



MAJOR FEASTDAYS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH





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References and information from the Greek Orthodox Church of America website, www.goarch.org

September 20, 2023



METROPOLIS
OF DETROIT



TRANSFIGURATION

FEAST DAY
AUGUST 6



The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on August 6. The feast commemorates the transfiguration or metamorphosis of Christ on Mount Tabor, when our Lord appeared in His divine glory before the Apostles Peter, James, and John.



Η ΜΕΤΑ

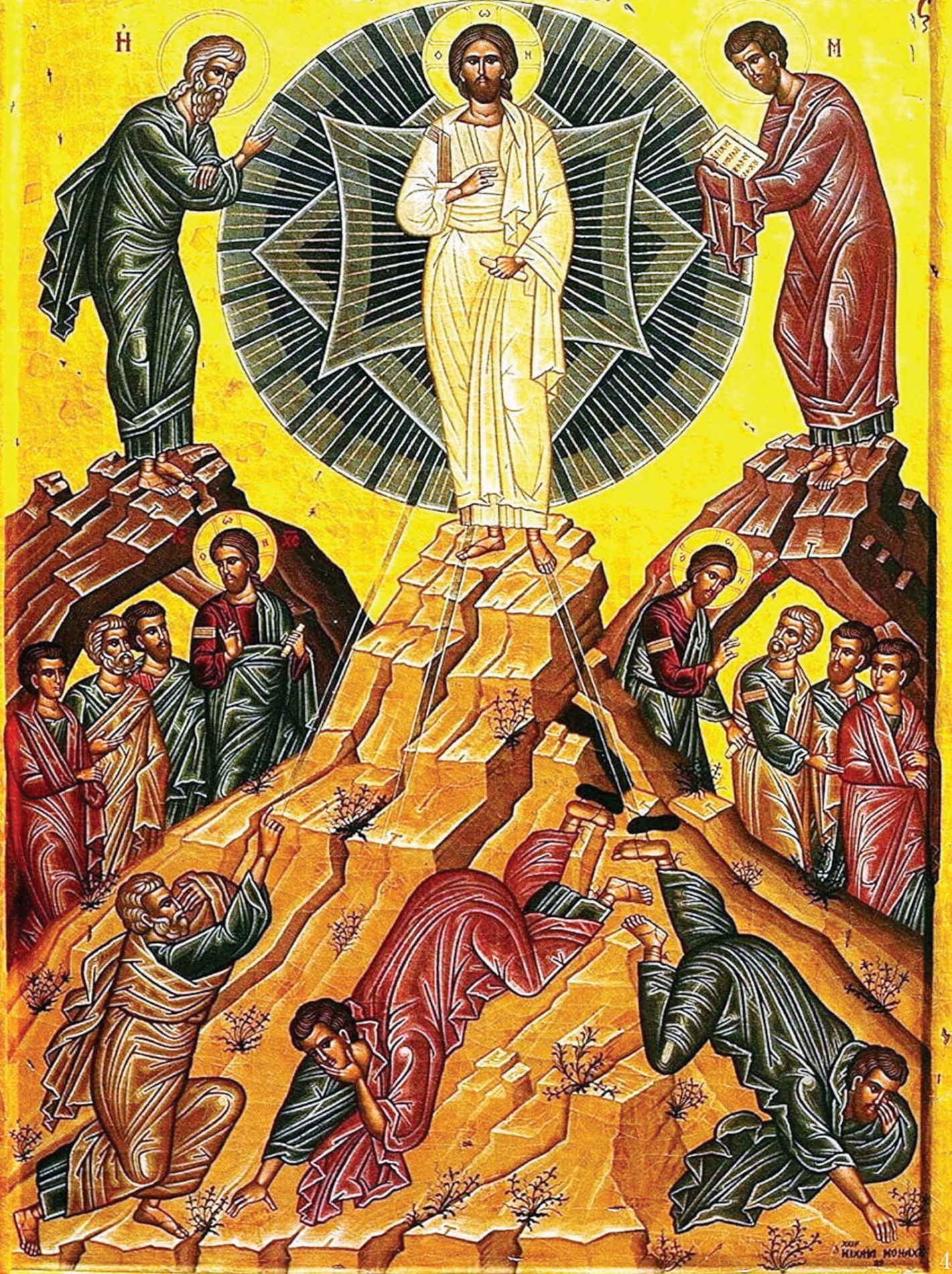
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TRANSFIGURATION

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ The bright white/blue light around Jesus in the shape of an almond is called the mandorla. It represents the Light of God, or the Essence of God, being a part of Jesus. It's also in the Resurrection icon, the Ascension icon, and in any icon at the top when something is coming from Heaven.
- ❖ The light surrounding Jesus shows that not only is He human, He is also God.
- ❖ The voice of the Father was heard at the Transfiguration.
- ❖ The three disciples are St. Peter, St. Iakovos (James) and St. John. Those three were present at nearly all the most important events during Jesus' ministry.
- ❖ The disciples are knocked over in confusion and because the light that was shining out of Jesus was so bright—it literally knocked their sandals off—just look at the icon!
- ❖ The Transfiguration took place on Mt. Tabor.
- ❖ The two figures next to Jesus are the Prophets Moses and Elijah. Moses delivered the Law to the Israelites after the escape from Egypt through the Red Sea. Elijah was one of the greatest, holiest, and bravest of the prophets. He never died but was taken directly up to Heaven on a chariot. Moses and Elijah are the two greatest people who lived in Old Testament times and the most faithful to God.

TRANSFIGURATION

AUGUST 6

The event of the Transfiguration is recorded in three of the four Gospels: Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36. Jesus took the Apostles Peter, James, and John with Him up upon a mountain, and while they were on the mountain Jesus was transfigured. His face shone like the sun, and His garments became glistening white.

Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ, talking to Him. Peter declared how good it was for them to be there and expressed the desire to build three booths for Moses, Elijah, and Christ. This reference to the booths could imply that this occurred during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles when the Jews would be camping out in the fields for the grape harvest; for this Feast had acquired other associations in the course of its history, including the memory of the wanderings in the wilderness recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus.

While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them. A voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." When the disciples heard this they fell on their faces filled with awe. Jesus came to them and told them to not be afraid. When the three looked up they saw only Jesus.

As Jesus and His disciples came down the mountain, He told them not to speak of what they had seen until He had risen from the dead.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/transfiguration





DORMITION

FEASTDAY
AUGUST 15



The Feast commemorates the repose (dormition, in Greek *kimisis*) or "falling-asleep" of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. The Feast also commemorates the translation or assumption of her body into heaven.





Apolytikion (First Tone)

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.

Kontakion (Second Tone)

Neither the grave nor death could contain the Theotokos, the unshakable hope, ever vigilant in intercession and protection. As Mother of life, He who dwelt in the ever-virginal womb transposed her to life.

DORMITION

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ The Virgin Mary has fallen asleep (died) and is going to Heaven. You see her on the bed.
- ❖ She is surrounded by the Apostles. They were still alive when she fell asleep.
- ❖ She is also surrounded by saints that look like bishops. Those were some of the first bishops of the Church, like St. Iakovos (James) of Jerusalem.
- ❖ Jesus is behind or above her, usually in the light of the mandorla.
- ❖ Sometimes, Jesus is holding what looks like a little baby in swaddling clothes just like the clothes on Jesus when He was born. This is not a baby, but it represents the soul of the Virgin Mary going to Jesus. Sort of the opposite of Jesus birth, when the Virgin Mary holds Jesus in swaddling clothes, now Jesus holds the soul of the Virgin Mary on her “birthday” into Heaven, which is the day she fell asleep.
- ❖ Angels are usually present ready to help and do whatever Jesus needs them to do.
- ❖ A few days later, they went to see her body, but it was gone! It had been taken up into Heaven!
- ❖ There are no scriptural references of the Dormition, it is derived only from Holy Tradition.

