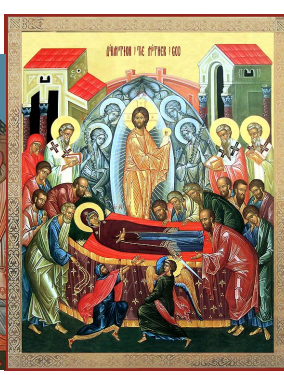
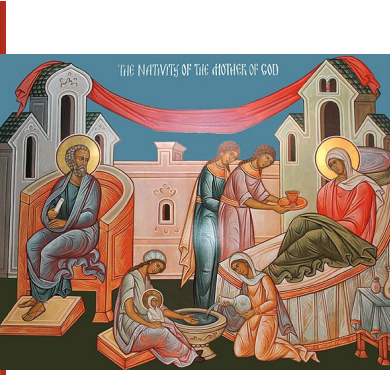
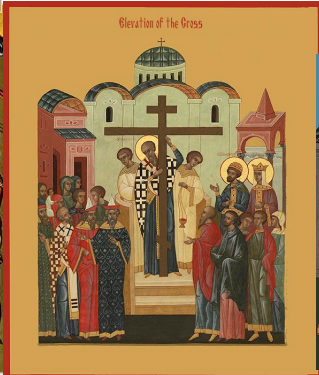
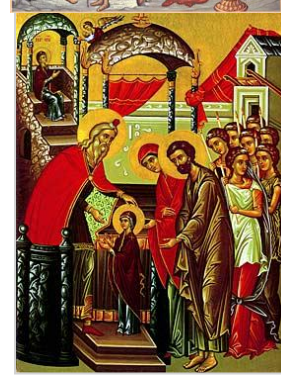


Great Feasts, Part 2

Feasts of the Theotokos, Cross, and Holy Spirit



OPENING PRAYERS:

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen
Glory to thee, our God, glory to thee!

Prayer to Holy Spirit

O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art everywhere present and fillest all things, Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Trisagion Prayer

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Before Study

Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart that I may hear thy word and understand it and so fulfill thy will. Amen.

LESSON / ACTIVITY: See pages below. For each topic, please note Parent roles, notes, and (child responses).

Prayers

Before and after each lesson, please say a short prayer in front of an icon according to your family's prayer rule or the following, taken from the red St Tikhon's Prayer Book:

CLOSING PRAYERS:

"Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb: for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls.

Pray to God for me, O holy [name of your patron saint], pleasing to God, for with fervor I run to thee, swift helper and intercessor for my soul.

O Lord, save thy people and bless thine inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries, and by virtue of thy Cross preserve thy habitation.

It is truly meet to bless thee, O Theotokos: ever-blessed and most pure and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim; without corruption thou gavest birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify thee.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, through the prayers of thy most pure Mother, of my holy guardian angel, of [name of your patron saint], of [saint(s) of the day], and of all the saints: save me, a sinner. Amen."

Introduction: The Church Year and Cycle of Feasts

Parent Asks: “How often do we celebrate days and feasts, eating delicious food and celebrating with people we love, like Christmas or your birthday? Are they on the same day every year? Why do we celebrate those days?” (Something important happened that we want to remember.) “What other days do we celebrate in the Church each year? Are some on a different day, but in the same season?”

Parent Explains: “Each year the Orthodox Church calendar remembers important events that we want to celebrate, like Christ’s nativity, *birthday*, His baptism, or the nativity, *birthday*, of the Theotokos, *mother of God*. These are on specific days. Pascha, or Easter, and the feasts around it, like Palm Sunday, Christ’s Ascension into heaven, and Pentecost, are on different days each year. There are 12 major feast days, plus Pascha, ‘the feast of feasts.’” *If the child has The Great Feasts DIY Banner*, say, “Look at each icon and try to see what event is happening or why this day is special. The 12 feasts in order of the January-December calendar year are: Theophany, Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, Annunciation, Palm Sunday, Pascha, Pentecost, Transfiguration, Dormition, Nativity of the Theotokos, Elevation of the Cross, Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, and the Nativity of our Lord. This week we will focus on the Feasts of the Theotokos, Cross, and the Holy Spirit and practice singing the Troparia!

Activity: *If you haven’t already, now is a good time to color the Great Feasts Banner and look at the icons. Think about what is happening in the icon while coloring.*

Day 2: The Annunciation

1) Parent Explains: “On this feast day we celebrate the Archangel Gabriel announcing to Saint Mary that she will bear (give birth to) Jesus.” Read the Bible story together, Luke 1:26-38. See *King James Version* text on next page.

2) Parent Asks: “Who made an announcement?” (The angel Gabriel) “Who did he announce it to?” (Mary) “What was the announcement?” (That she would have a baby and name Him Jesus) “How did Mary respond?” (A little confused about how, but wanting to do God’s will.) “when Mary says, ‘be it unto me according to thy word,’ she is saying to God, ‘Let it be done to me according to Your will.’ What do we pray for in the Lord’s Prayer, *after ‘Thy kingdom come’?*” (Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.)



