

Studies in the Faith

The Church Calendar (part 1)



GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH
OF THE
ASSUMPTION

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<p>Resources</p> <p>Video: The Akathist Hymn: www.goarch.org/multimedia/video</p> <p>Pamphlet: Holy Week in the Orthodox Church www.goarch.org/ourfaith/faithandlife</p> <p>Services: Lenten Liturgies and Akathist Hymn: www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical_texts</p> <p>Resources: Great and Holy Pascha: lent.goarch.org/holy_pascha/learn/</p> <p>Live Broadcasts: Paschal Services: lent.goarch.org/media/video-broadcast.asp</p>		<p>1 ✝</p> <p>Isaiah 40:18-31 / Genesis 15:1-15 / Proverbs 15:7-19</p> <p>Mary of Egypt Gerontios & Vasilides Μαρία ή Αιγυπτία Γερώντιος και Βασιλίδης</p>	<p>2 Presanctified Lit</p> <p>Isaiah 41:4-14 / Gen: Proverbs 15:20-16:9</p> <p>Titus the Wonderwork Theodora of Palestine Τίτος ό Θαυματουργό Παρθενομάρτυς Θεοδ</p>
<p>6 Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt 🍇</p> <p>Hebrews 9:11-14 Mark 10:32-45</p> <p>Eutychios, Pat. of Constan. Methodius Enlightener of Slavs Εὐτύχιος Πατρ. Κωνσταν. Μεθόδιος Ισαπόστολος</p>	<p>7 ✝</p> <p>Isaiah 48:17-49:4 / Genesis 27:1-41 / Proverbs 19:16-25</p> <p>Kalliopios & Akylina, Martyrs Savvas the New in Calymna Καλλιόπιος και Ακυλίνα Σάββας ό Νέος</p>	<p>8 ✝</p> <p>Isaiah 49:6-10 / Genesis 31:3-16 Proverbs 21:3-21</p> <p>Agavos, Roupfos, Asynkritos, Phlegon, Herodion, & Hermes Rufus the Obedient Ήρωδιών, Άγαβος, Ρουφός</p>	<p>9 Presanctified Lit</p> <p>Isaiah 58:1-11 / Gen. 45:1-16 / Prov. 21:23-</p> <p>Eupsychios the Martyr Vadin the Righteous o. Εὐψύχιος Μάρτυς Όσιος Βάδιμος</p>
<p>13 PALM SUNDAY 🐟</p> <p>Philippians 4:4-9 John 12:1-18</p> <p>Martin, Pope of Rome Μαρτίνος Όμολογητής</p>	<p>14 Holy Monday ✝ Presanctified Liturgy</p> <p>Matthew 21:18-43 Matthew 24:3-35</p> <p>Aristarchos, Pudens, Trophimos Thomais of Alexandria Άρισταρχος, Πούδης, Τρόφιμος Μάρτυς Θωμάς</p>	<p>15 Holy Tuesday ✝ Presanctified Liturgy</p> <p>Matthew 22:15-46; 23:1-39; 24:36-51; 25:1-46; 26:1-3</p> <p>Crescens the Martyr Leonidas, Bishop of Athens Μάρτυς Κρήσης Λεωνίδας Ίερομάρτυς</p>	<p>16 Holy Wednesday Presanctified Lit</p> <p>John 12:17-50 Matthew 26:6-16</p> <p>Agape, Chionia, Irene Μάρτυρες Αγάπη, Είρ Χιονία</p>
<p>20 GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA</p> <p>Acts 1:1-8 John 1:1-17</p> <p>ΑΓΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΣΧΑ</p>	<p>21 Renewal Monday 🍀</p> <p>Acts 1:12-17, 21-26 John 1:18-28</p> <p>Ianouarios and Companions Alexandra the Empress Ίερομάρτυς Ιανουάριος Μαξιμιανός, Πατρ. Κωνσταν</p>	<p>22 Renewal Tuesday 🍀</p> <p>Acts 2:14-21 Luke 24:12-35</p> <p>Theodore the Sykeote Nathaniel, Luke, & Clemente Raphael, Nicholas, Irene Όσιος Θεόδωρος ό Συκεώτης Απόστολος Ναθαναήλ</p>	<p>23 Renewal Wednesday</p> <p>Acts 12:1-11 John 1:35-52</p> <p>Great Martyr George Γεώργιος Μεγαλομάρ</p>
<p>27 Sunday of Thomas</p> <p>Acts 5:12-20 John 20:19-31</p> <p>Symeon the Holy Martyr Eulogios the Innkeeper Ίερομάρτυς Συμεών Εὐλόγιος ό Ξενοδόχος</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Acts 3:19-26 John 2:1-11</p> <p>9 Monk-martyrs of Cyzikos Memnon the Wonderworker 9 Μάρτυρες έν Κυζίκω Όσιος Μέμνων</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Acts 4:1-10 John 3:16-21</p> <p>Jason & Sosipater of the 70 Martyr Cercyra Ίάσων και Σωσίπατρος Άγία Κέρκυρα</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Acts 12:1-11 Luke 9:1-6</p> <p>James the Apostle Argyra the New Martyr Ίάκωβος ό Απόστολος Άργυρη Νεομάρτυς</p>