DORMITION

AUGUST 15

LENTEN PERIOD: AUGUST 1-14

The Holy Scriptures tell us that when our Lord was dying on the Cross, He saw His mother and His disciple John and said to the Virgin Mary, "Woman, behold your son!" and to John, "Behold your mother!" (John 19:25-27). From that hour, the Apostle took care of the Theotokos in his own home.

Along with the biblical reference in Acts 1:14 that confirms that the Virgin Mary was with the Holy Apostles on the day of Pentecost, the tradition of the Church holds that she remained in the home of the Apostle John in Jerusalem, continuing a ministry in word and deed.

At the time of her death, the disciples of our Lord who were preaching throughout the world returned to Jerusalem to see the Theotokos. Except for the Apostle Thomas, all of them including the Apostle Paul were gathered together at her bedside. At the moment of her death, Jesus Christ himself descended and carried her soul into heaven.

Following her repose, the body of the Theotokos was taken in procession and laid in a tomb near the Garden of Gethsemane. When the Apostle Thomas arrived three days after her repose and desired to see her body, the tomb was found to be empty. The bodily assumption of the Theotokos was confirmed by the message of an angel and by her appearance to the Apostles.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/dormition





NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

FEASTDAY

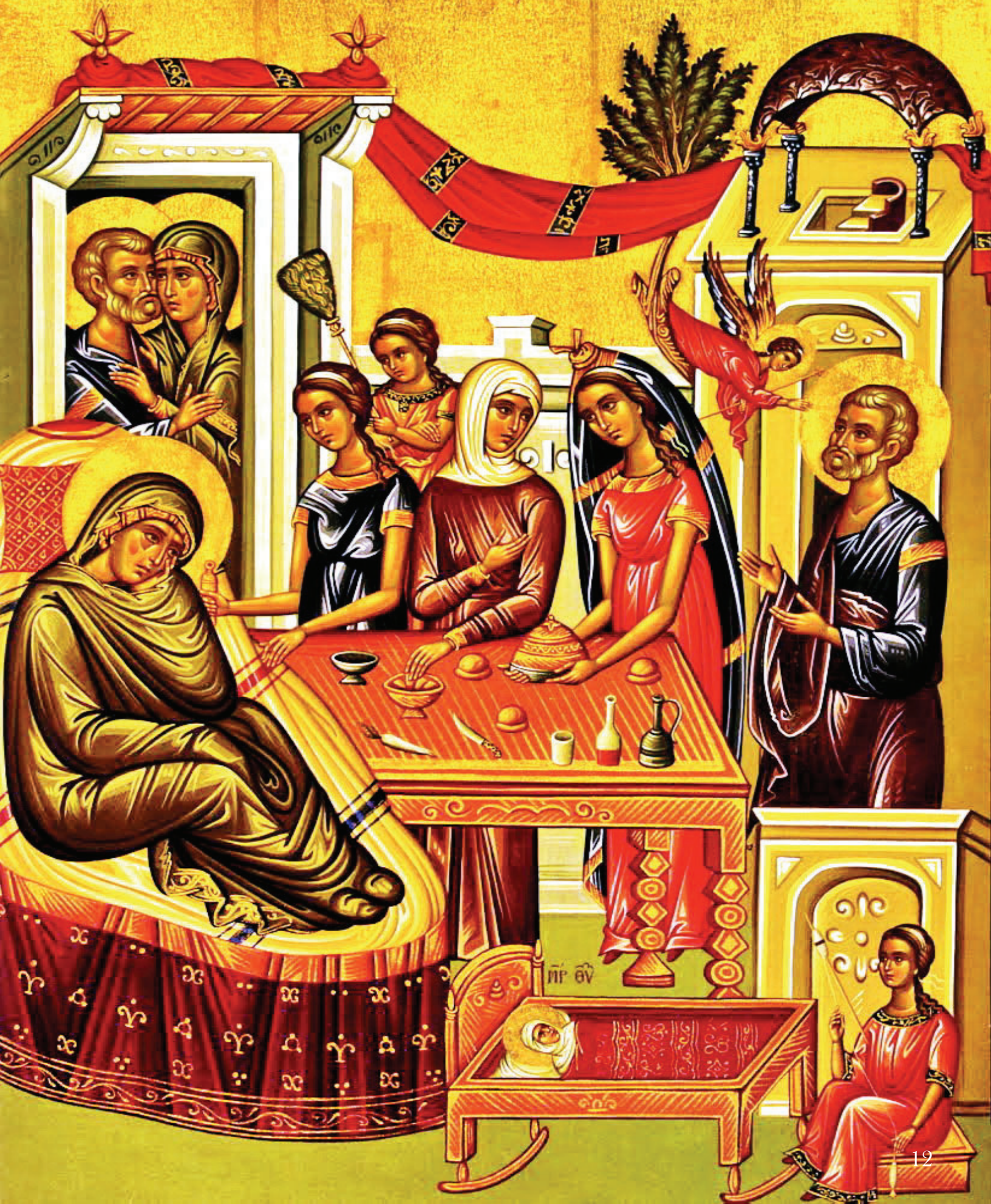
SEPTEMBER 8



The Feast of the Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on September 8 each year. The Feast commemorates her birth.



Η ΓΕΝΗΣΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ



NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ Saints Joachim and Anna, Mary's parents, and the Mother of our Lord as an infant, are prominent in this icon.
- ❖ Saint Anna is in the middle of the icon with her right hand extended toward her daughter. Likewise, Saint Joachim, Mary's father, is gazing upon the young child with his right hand extended toward her.
- ❖ The icon directs attention to Mary as the central figure in this feast.
- ❖ The red cloth draped acts as a reminder that this event took place indoors. (Most icons are depicted outside, to signify that nothing is hidden from God.)
- ❖ Women are shown attending to St. Anna and offering her food to help her recover from the rigours of childbirth. The depiction of the women illustrates that the birth of the Theotokos from St. Anna was a natural childbirth, even though the conception of the Theotokos was miraculous and beyond nature, her birth was not.

Apolytikion (First Tone)

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.

Kontakion (Fourth Tone)

In your holy birth, Immaculate One, Joachim and Anna were rid of the shame of childlessness; Adam and Eve of the corruption of death. And so your people, free of the guilt of their sins, celebrate crying: "The barren one gives birth to the Theotokos, who nourishes our life."

NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

SEPTEMBER 8

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.

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. One day, when Joachim came to the temple to make an offering, he was turned away by the High Priest who chastised him for his lack of children. To hide his shame, Joachim retreated to the hill country to live among the shepherds and their flocks.

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. Joachim returned home, and in due time Anna bore a daughter, Mary.




For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/nativity-theotokos






ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

FEASTDAY
NOVEMBER 21



The Feast of the Entrance into the Temple of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on November 21 each year. The Feast commemorates when as a young child, the Virgin Mary entered the Temple in Jerusalem.



ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE



ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ The icon of the feast tells the story of Mary's entry into the Temple. According to tradition, the event took place when the child of the righteous Joachim and Ana turned three years old.
- ❖ The High Priest, Zacharias, is in his priestly robes standing on the step of the Temple. His arms are outstretched, ready to greet and receive the Virgin.
- ❖ Mary is shown as a small child, standing before Zacharias with her arms reaching up to him.
- ❖ We see her parents, Joachim and Anna, offering their child to God and His divine service.
- ❖ In the upper center portion of the icon, the Virgin is seated on the steps of the Holy of Holies. An angel is there, attending to the one chosen by God to bring the Savior into the world.

Apolytikion (First Tone)

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."

Kontakion (Fourth Tone)

Today, the most pure temple of the Savior, the precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the sacred treasure of God, enters the house of the Lord, bringing the grace of the Divine Spirit. The Angels of God praise her. She is the heavenly tabernacle.

ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

NOVEMBER 21

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.

When Mary was three years old, Joachim and Anna decided that the time had come to fulfill their promise and to offer her to the Lord. Joachim gathered the young girls of the neighborhood to form an escort, and he made them go in front of Mary, carrying torches. Captivated by the torches, the young child followed joyfully to the Temple, not once looking back at her parents nor weeping as she was parted from them.

The holy Virgin ran toward the Temple, overtaking her attendant maidens and threw herself into the arms of the High Priest Zacharias, who was waiting for her at the gate of the Temple with the elders. Zacharias blessed her saying, "It is in you that He has glorified your name in every generation. It is in you that He will reveal the Redemption that He has prepared for His people in the last days."

Then, Zacharias brought the child into the Holy of Holies—a place where only the High Priest was permitted to enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. He placed her on the steps of the altar, and the grace of the Lord descended upon her. She arose and expressed her joy in a dance as wonder seized all who saw this happen.

The Virgin Mary dwelt in the Temple for nine years until, reaching an age for marriage, she was taken from the Temple by the priests and elders and entrusted to Joseph as the guardian of her virginity.

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple signifies her total dedication to God and her readiness for her future vocation as the Mother of the Incarnate Lord. This is a feast of anticipation. As honor is shown to Mary, the faithful are called to look forward to the Incarnation of Christ, celebrated in a little more than a month by the Feast of the Nativity on December 25.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/entrance-theotokos





BIRTH OF CHRIST

FEAST DAY
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.



Η ΓΕΝΝΗΣΙΣ

ΤῸ ΧΡΙΣΤῸ



BIRTH OF CHRIST

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ The Virgin Mary and baby Jesus are in the center of the icon and bigger than usual because that is the focus of the icon.
- ❖ Jesus is in swaddling clothes, just as the Gospel says.
- ❖ A calf and a colt are behind baby Jesus as the Old Testament said would happen (prophesied).
- ❖ Joseph is usually in a corner with a look of “not being sure” what is happening. Joseph always listens to the Archangel Gabriel, but it’s hard for him to understand how the Virgin Mary is having a child!
- ❖ The angels in the background are what the shepherds saw that night, telling them that Jesus was born.
- ❖ The shepherds are in the background listening to the angels and ready to visit Jesus. Sometimes, the sheep of the shepherds are also in the background.
- ❖ The Magi, dressed like kings, are usually in the background riding horses. They are following the star that led them from the east to where Jesus was. They bring their gifts: gold (for a king), frankincense (for a priest) and myrrh (for Jesus’ death later on).
- ❖ There is a star that comes from a beam from Heaven, that is just above Jesus’ head. This is the star that led the Magi to Jesus.
- ❖ Sometimes, a woman is bathing the baby Jesus. This is just a helper to the Virgin Mary.
- ❖ Sometimes, in the corner talking to Joseph, is a man, who looks like he’s wearing animal skins. This represents the devil trying to tempt Joseph not to follow the instructions of the Archangel Gabriel. Of course, Joseph doesn’t listen to the devil and follows God’s word.

BIRTH OF CHRIST

DECEMBER 25

LENTEN FAST PERIOD: NOVEMBER 15-DECEMBER 24

As the story is told by the Apostles, the Roman Empire was powerful. The Romans had conquered much of the then known world. Judea and Samaria, what we know today as Israel, were included in their conquests. Emperor Augustus ordered that a census be taken in all his lands. He needed to know how many people lived in the empire so he could tax them. Everyone had to go to the town of their family's origin to register for the census. This meant that Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. They were descendants of King David and Bethlehem was the City of David.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and it was a great distance from Bethlehem. It was about 100 miles over very rugged roads. Moreover, Mary was expecting the baby and it was almost time for her to give birth. Bethlehem was a small town and there were many descendants of David who had come to register for the census. By the time Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem there was no place for them to stay. Joseph tried very hard to find a place to sleep that evening. There was no room at the inn. Finally, Joseph found a cave-like place where they could rest. This place was used by shepherds to protect their sheep in stormy weather. It was here that Mary gave birth to Jesus. The baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the straw in the manger.

Now, that night the shepherds were out in the fields guarding their sheep. Suddenly, there was a bright light which startled the shepherds. The light was so bright that it turned the night into daylight. Of course, the shepherds were frightened. Nothing such as this had ever happened. Soon an angel appeared and calmed them. The angel said:

"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).

Then a larger group of angels appeared. They praised and glorified God and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). When the angels finished singing, they disappeared and the light began to fade. It became dimmer and dimmer until it was dark again. The shepherds were awed. They didn't know what to do. Finally, they decided to leave their flocks of sheep and go to Bethlehem. They decided that they wanted to see for themselves what the angels had told them. When they got to Bethlehem, they found Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. They fell to their knees and adored Jesus.

Some Wise Men came from the East for they knew of the coming of Jesus. They had seen a star that told them that a new king had been born to the Jews. They followed the star and were looking for the child. At this time the governor of Judea was King Herod. He was a wicked man and was feared and hated by the people. When Herod heard about the Wise Men looking for the child, he invited them to his palace. Herod asked the Wise Men to find the child so that he, too, could worship Him. But Herod was lying. He did not want anyone to take his place. The Wise Men went on to look for Jesus. The Star led them to Jesus and Mary. When the Wise Men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshipped Him. They gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Wise Men left but did not return to Herod. They had a dream that warned them that Herod wanted to harm Jesus. Instead, they returned to their native country by a different route.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/-/feast-of-the-nativity





BAPTISM OF JESUS

FEAST DAY
JANUARY 6



The Feast of the Holy Theophany (Epiphany) of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on January 6. The Feast commemorates the Baptism of Christ and the divine revelation of the Holy Trinity. At the Baptism of Christ, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—were made manifest. Thus, the name of the Feast is Epiphany, meaning manifestation, or Theophany, meaning manifestation of God.



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BAPTISM OF JESUS

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ Jesus is standing in the Jordan River, where He was baptized.
- ❖ John the Baptist is there to baptize Jesus.
- ❖ Heaven is depicted on the top of the icon with the half circle of blue/white. A beam of God's light with a dove in it, comes to Jesus. The dove represents the Holy Spirit. After Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to everyone who is Baptized!
- ❖ Angels are in the background ready to do whatever God needs them to do.
- ❖ Sometimes there are people riding a red and blue fish in the river. The red fish represents the Red Sea, which God, through Moses, opened up so the Israelites could escape from Egypt—it was like their baptism. The blue fish represent the Jordan river, which also opened up so Joshua could cross it when the Israelites came into the Promise Land 40 years after Moses opened the Red Sea. Both of those openings are like “baptisms” for those people going through. But this is the real baptism.
- ❖ Sometime there is an ax in the tree in the corner. This represents the teaching of John the Baptist (and Jesus) that if a tree does not produce fruit, it is chopped up and thrown into the fire. This means that as Christians, we should be showing that we are Christians by producing good and holy works. This shows we love God and our neighbors.
- ❖ At the Baptism, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity were present: the Father (His voice), the Son (Jesus Himself), and the Holy Spirit (the dove).

BAPTISM OF JESUS

JANUARY 6

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.

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus and the one chosen by God to proclaim His coming, was preaching in the wilderness and was baptizing all who would respond to his message calling for repentance. As he was doing this, John was directing the people toward the one who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. Initially, John would not do this, saying that Jesus should baptize him. Jesus said to John, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness (3:15). John consented and baptized Jesus.

When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens opened suddenly, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. The Bible records that the Spirit descended like a dove and alighted on him. When this happened, a voice came from heaven and said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." This was the voice of God the Father.

Christ's baptism in the Jordan was "theophany," a manifestation of God to the world, because it was the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. It was also a "theophany" in that the world was granted a revelation of the Holy Trinity. All three Persons were made manifest together: the Father testified from on high to the divine Sonship of Jesus; the Son received His Father's testimony; and the Spirit was seen in the form of a dove, descending from the Father and resting upon the Son.

The theme of "manifestation" or "revelation" is also expressed in Scripture with the symbolism of light. In the hymn of the Feast we sing, "Christ has appeared and enlightened the world." Thus, January 6 is also known as the Feast of Lights. The Church celebrates on this day the illumination of the world by the light of Christ.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/epiphany





PRESENTATION TO THE TEMPLE

FEAST DAY
FEBRUARY 2

This feast, celebrated on February 2, is known in the Orthodox Church as The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Another name for the feast is The Meeting of our Lord. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians call the feast the Purification of the Holy Virgin. About 450 AD in Jerusalem, people began the custom of holding lighted candles during the Divine Liturgy of this feast day. Therefore, some churches in the West refer to this holy day as Candlemas. The Feast of the Presentation concludes the observances related to the Nativity of Christ, a period that opened on November 15 with the beginning of the Nativity fast.



ΗΥΜΝ

ΠΑΝΤΗ



ΤΟΥΤΟ
ΤΟΣΗ
ΦΟΣ ΟΙ
ΡΑΝΟΝ
Κ' ΕΓΙΝΕ
ΣΤΕΡΕ
ΩΣΕΝ :

PRESENTATION TO THE TEMPLE

H I G H L I G H T S



- ❖ Jesus was brought to the Temple (the place where the believers in God worshiped before churches were built) by His mother, the Virgin Mary, and Joseph. This happened on the 40th day after His birth. We still do this today! Babies are brought to church by their parents on the 40th day after birth to the church for the first time!
- ❖ The Temple is represented by the structure with the roof on it behind Jesus. It was in Jerusalem.
- ❖ The Virgin Mary is handing the baby Jesus to Symeon, a holy man who lived a very long time because he believed so strongly in God. Symeon holds him and says a prayer to God because God allowed him to see the Savior, Jesus, before he died. We still use a part of that prayer to this day in the 40-day blessing of the children coming into the church!
- ❖ Joseph is behind the Virgin Mary.
- ❖ Next to Joseph is the Prophetess Anna. She was also very holy and faithful, like Symeon, and she also says a prayer and tells the Virgin Mary that Jesus would suffer so that all people would be able to go to Heaven.

PRESENTATION TO THE TEMPLE

FEBRUARY 2

The story of the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice.

Joseph and Mary were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple.

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. He was a holy man and was noted as a very intelligent scholar. Simeon spent much time studying about the prophets of Israel. It was during his studies that he learned of the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from their conquerors. From that time on, Simeon spent his time praying for the Messiah to come. He spent many years in prayer. Finally, while Simeon was praying he heard the voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the baby in his arms and blessed the Lord and said:

"Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel."

Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the Temple worshiping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Christ Child she praised God and spoke of him to all who were awaiting the Messiah.

After Jesus was presented in the Temple, the family returned to Galilee to the town of Nazareth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong, and was filled with wisdom.

For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
<https://www.goarch.org/presentation>





ANNUNCIATION

FEASTDAY
MARCH 25



The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on March 25 each year. The Feast commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would become incarnate and enter into this world through her womb.



Ὁ ΕΥΑΓΓΕ

ΛΙΣΜΟΣ

Α
ΘΑ ΓΑΒΡΗΛ



ANNUNCIATION

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ The Archangel Gabriel is offering the Virgin Mary God's blessing because of her faith and goodness.
- ❖ The Virgin Mary's pose, with her right hand in the air, represents that she humbly accepts to do the will of God.
- ❖ The half-circle on the top represents Heaven. The ray of light that comes to the Virgin Mary represents the Holy Spirit coming to her and conceiving baby Jesus in her womb.
- ❖ Often, there are flowers in the icon (a rose or lily). They represent the Virgin Mary's purity—and the beauty of her faith and life “never fades” and is more beautiful than a flower, whose beauty does fade over time.

Apolytikion (Fourth Tone)

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."

Kontakion (Plagal of the Fourth Tone)

To you, Theotokos, invincible Defender, having been delivered from peril, I, your city, dedicate the victory festival as a thank offering. In your irresistible might, keep me safe from all trials, that I may call out to you: "Rejoice, unwedded bride!"

ANNUNCIATION

MARCH 25

The biblical story of the Feast of the Annunciation is found in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke (1:26-39). The Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary, who was living in Nazareth, and said to her, “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you.” Mary was perplexed and wondered what kind of greeting this was.

The angel told her not to be afraid, for she had found favor with God. He said, “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mary responded to the angel by asking how this could happen since she had no husband. The angel told her that the Holy Spirit and the power of God would come upon her, and that the child to be born of her would be called holy, the “Son of God.”

The angel then proceeded to tell the Virgin Mary that her cousin Elizabeth had conceived a son in her old age (John the Baptist), and affirmed that with God nothing is impossible.

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.” Upon her response, the angel departed.

It is on the Feast of the Annunciation, that Orthodox Christians commemorate both the divine initiative of God, whereby He took on flesh from the Virgin for our salvation, and the human response, whereby Mary freely accepted the vocation offered to her. He elected to become man, and He desired to do this with the willing agreement of her whom He chose as His mother. Mary could have refused, for she was not a passive instrument, but an active participant with a free and positive part to play in God’s plan for our salvation. Thus, when on this and other feasts the Orthodox Church honors the Theotokos, the Mother of God, it is not just because God chose her but also because she herself chose to follow His will.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/annunciation





RAISING OF LAZARUS

FEAST DAY

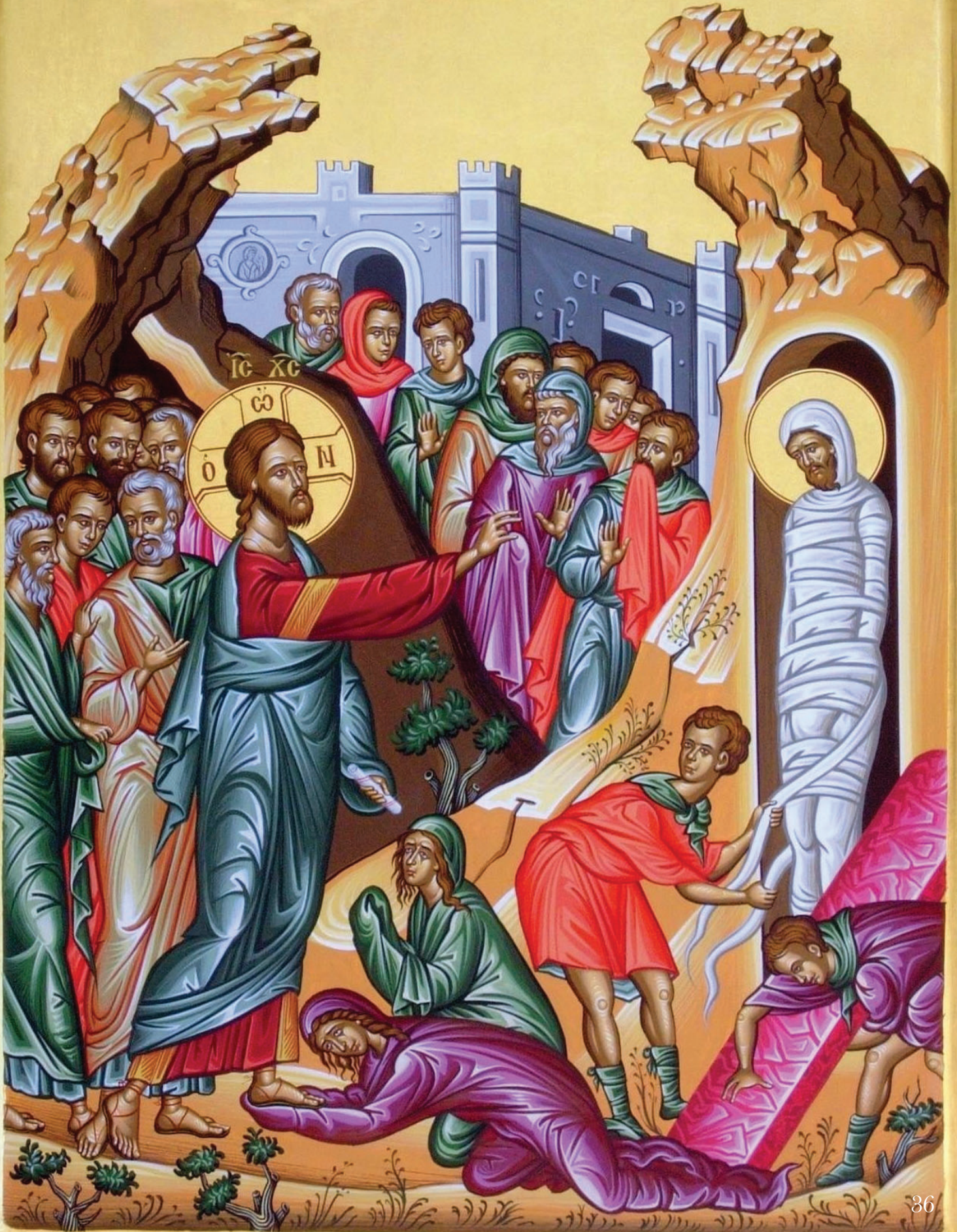
SATURDAY BEFORE PALM SUNDAY



On the Saturday before Holy Week, we commemorate the miracle of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. Here, at the end of Great Lent and the forty days of fasting and penitence, the Church combines this celebration with that of Palm Sunday. In triumph and joy the Church bears witness to the power of Christ over death and exalts Him as King before entering the most solemn week of the year, one that leads the faithful in remembrance of His suffering and death and concludes with the great and glorious Feast of Pascha.



Ἡ ἙΓΕΡΣΙΣ ΤῸ ΛΑΖΑΡΟΥ



RAISING OF LAZARUS

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ This took place in Bethany, not far from Jerusalem.
- ❖ Lazarus' sisters are Mary and Martha. All three of them were friends of Jesus and loved Him very much. Mary and Martha are usually seen at the feet of Jesus.
- ❖ Behind Jesus are the disciples, and behind the disciples—or in another area—are other people of Bethany that were comforting Mary and Martha because Lazarus had died. Some of the people look like they're covering their faces. That's because the body of Lazarus, having been dead for 4 days, started to stink.
- ❖ Lazarus is seen having come out of the tomb at Jesus' command. Jesus is in a position of motion, blessing Lazarus and calling him to come forth.
- ❖ Others are following Jesus' commands and are loosening Lazarus from his funeral wrappings.
- ❖ The tomb looks like the tomb of Jesus. The wrapping around Lazarus is the same kind that was around Jesus when He was placed in the tomb. This icon is like a preview of what was to happen at Jesus' burial and resurrection. The difference is that Jesus rose from the dead on His own; Lazarus was raised by Jesus.

Apolytikion (First Tone)

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Your Passion, You confirmed the universal resurrection, O Christ God! Like the children with 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!

Kontakion (Second Tone)

Christ - the Joy, the Truth, and the Light of All, the Life of the World and the Resurrection - has appeared in his goodness to those on earth. He has become the Image of our resurrection, granting divine forgiveness to all.

RAISING OF LAZARUS

SATURDAY BEFORE PALM SUNDAY

The story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead by Jesus Christ is found in the Gospel of John 11:1-45. Lazarus becomes ill, and his sisters, Mary and Martha send a message to Jesus stating, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” In response to the message, Jesus says, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (vv. 1-4).

Jesus did not immediately go to Bethany, the town where Lazarus lived with his sisters. Instead He remained in the place where He was staying for two more days. After this time, He told his disciples that they were returning to Judea. The disciples immediately expressed their concern, stating that the Jews there had recently tried to stone Him (John 10:31). Jesus replied to His disciples, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them” (vv. 5-10).

After He said this, Jesus told his disciples that Lazarus had fallen asleep and that He was going there to wake him. The disciples wondered why He would go to wake Lazarus, since it was good for him to sleep if he was ill. Jesus, however, was referring to the death of Lazarus, and thus told the disciples directly that Lazarus was dead (vv. 11-14).

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Since Bethany was near Jerusalem, many of the Jews had come to console Mary and Martha. When Martha heard that Jesus was approaching she went to meet Him and said to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of Him.” Jesus told her that her brother will rise again. Martha said that she knew he would rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus replied, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” Jesus asked Martha if she believed this. She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” (vv. 17-27).

Martha returned to tell Mary that Jesus had come and was asking for her. Mary went to meet Him, and she was followed by those who were consoling her. The mourners followed her thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When she came to Jesus, she fell at His feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus saw her weeping and those who were with her, and He was deeply moved. He asked to be taken to the tomb of Lazarus. As Jesus wept for Lazarus the Jews said, “See how He loved him.” Others wondered that if Jesus could open the eyes of the blind, He certainly could have kept Lazarus from dying (vv. 28-37).

RAISING OF LAZARUS

SATURDAY BEFORE PALM SUNDAY

Jesus came to the tomb and asked that the stone that covered the door be taken away. Martha remarked that Lazarus had now been in the tomb for four days and that there would be a stench. Jesus replied, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” The stone was taken away, and Jesus looked toward heaven and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When He had said this, He called out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” Lazarus walked out of the tomb, bound with the strips of burial cloth, and Jesus said, “Unbind him, and let him go” (vv. 38-44).

As a result of this miracle, many of the Jews that were present believed in Jesus. Others went and told the Pharisees what Jesus had done. In response the Pharisees and chief priests met and considered how they might arrest Him and put Him to death (v. 45ff).

This miracle is performed by Christ as a reassurance to His disciples before the coming Passion: they are to understand that, though He suffers and dies, yet He is Lord and Victor over death. The resurrection of Lazarus is a prophecy in the form of an action. It foreshadows Christ’s own Resurrection eight days later, and at the same time it anticipates the resurrection of all the righteous on the Last Day: Lazarus is “the saving first-fruits of the regeneration of the world.”

As the liturgical texts emphasize, the miracle at Bethany reveals the two natures of Christ the God-man. Christ asks where Lazarus is laid and weeps for him, and so He shows the fullness of His manhood, involving as it does human ignorance and genuine grief for a beloved friend. Then, disclosing the fullness of His divine power, Christ raises Lazarus from the dead, even though his corpse has already begun to decompose and stink. This double fullness of the Lord’s divinity and His humanity is to be kept in view throughout Holy Week, and above all on Good Friday. On the Cross we see a genuine human agony, both physical and mental, but we see more than this: we see not only suffering man but suffering God.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
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PALM SUNDAY

FEAST DAY

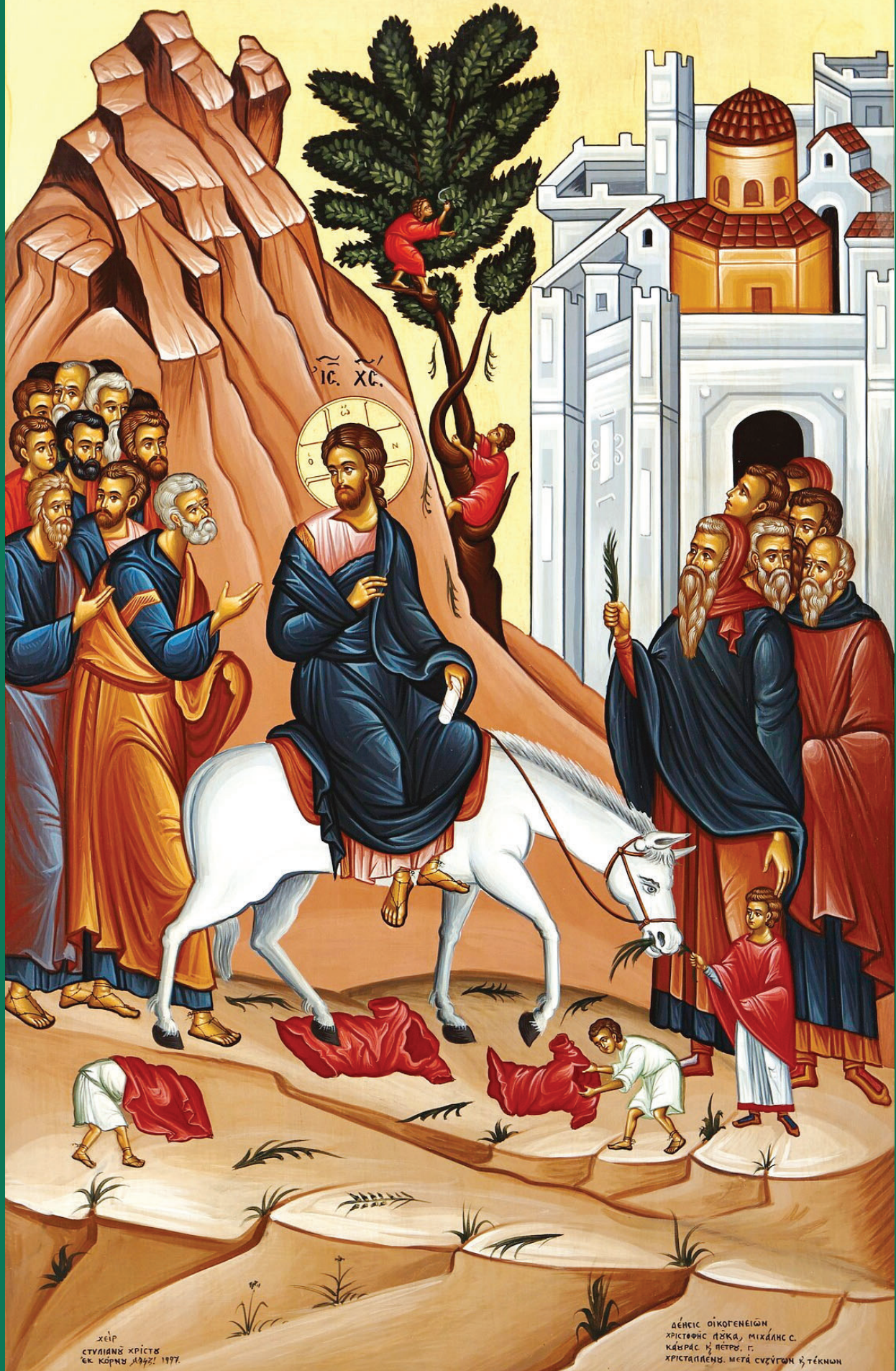
SUNDAY BEFORE PASCHA



On the Sunday before the Feast of Great and Holy Pascha, at the beginning of Holy Week, the Orthodox Church celebrates one of its most joyous feasts of the year. Palm Sunday is the commemoration of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem following His glorious miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Having anticipated His arrival and having heard of the miracle, the people went out to meet the Lord and welcomed Him with displays of honor and shouts of praise. On this day, we receive and worship Christ in this same manner, acknowledging Him as our King and Lord.



Ἡ ΒΑΪΟΦΟΡΟΣ.



χείρ
ΣΤΥΛΙΑΝῆ ΧΡΙΣΤῆ
ἔκ Κόρνυ 1977/1977.

Δένεις Οἰκογενεῶν
Χριστοῦς Λόκι, Μιχάλης Σ.
Κάβρας ἢ Πέτρος, Γ.
Χριστάλημος, μετὰ συζύγων ἡ τέκνων

PALM SUNDAY

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ This took place as Jesus entered Jerusalem the Sunday before Pascha.
- ❖ Jesus is sitting on the foal (offspring) of a donkey— just like the Old Testament prophecy stated.
- ❖ The people were cheering for Jesus because: 1) they had heard He raised Lazarus from the dead 2) they knew about His other miracles and 3) many thought Jesus was going to make Himself a new leader, like a king, but that's not why Jesus came to earth. The people knew that Jesus was special, but were wrong in thinking Jesus was going to replace the leaders.
- ❖ The people were throwing palm branches and clothes on the ground in front of Jesus. This shows that they were treating Him like a king, like a king walking on a red carpet.
- ❖ The people were chanting from the Psalms, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” Hosanna in the highest!” Hosanna means “save us now,” or “we pray you save us”. Using the phrase “Son of David” means that the people understood He was the Christ or “the Anointed One of God”*, Who would save the people (though the people thought He would save them from a bad government; they did not really understand that He came to save everyone’s soul and bring them to Heaven!)
- ❖ This event made the leaders of the Temple very angry because they saw Jesus was more popular than they were, and they thought they would lose their power, money and prestige. After this, the leaders decided to kill Jesus.

*Also called the Messiah, the promised deliverer as prophesied.

Apolytikion (First Tone)

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!

Kontakion (Plagal of the Second Tone)

Sitting on Your throne in heaven, carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God. Accept the praise of angels and songs of children who sing: Blessed is He that comes to recall Adam.

PALM SUNDAY

SUNDAY BEFORE PASCHA

The biblical story of Palm Sunday is recorded in all four of the Gospels (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; and John 12:12-18). Five days before the Passover, Jesus came from Bethany to Jerusalem. Having sent two of His disciples to bring Him a colt of a donkey, Jesus sat upon it and entered the city.