3) Parent Asks:

“What do you see?”

- ❖ (St. Mary the Theotokos,
- ❖ Archangel Gabriel,
- ❖ dove,
- ❖ the sign of a blessing)

“Have you seen this image before? Do you remember where it is?” (On the doors of the iconostasis that to the altar)



4) Listen to and sing the festal troparion: (Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery. The Son of God becomes the Son of the virgin, as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you!)

Day 2: The Annunciation Bible Story, KJV (or your home Bible)

1. **Read Luke 1:26-38** “And in the sixth month[^] the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month[^] with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”

^Ask older children to do the math:

1) If the Hebrew Calendar starts in September/October, what would be the 6th month in the Gregorian (modern) calendar?

2) If the Annunciation is celebrated on March 25th, when should the Nativity take place?

3) When might we expect St. John the Forerunner to be born?

**At any point when reading, you may find it helpful to define a word/phrase, and we will also review this passage on the next page.*

Day 3: Pentecost

2) Parent Explains: “When Jesus gave His final commandment to His disciples, He also told them to not leave Jerusalem, ‘but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence,’ (Acts 1:4-5).

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 Holy Spirit descends as tongues of fire to a semi-circle of apostles and evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, signifying the unity of the Church. The Church is brought together and sustained in unity through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides the Church in the missionary endeavor throughout the world, and the Spirit nurtures the Body of Christ, the Church, in truth and love. The Feast is also seen as the culmination, *completion*, of the revelation of the Holy Trinity.

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us, cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One.

1) Parent Asks: “What do you see?”



- ❖ (Big blue semi-circle,
- ❖ Lines coming down,
- ❖ Red flaming tongues,
- ❖ Apostles,
- ❖ Gospels,
- ❖ Royal figure in darkness holding cloth of scrolls from the apostles)



3) Listing to and sing the festal troparion: (Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God. Thou hast revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit: through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of Man, Glory to Thee!)

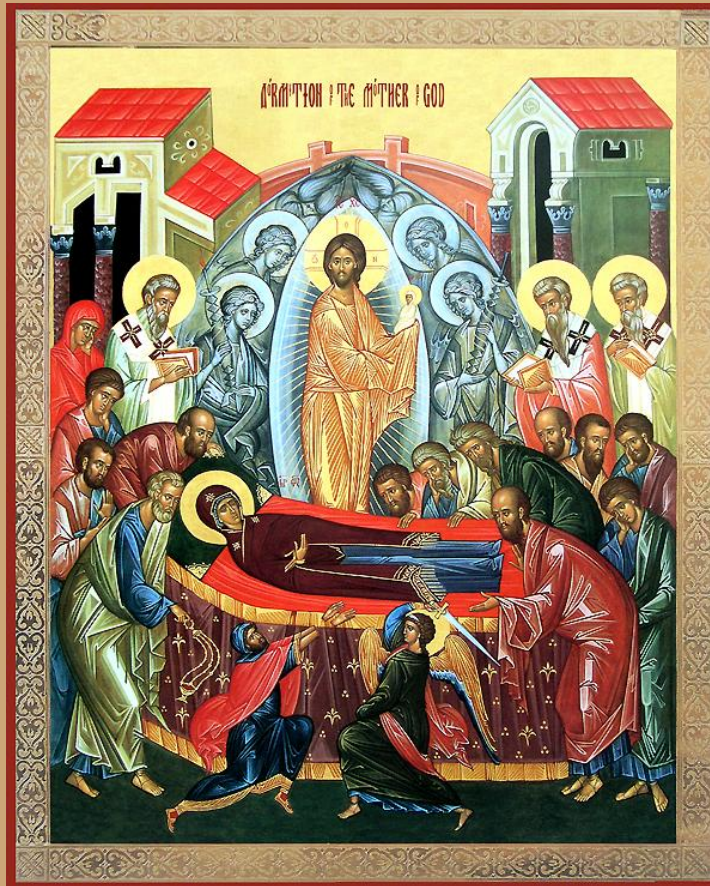
Day 4: Dormition of the Theotokos

2) Parent Explains: “The Feast of the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on August 15 each year. The Feast commemorates the repose (dormition and in the Greek *kimisis*) or “falling-asleep” of the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Feast also commemorates the translation or assumption into heaven of the body of the Theotokos.

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.

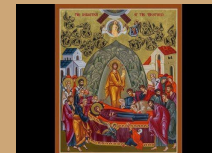
Except for the Apostle Thomas, all of them including the Apostle Paul were gathered together at her bedside. At the moment of her death, Jesus Christ himself descended and carried her soul into heaven. