of Pascha and are called "movable"; the rest are "fixed."



MINOR FEASTS

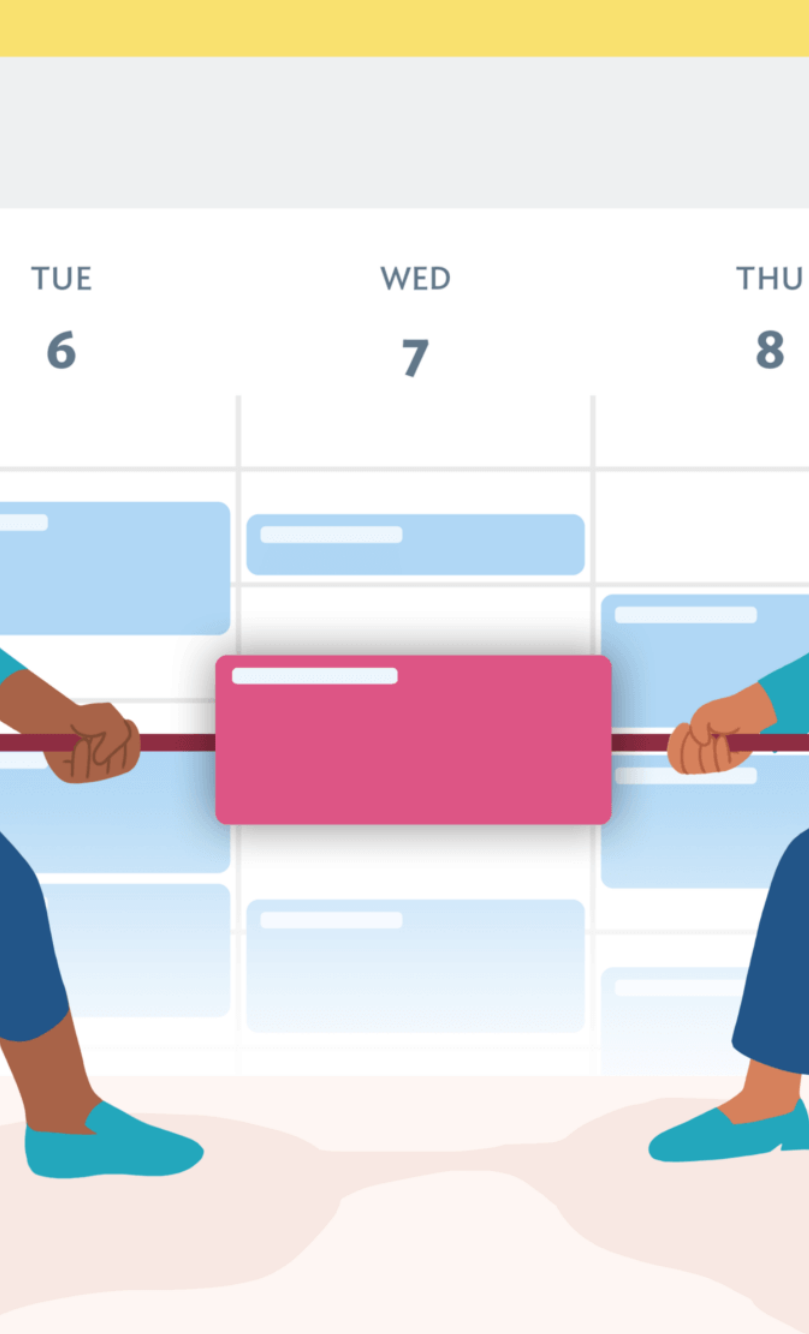
There are also many other feasts. Among the more important are:

- The Circumcision of Christ; St Basil (1 January)
- The Three Great Hierarchs (30 January)
- The Nativity of St John the Baptist (24 June)
- St Peter and St Paul (29 June)
- The Beheading of St John the Baptist (29 August)
- The Protecting Veil of the Theotokos (1 October)
- St Nicolas the Wonderworker (6 December)
- All Saints (First Sunday after Pentecost)



OLD VS NEW CALENDAR

- Up until the end of First World War, Orthodox used the Julian Calendar, which is at present 13 days behind the New or Gregorian Calendar currently used in the west
- In 1923 an Inter-Orthodox Congress decided to adopt the New Calendar but not all Orthodox churches were on board:
 - **New Calendar:** Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and the OCA
 - **Old Calendar:** Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, Georgia and Poland, and the Holy Mountain of Athos



DISCREPANCIES

- This division led to 13 days discrepancy in celebrating church feasts
- The only exception is that all Orthodox celebrate Pascha at the same time (the Old Calendar is still used to calculate it)



DATE OF PASCHA

- Determined by a calculation based on the vernal equinox and the phase of the moon
- According to the rules of the First Ecumenical Synod, Pascha should fall on the Sunday which follows the first full moon after the vernal equinox
- If the full moon happens to fall on a Sunday, Easter is observed the following Sunday
- The day taken to be the invariable date of the vernal equinox is March 21
- The reason we do not celebrate together with western Christians is because we still calculate the date of Easter using the Old Julian Calendar, which was in use at the time of the First Ecumenical Council



FASTS

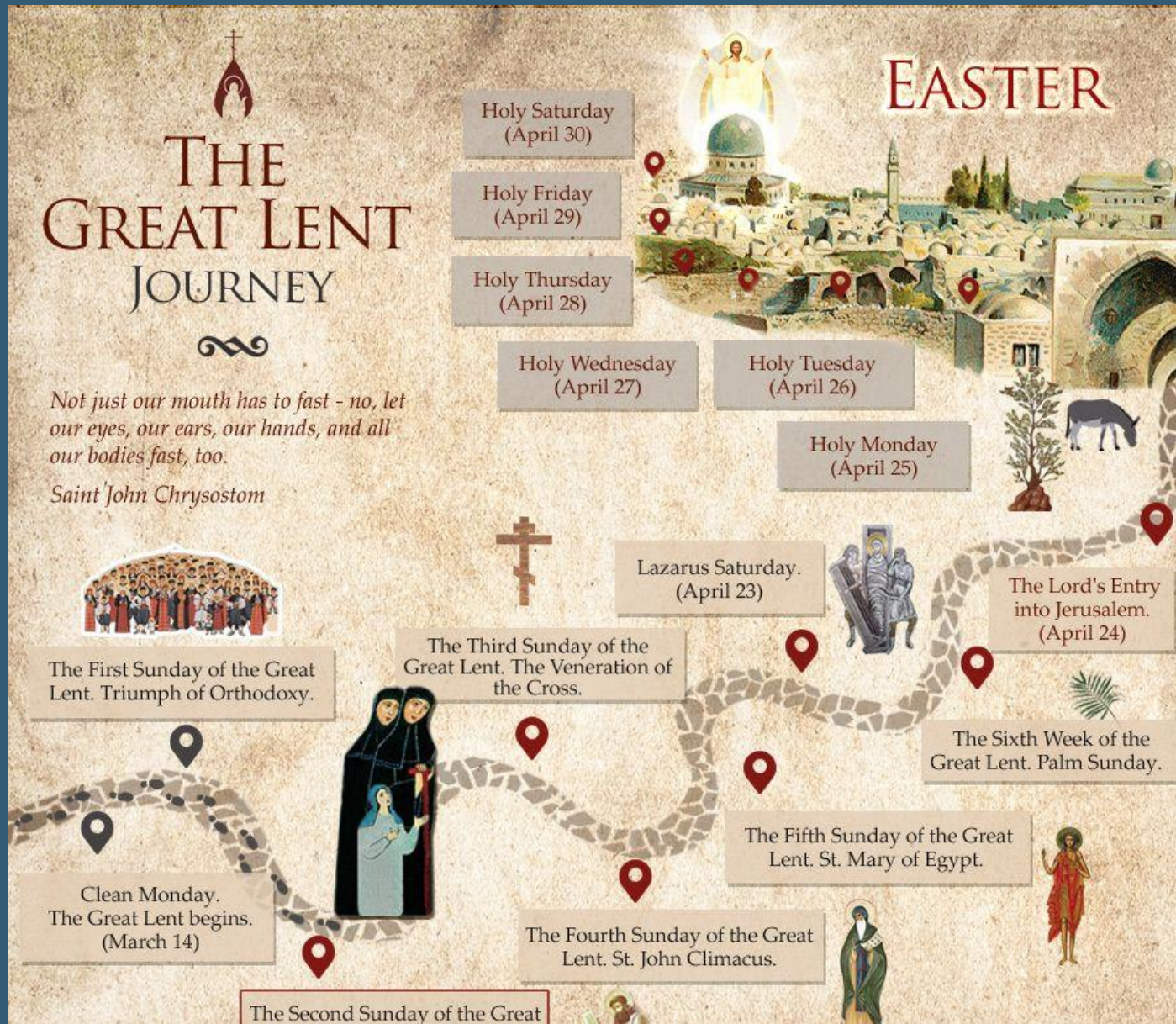
- Besides days of celebration, there are periods of fasting. Why is fasting important?
- Because God created us with body and soul
- Just as the soul needs training with prayer and meditation, the body needs training with fasting
- The fruit of fasting is **self-control**, one of the most important virtues protecting us against sin