People had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover and were looking for Jesus, both because of His great works and teaching and because they had heard of the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus. When they heard that Christ was entering the city, they went out to meet Him with palm branches, laying their garments on the ground before Him, and shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the Name of the Lord, the King of Israel!"

At the outset of His public ministry Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God and announced that the powers of the age to come were already active in the present age (Luke 7:18-22). His words and mighty works were performed "to produce repentance as the response to His call, a call to an inward change of mind and heart which would result in concrete changes in one's life, a call to follow Him and accept His messianic destiny. The triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is a messianic event, through which His divine authority was declared.

Palm Sunday summons us to behold our king: the Word of God made flesh. We are called to behold Him not simply as the One who came to us once riding on a colt, but as the One who is always present in His Church, coming ceaselessly to us in power and glory at every Eucharist, in every prayer and sacrament, and in every act of love, kindness and mercy. He comes to free us from all our fears and insecurities, "to take solemn possession of our soul, and to be enthroned in our heart," as someone has said. He comes not only to deliver us from our deaths by His death and Resurrection, but also to make us capable of attaining the most perfect fellowship or union with Him. He is the King, who liberates us from the darkness of sin and the bondage of death. Palm Sunday summons us to behold our King: the vanquisher of death and the giver of life.

Palm Sunday summons us to accept both the rule and the kingdom of God as the goal and content of our Christian life. We draw our identity from Christ and His kingdom. The kingdom is Christ - His indescribable power, boundless mercy and incomprehensible abundance given freely to man. The kingdom does not lie at some point or place in the distant future. In the words of the Scripture, the kingdom of God is not only at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17), it is within us (Luke 17:21). The kingdom is a present reality as well as a future realization (Matthew 6:10). Theophan the Recluse wrote the following words about the inward rule of Christ the King:

"The Kingdom of God is within us when God reigns in us, when the soul in its depths confesses God as its Master, and is obedient to Him in all its powers. Then God acts within it as master 'both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Philippians 2:13). This reign begins as soon as we resolve to serve God in our Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit.



PALM SUNDAY

SUNDAY BEFORE PASCHA

Then the Christian hands over to God his consciousness and freedom, which comprises the essential substance of our human life, and God accepts the sacrifice; and in this way the alliance of man with God and God with man is achieved, and the covenant with God, which was severed by the Fall and continues to be severed by our willful sins, is re-established.”

The kingdom of God is the life of the Holy Trinity in the world. It is the kingdom of holiness, goodness, truth, beauty, love, peace and joy. These qualities are not works of the human spirit. They proceed from the life of God and reveal God. Christ Himself is the kingdom. He is the God-Man, Who brought God down to earth (John 1:1,14). “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not. He came to His own home, and His own people received Him not” (John 1:10-11). He was reviled and hated.

Palm Sunday summons us to behold our king - the Suffering Servant. We cannot understand Jesus' kingship apart from the Passion. Filled with infinite love for the Father and the Holy Spirit, and for creation, in His inexpressible humility Jesus accepted the infinite abasement of the Cross. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions and made Himself an offering for sin (Isaiah 53). His glorification, which was accomplished by the resurrection and the ascension, was achieved through the Cross.

In the fleeting moments of exuberance that marked Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the world received its King, the king who was on His way to death. His Passion, however, was no morbid desire for martyrdom. Jesus' purpose was to accomplish the mission for which the Father sent Him.

“The Son and Word of the Father, like Him without beginning and eternal, has come today to the city of Jerusalem, seated on a dumb beast, on a foal. From fear the cherubim dare not gaze upon Him; yet the children honor Him with palms and branches, and mystically they sing a hymn of praise: ‘Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna to the Son of David, who has come to save from error all mankind.’” (A hymn of the Light.)

“With our souls cleansed and in spirit carrying branches, with faith let us sing Christ's praises like the children, crying with a loud voice to the Master: Blessed are You, O Savior, who have come into the world to save Adam from the ancient curse; and in Your love for mankind You have been pleased to become spiritually the new Adam. O Word, who have ordered all things for our good, glory to You.” (A Sessional hymn of the Orthros)



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/palmsunday-learn





RESURRECTION

FEAST DAY

MOVING DATE (JULIAN CALENDAR)



On the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha, Orthodox Christians celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast of feasts is the most significant day in the life of the Church. It is a celebration of the defeat of death, as neither death itself nor the power of the grave could hold our Savior captive. In this victory that came through the Cross, Christ broke the bondage of sin, and through faith offers us restoration, transformation, and eternal life.





RESURRECTION

HIGHLIGHTS



CHRIST RAISING ADAM AND EVE ICON

- ❖ Christ is conquering Hades. Christ is Risen, but before He rose, He went down to Hades and destroyed death. Death is represented by the skeletal figure chained up at the very bottom. Above Death are the doors of Hades that Jesus broke down after He died on the cross (notice the doors make the form of a cross). All around that area are locks, chains, and keys that were used to chain people up after they died. Jesus smashed all those locks and chains and freed all the people who had died so they could go to Heaven to be with Jesus.
- ❖ Jesus is pulling Adam and Eve out of their tombs (Adam and Eve represent all of humanity). Look how Jesus is standing; He's in a position of movement; of action (notice the bent knees and leaning of His torso and back). Jesus is doing all the heavy pulling - all of the work - through His death and resurrection. Just look at the hands of Adam and Eve; they are limp and weak. Jesus lifts them out with the power of His resurrection.
- ❖ Around Jesus is the mandorla; showing that He is God (like in the Transfiguration and Ascension icons).
- ❖ Usually you can see the mark of the nails in Jesus' feet and hands.
- ❖ To the left are the people of the Old Testament that are a part of the family of Christ, including: John the Baptist, King David, King Solomon, etc. On the right, it sometimes varies, usually you have the prophets of the Old Testament. In the background, you often see angels.



RESURRECTION

HIGHLIGHTS



THE EMPTY TOMB ICON

- ❖ In this icon, we see the myrrh-bearing women coming to the tomb of Jesus early in the morning. They were bringing myrrh, fragrant oils, to put on Jesus' body so it wouldn't stink from death (however, Jesus' body never decayed because it wasn't in the tomb long enough).
- ❖ The angel is sitting near the tomb, pointing to it, and telling them that "Jesus is risen! He is not here. Look and see where they laid Him. But go and tell Peter and the rest that Jesus will meet them in Galilee just like He said before He was crucified."
- ❖ The women were astonished! 1) They didn't know who would roll the stone away from the tomb for them, and when they came it was already gone! 2) The soldiers guarding the tomb were basically "knocked out" from fear and because of the glorious light of the resurrection (you can see them as if they were sleeping, or even dead!). 3) They could hardly believe what the angel told them about Jesus rising from the dead, and they went away from the tomb to tell the disciples, and they were astonished and completely overcome with the "awesomeness" of Jesus' resurrection.
- ❖ Inside the tomb are the sheets of cloth that were used to wrap Jesus' body, but there is no body in there because He rose from the dead.
- ❖ It resembles the icon of the Raising of Lazarus.

RESURRECTION

MOVING DATE

Holy Week comes to an end at sunset of Great and Holy Saturday, as the Church prepares to celebrate her most ancient and preeminent festival, Pascha, the feast of feasts. The time of preparation will give way to a time of fulfillment. The glorious and resplendent light emanating from the empty Tomb will dispel the darkness. Christ, risen from the dead, cracks the fortress of death and takes "captivity captive" (Psalm 67:19). All the limitations of our createdness are torn asunder. Death is swallowed up in victory and life is liberated. "For as by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:21-22). Pascha is the dawn of the new and unending day. The Resurrection constitutes the most radical and decisive deliverance of humankind.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth and absolute fact of the Christian faith. It is the central experience and essential kerygma of the Church. It confirms the authenticity of Christ's remarkable earthly life and vindicates the truth of His teaching. It seals all His redemptive work: His life, the model of a holy life; His compelling and unique teaching; His extraordinary works; and His awesome, life-creating death. Christ's Resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation. Together with His Ascension it brings to perfection God's union with us for all eternity.

