

There are many books by leading Orthodox theologians and scholars on all aspects of the Orthodox Church and this leaflet series provides some basic information in the hope that it might prompt further enquiry.

**LEAFLETS IN THIS INTRODUCTION TO  
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SERIES:**

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All text in these leaflets is mine except where indicated, therefore any errors of fact or in grammar are mine. I should be grateful to have those errors pointed out so that corrections can be made.

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**"The Orthodox Church.....**has preserved unadulterated the first and most ancient ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, has avoided innovations and personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and dogmas of the faith, and is administered according to the ancient synodical system under local bishops in collaboration with the faithful and successive groups of both local and broader episcopal synods, of which the highest is the Ecumenical Synod, that of the Orthodox worldwide. The basic administrative canons, the details of which are regulated according to local needs, have been determined by the seven ecumenical synods. The Church is not managed by regional states in which it resides, although it collaborates in good works when asked to do so. Within the entire Orthodox Church there is absolute cooperation in goodwill and mutual respect. Perchance minor human problems are addressed successfully through the application of the evangelical spirit."

*Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, from  
"Encountering the Mystery."  
ISBN 978-0-385-51813-0*

Orthodox Community of Archangel Michael  
and Holy Piran, Cornwall.  
[www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk](http://www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk)

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[www.thyateira.org.uk](http://www.thyateira.org.uk)

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Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

# Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: The Calendar



Icon of the Resurrection and the Twelve Great Feasts.

And they continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts of the Apostles 2:42

Most people know what a calendar is and a diary. Both contain the days and months of the year, noting special dates. Although most calendars will start at January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Church's liturgical year begins on September 1<sup>st</sup>.

The major feast (festival) in the Church's year is Holy Pascha (Easter) – the time we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. There are twelve Great Feasts in the year, nine being on fixed dates and three dependent upon the moveable date of Pascha.

Whilst services may take place throughout the week, Sunday is the special day when faithful Orthodox Christians come together in worship. In Greece the name for Sunday is the Lord's Day (Κυριακή ημέρα) and in Russia the Day of Resurrection (Воскресенье).

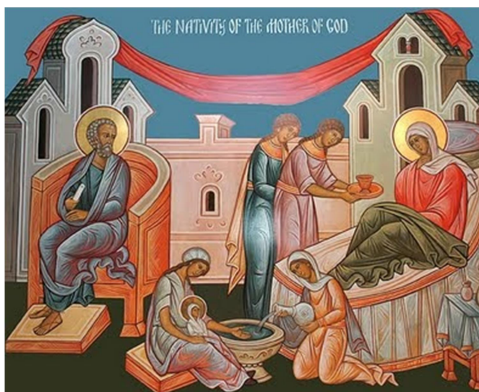


The calendar places before us events in the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of his Most Blessed Mother, the holy Apostles, men and women who down the ages to the present day provide witness and example through which we can learn and be strengthened in our discipleship. In the context of worship the Synaxarion book supplies an account of the event or saint(s) of the day being commemorated.

**The Church's year, with its sequence of feasts and fasts, is something of overwhelming importance in the religious experience of the Orthodox Christian.**

Metropolitan Kallistos.

Pre-eminent among all festivals is Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, with the Twelve Great Feasts next in importance and those are:-



Icon of the Birth of the Theotokos.

- The Birth of the Theotokos**  
September 8<sup>th</sup>
- The Exaltation of the Holy Cross**  
September 14<sup>th</sup>
- The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple**  
November 21<sup>st</sup>
- The Birth of Christ**  
December 25<sup>th</sup>
- The Holy Theophany**  
January 6<sup>th</sup>
- The Meeting of Our Lord**  
February 2<sup>nd</sup>
- The Annunciation to the Theotokos**  
March 25<sup>th</sup>
- Sunday of Palms**  
One week before Pascha
- The Ascension of Our Lord**  
40 days after Pascha
- Pentecost**  
50 days after Pascha
- The Transfiguration of the Lord**  
August 6<sup>th</sup>
- The Dormition of the Theotokos**  
August 15<sup>th</sup>

Many other commemorations have set dates within the Calendar, for instance national and local patron saints. Also, a person's name day is important recalling that at baptism and chrismation a special Christian name was given. The saint whose name we bear becomes a special friend and guide in our Christian life and upon whose prayers we can rely. Personalities from the Old Testament witness and special events in the Church's history find a place in the Calendar from which we can gain knowledge and grow in our own day to day lives as Christians.

There are also certain Saturdays in the year when special services for those who have died take place (in church and at cemeteries), and these are noted in the Calendar.

The beneficial fasting periods noted in the Calendar include Wednesdays and Fridays of every week (with some exceptions). Then there are four particular times for fasting:-

**The Great Fast** (Lent) beginning seven weeks before and leading to Pascha.

**The Apostles Fast** from eight days after Pentecost to the 28<sup>th</sup> June, the eve of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

**The Dormition Fast** from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of August.

**The Nativity Fast** forty days, from 15<sup>th</sup> November to 24<sup>th</sup> December.

Within Orthodoxy some follow the **Julian** calendar introduced in 46 BC by Julius Caesar and known as *Old Style (OS)* which means for them Christmas and other commemorations take place 13 days after those using the new calendar, i.e., Christmas is on the 7<sup>th</sup> January. The majority of Orthodox Churches however follow the 16<sup>th</sup> century **Gregorian** calendar known as *New Style (NS)* and which most world nations use. Even so, allowing for this unfortunate difference the date of Pascha (Easter) is held in common by all Orthodox.