THE GREAT LENT JOURNEY

Not just our mouth has to fast - no, let our eyes, our ears, our hands, and all our bodies fast, too.

Saint John Chrysostom

EASTER



PERIODS OF FASTING

- **The Great Fast** – begins seven weeks before Pascha
- **The Fast of the Apostles** – starts on the Monday eight days after Pentecost, and ends on 28 June, the eve of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (variable in length)
- **The Dormition Fast** – lasts two weeks, from 1 to 14 August
- **The Christmas Fast** – lasts forty days, from 15 November to 24 December




Apolytikion. Fourth

Your birth, O Christ our God, has brought us knowledge upon the earth of those who adored stars and idols, to worship You, the Sun and Moon, O Christ our God, You, Orient from on High.

Ἀπολυτίκιον Ἦχος

Ἦ γέννησίς σου Χριστέ ὁ τῷ κόσμῳ, τὸ φῶς τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας, γὰρ οἱ τοῖς ἀστράσι λατρεῖν ἐδιδάσκοντο, σὲ προσκυνεῖν δὲ δικαιοσύνης, καὶ σὲ γινώσκοντες ἀνατολὴν, Κύριε δόξα σοι.

Learn more about this feast at goarch.org/wallcalendar
Icon provided by Theologic

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
				01 + I Timothy 4:4-8 Luke 20:19-26 Nahum the Prophet Φιλᾶρετ ὁ Μερκεφίλου Ναούμ Προφήτης Φιλᾶρετος ὁ Ἐλεμίων
04 + Galatians 3:23-29, 4:1-5 Mark 5:24-34 Barbara the Great Martyr John the Righteous of Damascus Βαρβάρᾳ Μεγαλομάρτυρὶς Τυάδωνος ὁ Δαρσοσκηνός	05 + Galatians 5:22-26, 6:1-2 Matthew 11:27-30 Savas the Sanctified Martyr Diogenes Σάβας ὁ Ἠγιασμένος Διογένους Μάρτυρος	06 + Hebrews 13:17-21 Luke 6:17-23 Nicholas the Wonderworker Nicholas the New Martyr Νικόλαος ὁ Θαυματουργός Νικόλαος Νεομάρτυρος	07 + I Timothy 6:17-21 Luke 21:28-33 Ambrose, Bishop of Milan Athenodoros of Mesopotamia Ἀμβρόσιος Ἐπίτ. Μεσοποταμῶν Μάρτυρ Ἀθηνόδοτος	08 + II Timothy 11:2, 8-18 Luke 21:37-38, 22:1-8 Forefeast Conception of the Thebes Παλαῖος ὁ Θεβῶν Προεόρτια Σουλίου Παλαῖος Ὅσιος
11 + II Timothy 2:20-26 Mark 8:11-21 Daniel the Stylite Luke, Stylite of Chalcedon Δανιήλ ὁ Στυλίτης Λουκάς ὁ Στυλίτης	12 + Ephesians 5:8-19 John 10:9-16 Spyridon the Wonderworker Peter the Aleuti Σπυρίδων ὁ Θαυματουργός Νεομάρτυρ Πέτρος ὁ Ἀλεῦτ	13 + II Timothy 4:9-22 Mark 8:30-34 Auxentios & Martyrs of Sebaste Herman of Alaska Εὐστροπάτος, Ἀὐξέντιος, Ἐδύγιος Γερμανός Ἀλάσκου	14 + Titus 1:5-14 Mark 9:10-15 Thyrsos, Leucius, & Callinicos Θύρσος, Καλλινίκος, Λεύκιος	15 + II Timothy 1:8-18 Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-5 Eleutherios, Bishop of Sardis Susanah the Deaconess Ἐλευθέριος καὶ Ἀνθία Ὁσιομάρτυρ Σιῶδωνα
18 + Hebrews 3:5-11, 17-19 Mark 9:42-50, 10:1 Sebastian & his Companions Σεβαστιανός καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ	19 + Hebrews 4:1-13 Mark 10:2-12 Boniface of Tarsus Gregentius, Bishop of Ethiopia Βονιφάτιος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ Γρηγέντιος, Ἐπίτ. Αἰθιοπίας	20 + Hebrews 10:32-38 Mark 9:33-41 Ignatius the God-Bearer Philogonius, Bishop of Antioch Ἰγνατίος ὁ Θεοφόρος Φιλογόνιος, Πατριάρχης Ἀντιοχείας	21 + Hebrews 7:1-6 Mark 10:17-27 Juliana & 650 Companions Themistocles, Martyr of Myra Τουλιανή καὶ οἱ 650 σὺν αὐτῇ Μάρτυρ Θεμιστοκλής	22 + Hebrews 7:18-25 Mark 10:24-32 Anastasia the Great Chrysogonos the Martyr Ἀναστασία Μεγαλομάρτυρ Χρυσόγονος Μάρτυρος
25 HOLY NATIVITY Galatians 4:4-7 Matthew 2:1-12  Γέννησις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	26 Hebrews 2:11-18 Matthew 2:13-23 Synaxis of the Theotokos Euthemios, Bishop of Sardis Συναξίς τῆς Θεοτόκου Εὐθέμιος, Ἐπίσκοπος Σαρδεῶν	27 Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60 Matthew 21:33-42 Stephen, First Martyr Theodore the Confessor Στέφανος Πρωτομάρτυρ Θεόδωρος ὁ Γραπτός	28 Hebrews 10:35-39; 11:1-7 Luke 14:25-35 20,000 Martyrs in Nicomedia Martyr Glykerios 20.000 Μάρτυρες ἐν Νικομηδείᾳ Γλυκερίας Ἱερομάρτυρος	29 Hebrews 2:11-18 Matthew 2:13-23 14,000 Infants (Holy Righteous) Marcellus 14.000 Ἰνφάντ Ὅσιος Μάρκελλος
				FASTING LEGEND + STRICT FAST + WINE/OIL ALLOWED + FISH ALLOWED NOTES NO SYMBOL: FAS

ADDITIONAL FASTS

- Every **Wednesday** and **Friday**, with some exceptions noted in the calendar
- That is why it is important for each Orthodox household to have one

Ἡ ὙΨΩΣΙΣ Τῆς ΤΙΜῆς Σταυροῦ



OTHER FAST DAYS (STRICT)

- The Exaltation of the Cross (September 14)
- The Beheading of St John the Baptist (August 29)
- The Eve of Epiphany (January 5)



FASTING RULES



- Very strict in the Orthodox Church: no animal products like meat , dairy, and even oil and wine are excluded on the stricter days
- Great Lent is by far the stricter one
- Christmas Fast is more lenient
- Not everyone is able to keep a strict fasting
- Guidance from one’s priest confessor is recommended

THANK YOU

All materials will be posted on
holycrossgo.org/adult-catechism

