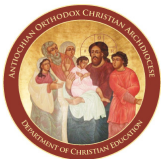




## **The Great Feasts:** *The Life of Our Lord*



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***The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch***

*Above: Icon of Christ Pantocrator from Hagia Sofia, Constantinople*

## *Beloved Teacher,*

Orthodox Christians, ideally, have one foot walking in the temporal year and the other in the Church's liturgical year—one foot on earth and the other in heaven. The foot that walks the liturgical year keeps us in touch with the eternal, important events of the life of Jesus and his mother, the Theotokos.

Although the term, "liturgical year" includes all the services and readings for the year, it is often used to speak of the Pascha and The Twelve Great Feasts. We hold Pascha as "the feast of feasts," hence it is called out when we speak of the Great Feasts of the liturgical year. The Church Year begins on September 1. The feasts are listed in temporal chronological order below.

### *The Great Feasts*

#### *Pascha!*

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|---|--|
| 1. Nativity of the Theotokos <b>September 8</b>         | 6. Presentation of the Lord, <b>February 2</b>   |
| 2. Elevation of the Holy Cross, <b>September 14</b>     | 7. Annunciation, <b>March 25</b>                 |
| 3. Presentation of the Theotokos,<br><b>November 21</b> | 8. Palm Sunday, <b>the Sunday before Pascha</b>  |
| 4. Nativity of Christ, <b>December 25</b>               | 9. Ascension, <b>Forty Days after Pascha</b>     |
| 5. Theophany, <b>January 6</b>                          | 10. Pentecost, <b>Fifty Days after Pascha</b>    |
|   | 11. Transfiguration, <b>August 6</b>             |
|   | 12. Dormition of the Theotokos, <b>August 15</b> |

Through the Great Feasts we are kept in touch with the reality of Jesus Christ. When we remember any of the events of His life story, we also remember His promise at the end: one day He will come again and we will live eternally in His Kingdom. Only by placing our story in His, can we find peace, joy and meaning in this life.

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***Please post the Feast Day pages around your classroom, or if you don't have a room, keep them in a notebook*** so you can show the students the icon as the feast approaches. If you post them, find a way to note that the Feast Day is approaching by placing a colored closepin, or a removable sticker, or arrow on the page. Our goal is for the students to know the icons, and memorize the feasts—our Lord's story—by the end of their years in Church School.

The facing page gives you a few words you can say to the students, or give to a student to read at the outset of each year. If you have the time, we have also provided a "fill-in" sheet for the students to practice naming the icons, or numbering them by feast-day order or by the order of their occurrence in Jesus' life story, or writing their dates. If you wish to expand the program, consider learning alternate names of the feasts and icons (Epiphany/Theophany), or considering why we celebrate the feasts of the Theotokos, or how each feast speaks to us personally. Thank you for your attention to this program that aims to keep the story of Christ intact, and the reality of Christ active in the lives of our students.

*Carole A. Bulega*

Director, Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese  
Department of Christian Education, July 2018

## *Dear Students,*

When we make a new friend, we ask one another questions about families, our likes and dislikes, and eventually end up sharing some stories. If you are going to be in a relationship with anyone, you get to know their story.

Each one of us has been entered into a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. We have “put on Christ,” at our baptism. Yet, do we know Him? How well do we know His story?

Through the centuries, Orthodoxy has commemorated certain events, thirteen by number, of the life of God’s Son. These comprise the key events of His life story.

These events are found in the pages of the four gospels. With your time allotted to school work, a sport or two or three, music lessons, texting, eating and maybe sleeping, it is difficult to squeeze in a time for God, especially when no one is waiting to mark you “present,” or to grade you on your activity. Always remember that you can simply be with Him, in prayer, or in silence. If you seek Jesus, He will find you. His Holy Spirit will give you peace and joy.

Without His life, our lives would end at the grave. With His story—His life—we look forward to the Life of the Kingdom at the end of the world. Then we will be with the Lord who knows us and loves us, forever.

*“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure  
to give you the kingdom.”*

Luke 12:32

### *Acknowledgements*

*We are grateful to the parish of St. Elijah, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, for sharing these icons. The iconographer is Antoine Solounias.*

The apolytikia are taken from the website of the Antiochian Archdiocese Department of Sacred Music. <http://ww1.antiochian.org/music/library>

Carole Buleza, Jacob Corbin, Dn. Jerome, Leslie, and Elaine Atherholt prepared this program.



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## September 8

*Thy nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.*



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**September 14**

*O Lord, save thy people and bless thine inheritance, granting to thy people victory over all their enemies, and by the power of thy Cross preserving thy Kingdom.*



## November 21

*Today the Virgin is the foreshadowing of the pleasure of God, and the beginning of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. Thou hast appeared in the temple of God openly and hast gone before, preaching Christ to all. Let us shout with one thrilling voice, saying: Rejoice, O thou who art the fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation.*



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## December 25

*Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars did learn there from to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest Thou didst come. O Lord, glory to Thee.*



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## January 6

*When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee calling Thee His Beloved Son; and the Spirit in the likeness of a dove confirmed the truth of His word. O Christ our God, who has appeared and enlightened the world, glory to Thee.*



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## February 2

*Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Who art full of grace, for from Thee did shine the Sun of Justice, Christ Who is our God, a light to those who dwell in darkness. Rejoice and be glad, O righteous old man, bearing in thine arms the Deliverer of our souls, Who grants to us resurrection.*

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## March 25

*Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the manifestation of the mystery from the ages; for the Son of God becometh the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaimeth grace.*

*Wherefore, do we shout with him to the Theotokos:  
Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with thee.*



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### The Sunday before Pascha

*O Christ God, when we were buried with thee in Baptism  
we became deserving of thy Resurrection to immortal life.  
Wherefore we praise thee crying: Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.*



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*Christ is risen from the dead,  
trampling down death by death,  
and on those in the tombs bestowing life!*



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## Forty Days after Pascha

*Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and  
gladdened Thy Disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit,  
making them confident through the blessing that Thou art  
the Son of God, and Deliverer of the world.*



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## Fifty Days after Pascha

*Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast revealed  
the fishermen most wise, having sent upon them the Holy Spirit,  
and through them Thou hast fished the universe,  
O Lover of mankind, glory to Thee.*



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## August 6

*When thou, O Christ our God, wast transfigured on the mountain, thou didst reveal thy glory to thy disciples in proportion as they could bear it. Let thine everlasting light also enlighten us sinners, through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O thou Bestower of light, glory to thee.*



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**August 15**

*In thy birthgiving, O Theotokos, thou didst keep and preserve  
virginity; and in thy falling asleep hast not forsaken the world;  
for thou wast translated into life, being the Mother of Life.  
Wherefore by thine intercessions, deliver our souls from death.*



# Know Christ, Know His Story

Note: These icons are not in feast-day order.





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