THE CALENDAR OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

READING ASSIGNMENTS

The Calendar of the Orthodox Church by Dr. Lewis Patsavos, pages 78-83, on page 7.

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN WORSHIP

In every Liturgical event (worship) we encounter Christ!

Worship, in general, and the sacraments in particular introduce us to and give us a glimpse of Christ's heavenly kingdom. The future age is made manifest to us by Christ through the sacraments of our Church.

The Church calendar helps us maintain our focus on Christ.

- a) The calendar of the Church expresses the whole history and faith of the Church.
- b) The calendar of the Church brings us, annually, the whole life of Christ. We relive with Jesus the great events in His life.
- c) The liturgical life of the Church, which follows the calendar, brings Christianity into our lives through the rich hymnology which often is written in the present tense.
- d) Important scriptural truths have been woven into the Church calendar.

The whole liturgical year revolves around the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

- a) The entire worship cycle of the Church is organized around Pascha (Easter), and therefore the liturgical year becomes a journey, a pilgrimage toward Pascha.
- b) It is the greatest and most exalted of all the Church feasts,
- c) Pascha is not considered to be one of the twelve feasts because it is considered to be the source of all of them.

OBSERVING THE DAY IN HONOR OF THE LORD

Our common, everyday experiences of time - sunrise and sunset, and the recurring cycle of the weeks, months and seasons - have been integrated into the worship cycle of the Church in order to express and signify God's life in us and our life in Him.

Since God and His saving power is always experienced as light, *"the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned"* (Matthew 4:16). Sunrise and Sunset are the times where the Orthodox Christian encounters Christ in worship either in private prayer or in communal, Liturgical prayer.

THE DAILY CYCLE OF SERVICES

The daily worship services of the Orthodox Church consists of the evening service of the Vespers and the morning service of the Matins.

In addition to Matins and Vespers, the daily worship cycle of the Church contains the following services of the hours. Each "service of the hours" has associated with it a set of psalms, hymns and a distinctive prayer for that hour that emphasizes the "theme" for that hour.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

In addition, there is the service of the Compline that is recited after supper and before retiring for bed. The service of the Compline focuses on three things:

- a)
- b)
- c)

There is also the midnight service which, as its name indicates, is a service for the middle of the night (mostly a monastic service). The middle of the night is an important hour in scripture. Among the significant events that have occurred in the middle of the night is the resurrection of our Lord. Scripture also alludes to the occurrence of the second coming as an event that will take place in the middle of the night. The midnight service is structured around these general themes.

THE WEEKLY CYCLE OF SERVICES

Each day of the liturgical week has associated with it a specific theme:

Sunday:

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

THE LITURGICAL YEAR

The liturgical year begins in September in accordance with an ancient custom initiated by St. Constantine in the early fourth century.