The Resurrection made possible the miracle of the Church, which in every age and generation proclaims and affirms "God's plan for the universe, the ultimate divinization of man and the created order." The profound experience of and the unshakable belief in the risen Lord enabled the Apostles to evangelize the world and empowered the Church to overcome paganism. The Resurrection discloses the indestructible power and inscrutable wisdom of God. It disposes of the illusory myths and belief systems by which people, bereft of divine knowledge, strain to affirm the meaning and purpose of their existence. Christ, risen and glorified, releases humanity from the delusions of idolatry. In Him grave-bound humanity discovers and is filled with incomparable hope. The Resurrection bestows illumination, energizes souls, brings forgiveness, transfigures lives, creates saints, and gives joy.

The Resurrection has not yet abolished the reality of death. But it has revealed its powerlessness (Hebrews 2:14-15). We continue to die as a result of the Fall. Our bodies decay and fall away. "God allows death to exist but turns it against corruption and its cause, sin, and sets a boundary both to corruption and sin." Thus, physical death does not destroy our life of communion with God. Rather, we move from death to life - from this fallen world to God's reign.



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/pascha-learn





ASCENSION

FEAST DAY

40 DAYS AFTER PASCHA



The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on the fortieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter). Since the date of Pascha changes each year, the date of the Feast of the Ascension changes as well. The Feast is always celebrated on a Thursday.

The Feast itself 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.





ASCENSION

HIGHLIGHTS



- ❖ This happened 40 days after Pascha. Jesus led the disciples to Bethany (the town of Lazarus, Mary and Martha) and went on a nearby mount, Mt. Olivet (Mount of Olives).
- ❖ Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus was taken up to Heaven as on a cloud.
- ❖ You can see a mandorla, but circular, around Jesus, showing the light of His divinity (that Jesus is God).
- ❖ The Virgin Mary was present at the Ascension.
- ❖ Two angels appeared as men in white and told the disciples that Jesus will return at the Second Coming in the same way - like on the clouds, but with trumpets and noise and the power of God.
- ❖ Some of the disciples looked shocked as Jesus goes to Heaven - it was hard to believe what they were saying.
- ❖ Sometimes, Jesus is seen in the icon sitting on a rainbow between the clouds. This comes from Old Testament visions of Jesus (Ezekiel and Daniel).
- ❖ Angels are depicted helping Jesus as He ascends.
- ❖ Ascension always falls on a Thursday.

Apolytikion (Forth Tone)

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.

Kontakion (Plagal of the Second Tone)

O Christ our God, upon fulfilling Your dispensation for our sake, You ascended in Glory, uniting the earthly with the heavenly. You were never separate but remained inseparable, and cried out to those who love You, "I am with you and no one is against you."

ASCENSION

40 DAYS AFTER PASCHA

The story of the Ascension of our Lord, celebrated as one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church, is found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles 1:3-11. It is also mentioned in the Gospels of Mark (16:19) and Luke (24:50-53). The moment of the Ascension is told in one sentence: "He was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Christ made His last appearance on earth, forty days after His Resurrection from the dead. The Acts of the Apostles states that the disciples were in Jerusalem. Jesus appeared before them and commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the "Promise of the Father". He stated, "You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

After Jesus gave these instructions, He led the disciples to the Mount of Olives. Here, He commissioned them to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is also at this time that the disciples were directed by Christ to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus also told them that He would be with them always, "even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

As the disciples watched, Jesus lifted up His hands, blessed them, and then was taken up out of their sight (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Two angels appeared to them and asked them why they were gazing into heaven. Then one of the angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11).



For more information
and readings, scan QR code.
www.goarch.org/ascension





PENTECOST

FEAST DAY

50 DAYS AFTER PASCHA

The Feast of Holy Pentecost is celebrated each year on the fiftieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter) and ten days after the Feast of the Ascension of Christ. The Feast is always celebrated on a Sunday.

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.



Η ΠΕΝΤΗ

ΚΟΣΤΗ.



PENTECOST

HIGHLIGHTS



- This took place 50 days after Pascha, and 10 days after the Ascension.
- It always falls on a Sunday.
- By the time of Pentecost, the disciples picked a new disciple to replace Judas. His name was Matthias (Mat-thias).
- They were sitting in a room when they felt a great wind.
- In the top center, you see the partial mandorla of the Heavens, and 12 rays coming from it. Those rays point to the heads of the disciples.
- On top of the disciples' heads are flames. That is the representation of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit gave them the ability to speak in different languages and to preach the Gospel with strength, fervor, and courage.
- The Virgin Mary was present, and some icons include her in the middle.
- Sometimes the icon shows other people, not just the disciples; like St. Paul, St. Luke, or St. Mark. That's because the Holy Spirit came upon them, too.
- From there, the disciples went into all the world to preach about Jesus.
- At the bottom of the icon is a man, like a king, with 12 scrolls. This person represents the world. His name is Kosmos. The scrolls are the scriptures. The disciples took the scriptures and the Gospel (the teachings of Jesus and the story of His death and resurrection) into all the world. That's why his name is Kosmos.

The disciples are now called Apostles. Disciple means a student (from the Greek, mathitis). Apostles mean "those who are sent", like messengers. Their message is: Christ is the Son of God, became Man, worked countless miracles, taught the people, suffered, died, resurrected, and ascended for our salvation.

PENTECOST

50 DAYS AFTER PASCHA

The story of Pentecost is found in the book of The Acts of the Apostles. In Chapter two we are told that the Apostles of our Lord were gathered together in one place. Suddenly, a sound came from heaven like a rushing wind, filling the entire house where they were sitting. Then, tongues of fire appeared, and one sat upon each one of Apostles. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as directed by the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).

This miraculous event occurred on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, celebrated by the Jews on the fiftieth day after the Passover as the culmination of the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10). The Feast of Weeks began on the third day after the Passover with the presentation of the first harvest sheaves to God, and it concluded on Pentecost with the offering of two loaves of unleavened bread, representing the first products of the harvest (Leviticus 23:17-20; Deuteronomy 16:9-10).

Since the Jewish Feast of Pentecost was a great pilgrimage feast, many people from throughout the Roman Empire were gathered in Jerusalem on this day. When the people in Jerusalem heard the sound, they came together and heard their own languages being spoken by the Apostles (Acts 2:5-6). The people were amazed, knowing that some of those speaking were Galileans, and not men who would normally speak many different languages. They wondered what this meant, and some even thought the Apostles were drunk (Acts 2:7-13).

Peter, hearing these remarks, stood up and addressed the crowd. He preached to the people regarding the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Holy Spirit. He spoke about Jesus Christ and His death and glorious Resurrection. Great conviction fell upon the people, and they asked the Apostles, "What shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38-39).

The Bible records that on that day about three thousand were baptized. Following, the book of Acts states that the newly baptized continued daily to hear the teaching of the Apostles, as the early Christians met together for fellowship, the breaking of bread, and for prayer. Many wonderful signs and miracles were done through the Apostles, and the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

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