There are twelve great feast days in the Church calendar. Most are celebrated on the same day each year (fixed feasts determined by the Gregorian calendar). Others are celebrated on different days of the year (movable feasts determined by the Julian calendar). These twelve feasts highlight important events in the life of our Lord and the Virgin Mary (Theotokos). They are as follows:

The great and most important feast day:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

PRE-FESTIVE AND POST-FESTIVE PERIODS

There are preparatory periods before the major feasts as defined above. The pre-festive periods are designed to build up interest in the feast through special services, prayers and hymns. The hymnology of the Church always announces the feasts before the feast is celebrated.

There are also post-festive periods associated with a feast day which are designed to maintain our interest in the feasts just celebrated and helps us see its abiding relevance to our lives. The last day of this post festive period is called the *apodosis*.

THE FEASTS OF THE SAINTS - THE IMMOVABLE FEASTS

Every day of the year the Church remembers and honors one or more of the holy men and women who dedicated themselves to the Lord with exemplary faith and perseverance. The day the Saint is remembered is the day the Saint died, the day his/her new life began in Jesus Christ.

The feast days of Saints always fall on the same day of each year. They are therefore immovable feasts. For example, the feast day of St. Basil is always celebrated on January 1st regardless of the day on which it falls.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Orthros Gospel and Tone Schedule</p> <p>Sunday - Gospel - Tone</p> <p>2 10 Grave</p> <p>9 11 Plagal Fourth</p> <p>16 1 First</p> <p>23 2 Second</p> <p>30 3 Third</p>						<p>1 New Year's Day </p> <p>Colossians 2:8-12 / Luke 2:20-21, 40-52</p> <p>Circumcision of Jesus Christ</p> <p>Basil the Great</p> <p>ΠΕΡΙΤΟΜΗ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ</p> <p>Μέγας Βασίλειος</p>
<p>2 Sunday before Theophany </p> <p>II Timothy 4:5-8 / Mark 1:1-8</p> <p>Pope Sylvester</p> <p>Kosmas Pat. of Constantinople</p> <p>Σάββατος Πάπας Ρώμης</p> <p>Κοσμάς Πατρ. Κωνσταντ.</p>	<p>3 </p> <p>Acts 10:44-48; 11:1-10 / John 1:18-28</p> <p>Prophet Malachi</p> <p>Martyr Gordios</p> <p>Προφήτης Μαλαχίας</p> <p>Μάρτυρ Γκόδιος</p>	<p>4 </p> <p>I Timothy 3: 13-16; 4:1-5 / Matthew 3:1-6</p> <p>Synaxis of the 70 Apostles</p> <p>Theoctistos the Righteous</p> <p>Σύναξις τῶν 70 Ἀποστόλων</p> <p>Ἵσως Θεοκτίστου Σικελίας</p>	<p>5 </p> <p>I Corinthians 9:19-27 / Luke 3:1-18</p> <p>Eve of Theophany</p> <p>Theopemptos & Theonas</p> <p>Προεόρτια τῶν Φώτων</p> <p>Θεόπemptος καὶ Θεωνάς</p>	<p>6 HOLY THEOPHANY </p> <p>Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7 / Matthew 3:13-15</p> <p>ΑΓΙΑ ΘΕΟΦΑΝΕΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ</p>	<p>7 Synaxis of John the Baptist </p> <p>Acts 19:1-8 / John 1:29-34</p> <p>Σύναξις τοῦ Τιμίου Ἐνδόξου Προφήτου, Προδρόμου καὶ Βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου</p>	<p>8 </p> <p>Ephesians 6:10-17 / Matthew 4:1-11</p> <p>George the Chozebite</p> <p>Dominica the Righteous</p> <p>Ἵσως Γεώργιος ὁ Χοζεβίτης</p> <p>Ἵσια Δομνίκη</p>
<p>9 Sunday after Theophany</p> <p>Ephesians 4:7-13 / Matthew 4:12-17</p> <p>Martyr Polyuctos</p> <p>Eustratios the Wonderworker</p> <p>Πολυεύκτος Μάρτυρ</p> <p>Εὐστράτιος Θαυματουργός</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Ephesians 4:7-13 / Luke 3:19-22</p> <p>Gregory of Nyssa</p> <p>Dometian, Bishop of Melitene</p> <p>Γρηγόριος Ἐπίσκοπος Νύσσης</p> <p>Δομετιανός Ἐπίτ. Μελετινῆς</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Hebrews 13:7-16 / Matthew 11:27-30</p> <p>Theodosios the Cenobiarch</p> <p>Vitalis of Gaza</p> <p>Θεοδοσίος Ἵσως Κοννοβάρχεις</p> <p>Ἵσως Βιτάλιος</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Acts 18:22-28 / John 10:39-42</p> <p>Martyr Tatiana</p> <p>Martyr Mertios</p> <p>Τατιανὴ Μάρτυρ</p> <p>Μάρτυρ Μέρτιος</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Ephesians 6:10-17 / Luke 20:1-8</p> <p>Hermyllos & Stratonikos</p> <p>Maximos the Righteous</p> <p>Ἑρμύλλος καὶ Στρατόνικος Ἵσως Μάξιμος</p>	<p>14 </p> <p>Hebrews 10:32-38 / Luke 12:32-40</p> <p>Apodosis of Theophany</p> <p>Fathers Slain at Sinai & Raitho</p> <p>Ἀββάρδες ἀναρθεθέντες ἐν Σινά καὶ Ραϊθῶ</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2 / Luke 12:32-40</p> <p>Paul of Thebes</p> <p>John the Cave Dweller</p> <p>Παῦλος ὁ Θηβαῖος</p> <p>Ἰωάννης ὁ Καλύβιτης</p>
<p>16^{12th} Sunday of Luke (Ten Lepers)</p> <p>Colossians 3:4-11 / Luke 17:12-19</p> <p>Veneration of the Chains of the Apostle Peter</p> <p>Makarios Kalogeras of Patmos</p> <p>Προσκύνησις Λαϊσέτας</p> <p>Ἀποστόλου Πέτρου</p>	<p>17 Martin Luther King Jr. Day </p> <p>Hebrews 13:17-21 / Luke 6:17-23</p> <p>Anthony the Great</p> <p>Anthony of Bereoa</p> <p>Ἀντώνιος ὁ Μέγας</p> <p>Ἀντώνιος τῆς Βεροῦσίας</p>	<p>18 </p> <p>Hebrews 13:7-16 / Matthew 5:14-19</p> <p>Athanasios & Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria</p> <p>Xenia the Martyr</p> <p>Ἀθανάσιος καὶ Κύριλλος, Πατρ. Ἀλεξανδρείας</p>	<p>19 </p> <p>Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2 / Matthew 22:2-14</p> <p>Makarios the Great of Egypt</p> <p>Mark of Ephesus</p> <p>Μακάριος ὁ Αἰγύπτιος</p> <p>Μάρκος Ἐπίσκοπος Ἐφέσου</p>	<p>20 </p> <p>II Corinthians 4:6-15 / Luke 6:17-23</p> <p>Euthymios the Great</p> <p>Zacharias New Martyr of Patra</p> <p>Ἵσως Εὐθύμιος ὁ Μέγας</p> <p>Ζαχαρίας Νεομάρτυρ</p>	<p>21 </p> <p>Philippians 1:12-20 / Luke 12:8-12</p> <p>Maximos the Confessor</p> <p>Martyr Neophytos</p> <p>Μάξιμος Ὁμολογητῆς</p> <p>Νεόφυτος Μάρτυρ</p>	<p>22 </p> <p>II Timothy 1:3-9 / Matt. 10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30</p> <p>Timothy of the 70</p> <p>Martyr Anastasios the Persian</p> <p>Τιμόθεος Ἀπόστολος ἐκ τῶν 70</p> <p>Ἀναστάσιος ὁ Πέρσης</p>
<p>23 14th Sunday of Luke (Blind Man)</p> <p>I Timothy 1:15-17 / Luke 18:35-43</p> <p>Hieromartyr Clement of Ancyra</p> <p>Martyr Agathangelos</p> <p>Ἱερομάρτυρ Κλήμης Ἀγκυραῖος</p> <p>Μάρτυρ Ἀγαθάγγελος</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2 / Matthew 25:14-30</p> <p>Xenia, Deaconess of Rome</p> <p>Hieromartyr Babylas</p> <p>Ἵσια Ξένη</p> <p>Βαβύλας Ἱερομάρτυρ</p>	<p>25 </p> <p>Hebrews 7:26-8:2 / John 10:9-16</p> <p>Gregory the Theologian</p> <p>Archbishop of Constantinople</p> <p>Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος</p> <p>Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Κωνσταντ.</p>	<p>26 </p> <p>II Corinthians 1:22-24; 2:1-4 / Luke 19:1-10</p> <p>Xenophon & his Companions</p> <p>Symeon the Elder</p> <p>Ἵσως Ξενοφών</p> <p>Ἵσως Συμεών ὁ Παλαιός</p>	<p>27 </p> <p>Hebrews 7:26-8:2 / John 10:9-16</p> <p>Translation of the Relic of John Chrysostom</p> <p>Peter the Righteous of Egypt</p> <p>Ἀνακομιτὴ Λειψάνου Ἰωάννου Χρυσοστόμου</p>	<p>28 </p> <p>Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2 / Luke 6:17-23</p> <p>Ephraim the Syrian</p> <p>Isaac the Syrian</p> <p>Ἵσως Ἐφραίμ ὁ Σύρος</p> <p>Ἰσαάκιος ὁ Σύρος</p>	<p>29 </p> <p>Hebrews 10:32-38 / Mark 9:33-41</p> <p>Translation of the Relics of Ignatius the Godbearer</p> <p>Laurence of the Kiev Caves</p> <p>Ἀνακομιτὴ Λειψάνων Ἰγνατίου τοῦ Θεοφόρου</p>
<p>30 Three Hierarchs </p> <p>Hebrews 13:7-16 / Matthew 5:14-19</p> <p>Three Hierarchs</p> <p>Hippolytos of Rome</p> <p>Οἱ ΤΡΕΙΣ ἹΕΡΑΡΧΕΣ</p> <p>Ἱππολύτος Πάπας Ρώμης</p>	<p>31</p> <p>I Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8 / Matthew 10:1, 5-8</p> <p>Unmercenaries Cyrus & John</p> <p>Martyrs Theodote, Theoctiste & Eudoxia</p> <p>Κύρος καὶ Ἰωάννης Ἀνάγκυροι</p>				<p style="text-align: center;">Resources</p> <p>Article: Feast of Epiphany - January 6: www.goarch.org/special/listen_learn_share/epiphany</p> <p>Video: Epiphany: Festival of Lights: www.goarch.org/multimedia/video/epiphany/igt-epiphany-full</p> <p>Article: The Feast of Epiphany, The Feast of Lights: www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8383</p> <p>Article: Feast of Saint Basil - January 1: www.goarch.org/special/basil</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fasting Symbols</p> <p> Strict Fast</p> <p> Wine/Oil Allowed</p> <p> Fast Free</p> <p> Fish Allowed</p>

PRAYERS OF ST. BASIL

FIRST HOUR (6:00 AM)

O eternal God, the eternal Light without beginning, the Creator of all the world, the Fountain of mercy, the Sea of goodness, and the unsearchable Abyss of the love of humankind - shine the light of Your Countenance upon us. Enlighten our hearts, O spiritual Sun of righteousness, and fill our souls with Your joy, and teach us to study and speak Your judgments always, and to confess to You continuously as our Master and Benefactor. Direct the works of our hands to Your will, and strengthen us that we may work what is pleasing and beloved to You. So that through our unworthiness Your all-holy name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, of the one Godhead and Kingdom, may be glorified. To You belong all glory, honor and worship to the ages. Amen.

You send forth the light and it proceeds; You cause the sun to rise upon the just and the unjust, upon the evil and the good; You make the dawn and You enlighten all the world - enlighten our hearts, O Master of all. Grant us in the present day to please You; keep us from every sin and every evil action; rescue us from every sinful arrow which flies by day and from every power of the adversary through the intercessions of our all-pure Lady Theotokos, of Your bodiless and heavenly angelic servants and powers, and of all the saints who have pleased You from all ages. For it is You Who have mercy on us and save us, O our God, and to You do we ascribe glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and to the ages of ages. Amen.

THIRD HOUR (9:00 AM)

Lord our God, You gave Your peace to men and sent down the gift of the all-holy Spirit to Your disciples and apostles and opened their lips through tongues of fire by Your power. Open also the lips of us sinners and teach us how we should pray and for what we should pray. O fair Haven of the storm-tossed, govern our lives and make known to us the way in which we should walk. Establish a right Spirit within us, and by Your governing Spirit make firm our confused mind. So that, guided by Your good Spirit every day to what is for our benefit, we may be found worthy to do Your commandments and to remember always Your glorious presence which searches the actions of men. Strengthen us that we may not be deceived by the fleeting pleasures of this world but that we may desire the enjoyment of the future treasures. For You are blessed and praised among all Your saints unto the ages of ages. Amen.

SIXTH HOUR (12:00 NOON)

O God, Lord of Powers and Maker of the whole creation, O You who in your compassion beyond understanding deigned to send down your Only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our race; who through his cross cancelled the debt of our sins and overcame the powers and masters of darkness, O Lord and Lover of Mankind: accept from us sinners these prayers of thanksgiving and petition and preserve us against any deadly fall in the darkness and against every enemy seen or unseen who may be seeking our harm. Pierce our bodies with the fear of You, so that looking on You at all times and guided by the light that shines from You, we may behold the unapproachable eternal light and unceasingly address to You, Eternal Father, and to your only-begotten Son and to your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit our thanksgiving and worship, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

NINTH HOUR (3:00 PM)

O Master, Lord Jesus Christ, who patiently endured our sins and led us to this hour at which You were hanged on the life-giving wood; who opened a way to paradise for the penitent thief and crushed death by your death: forgive us the trespasses that we your servants have committed, unworthy sinners that we are. We have sinned indeed and transgressed your law: we are unworthy even to lift up our eyes to heaven, for we have abandoned the path of your holiness and pursued the desires of our hearts. But now we implore your immense goodness: spare us, O Lord, in the multitude of your mercies; save us for the sake of your most holy name. Our days were spent in vanity: wrest us from the hands of our enemy and forgive us our sins. Subdue in us the cravings of our flesh, so that, after putting off the old man, we may put on the new and live for You, our Lord and Benefactor; and that, obeying your commandments, we may reach eternal repose in the place where all the blessed abide, for You are truly joy and delight to those who love You, Christ our God! We send up glory to You, and to your eternal Father, and to your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

THE CALENDAR OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Lewis Patsavos, Ph.D.

Holy Cross School of Theology

1. RELIGIOUS CALENDAR: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Within the Orthodox Church feast days and fast days are reckoned according to two distinct calendars, the Julian Calendar and the Gregorian Calendar. The first is attributed to the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar, whose name it bears. It was later corrected in the sixteenth century by Pope Gregory XIII due to the ever increasing discrepancy between calendar time and calculated astronomical time. Thus the Gregorian Calendar came into being.

OLD AND NEW CALENDARS

Inasmuch as the Julian Calendar had been in continuous use in the Christian East and West throughout the centuries, the subsequent introduction of the Gregorian Calendar in the West created yet another anomaly in the deteriorating relations between the two Churches. The need for correction of the Julian Calendar was well understood in the East and had even led some to devise a new calendar themselves. Nevertheless, the Julian Calendar remained in use throughout the Byzantine period and beyond. Despite the efforts of the emissaries of Pope Gregory to convince the Orthodox to accept the New (Gregorian) Calendar, the Orthodox Church rejected it. The main reason for its rejection was that the celebration of Easter would be altered: contrary to the injunctions of canon 7 of the Holy Apostles, the decree of the First Ecumenical Synod, and canon 1 of Ancyra, Easter would sometimes coincide with the Jewish Passover in the Gregorian calendar.

This is where the matter stood until the end of World War 1. Until then, all Orthodox Churches had strictly abided by the Old (Julian) Calendar, which at present is 13 days behind the New Calendar long since adopted by the rest of Christendom. In May of 1923, however, an "Inter-Orthodox Congress" was convened at Constantinople by the then Ecumenical Patriarch, Meletios IV. Not all Orthodox Churches

were in attendance. The Churches of Serbia, Romania, Greece, and Cyprus were; the Churches of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, although invited, were not; the Church of Bulgaria was not invited. Several issues were under discussion at the congress, one of which was the adoption of the New Calendar. No unanimous agreement was reached on any of the issues discussed. Several of the Orthodox Churches, however, did eventually agree, though not all at the same time, to adopt the New Calendar. These were the Churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Poland, and most recently, Bulgaria (1968); on the other hand, the Churches of Jerusalem, Russia and Serbia, along with the monasteries on Mt. Athos, all continue to adhere to the Old Calendar.

2. CALENDAR PROBLEMS AND IMPLICATIONS AMONG THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE OLD CALENDARISTS

The result of this situation is unfortunate indeed. The Orthodox Churches which have adopted the New Calendar observe Christmas with the other Churches of Christendom on December 25; the Orthodox Churches which have not adopted it celebrate Christmas 13 days later, on January 7. Epiphany is celebrated by the former on January 6 and by the latter on January 19. And so it is with all the great feasts of the Christian Calendar but one. Easter, the feast of feasts, continues to be calculated by all Orthodox Churches to the dates of the Old Calendar. Consequently, all Orthodox Churches observe the event of Christ's Resurrection on the same day, regardless of when the rest of Christendom does. An exception to this general rule is the Orthodox Church of Finland. Owing to the fact that it makes up less than 2 per cent of the population of a predominantly Lutheran country, it observes Easter according to the New Calendar for practical reasons.

It may well be that the date of Orthodox Easter occasionally coincides with that of the other Christian Churches; however, it may also occur as much as 5 weeks later. Thus arose the formula applied by the Orthodox Churches adopting the New Calendar - viz., that immovable feastdays are to be observed 13 days earlier than in the Old Calendar, while Easter and all movable feastdays dependent on it are still calculated according to the Old Calendar—which was seen as a compromise with those who opposed the change. On the one hand, the necessary revisions were made to correct the Old Calendar; on the other hand, the calculation of Easter was retained as before so as not to violate the holy canons. Nevertheless, this compromise was to prove incapable of preventing the schism of "Old Calendarists" which ensued.

As is always the case with reform movements, there was strong opposition to the adoption of the New Calendar, especially in Greece. What differed in this situation, however, was that reform was initiated by the established Church together with the total backing of the state. Groups of "Old Calendarists" or *Palαιοemerologitai*, refused to abide by the Church's decision and continued to follow the Old Calendar for both movable and immovable feastdays. The basis of their refusal to abandon the Old Calendar rested on the argument that canons ratified by an Ecumenical Synod knew only of the Julian Calendar. Therefore, nothing less than an Ecumenical Synod had the authority to institute a reform of such proportion. In view of their refusal to submit to the authority of the Church of Greece, they were excommunicated by the official Church. This was not the case with the monasteries of Mt. Athos. Although all but one (i.e., 19 monasteries) continued to follow the Old Calendar, they are under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople with which they continue to be in communion. Despite attempts by the civil authorities in Greece to suppress them, the "Old Calendarists" continue to exist

there and abroad and to maintain a hierarchy of their own together with parishes and monasteries.

3. HOLY DAYS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

The ecclesiastical year, which according to Byzantine practice begins on the first of September, is divided between movable and immovable or fixed holy days. The movable holy days are determined by the date of Easter, the most important of all feast days, which is in a class by itself. The determination of the date of Easter was definitively regulated by the decision of the First Ecumenical Synod, held in Nicaea (325). Next in importance to Easter are the "twelve great feasts," of which three are movable. Eight of these feasts are devoted to Christ and four to the Virgin Mary. There are also a number of feast days of varying importance, most of which commemorate the more popular saints.

4. HOLY DAYS DEDICATED TO CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN MARY

The "twelve great feasts;" as they occur in chronological order after September 1, are as follows:

1. The Nativity of the Virgin Mary (September 8)
2. The Elevation of the Life-giving Cross (September 14)
3. The Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple (November 21)
4. Christmas (December 25)
5. Epiphany (January 6)
6. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (February 2)
7. The Annunciation (March 25)
8. Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter)
9. The Ascension (40 days after Easter)
10. Pentecost (50 days after Easter)
11. The Transfiguration (August 6)
12. The Repose of the Virgin Mary (August 15)

5. FAST DAYS AND FAST PERIODS

Four main fast period are included in the ecclesiastical year. They are:

1. The Great Fast (Lent)-beginning on a Monday 7 weeks before Easter.
2. Fast of the Apostles-varying in length from 1 to 6 weeks; it begins on a Monday, 8 days after Pentecost, and ends on June 28-the eve of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

3. Fast of the Repose of the Virgin Mary August 1 to 14.

4. Christmas Fast-lasting 40 days, from November 15 to December 24.

Individual fast days include the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (September 14), the Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29), and the eve of Epiphany (January 5), as well as all Wednesdays and Fridays. There is no fasting, however, between Christmas and Epiphany, during the tenth week before Easter, the week after Easter and the week after Pentecost.

Although the term denotes total abstinence from food or drink, fasting as practiced in the Orthodox Church means abstinence from meat, fish, dairy products, olive oil, and wine. Total abstinence is reserved for the fast of several hours duration preceding Holy Communion. The rules for fasting prescribed by the holy canons are quite rigid; and, although they are still observed in the monasteries and by the very devout, most Orthodox Christians today find it difficult to uphold the traditional practice for the length of time prescribed. Nevertheless, any deviation from the norm is permitted only following consultation with one's spiritual father or with the prior approval of the local hierarchy.

6. ORTHODOX EASTER (PASCHA)

The determination of the date of Easter is governed by a computation based on the vernal equinox and the phase of the moon. According to the ruling of the First Ecumenical Synod in 325, Easter Sunday 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.

Herein lies the first difference in the determination of Easter between the Orthodox Church and the other Christian Churches. The Orthodox Church continues to base its calculations for the date of Easter on the Julian Calendar, which was in use at the time of the First Ecumenical Synod. As such, it does not take into consideration the number of days which have since then accrued due to the progressive inaccuracy of the Julian Calendar. Practically speaking, this means that Easter may not be celebrated before April 3 (Gregorian), which had been March 21—the date of the vernal equinox—at the time of the First Ecumenical Synod. In other words, a difference of 13 days exists between the accepted date for the vernal equinox then and now. In the West, this discrepancy was addressed in the 16th century through the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar, which adjusted the Julian Calendar still in use by all Christians at that time. Western Christians, therefore, observe the date of the vernal equinox on March 21 according to the Gregorian Calendar.

The other difference in the determination of Easter between the Orthodox and other Christian Churches concerns the date of Passover. Jews originally celebrated Passover on the first full moon following the vernal equinox. Christians, therefore, celebrated Easter on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the other tragic events which gave rise to the dispersal of the Jews, Passover sometimes preceded the vernal equinox. This was occasioned by the dependence of the dispersed Jews upon local pagan calendars for the calculation of Passover. As a consequence, most Christians eventually ceased to regulate the observance of Easter by the Jewish Passover. Their purpose, of course, was to preserve the original practice of celebrating Easter following the vernal equinox.

As an alternative to calculating Easter by the Passover, "paschal (Easter) cycles" were devised. The

Orthodox Church eventually adopted a 19-year cycle, the Western Church an 84-year cycle. The use of two different "paschal cycles" inevitably gave way to differences between the Eastern and Western Churches regarding the observance of Easter. Varying dates for the vernal equinox increased these differences. Consequently, it is the combination of these variables which accounts for the different date of Orthodox Easter, whenever it varies from the rest of Christendom. ■

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

J. Dowden, *The Church Year and Calendar*. Cambridge, 1910.

D. R. Fotheringham, *The Date of Easter and Other Christian Festivals*. London, 1928.

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SESSION NOTES





Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption
Seattle, Washington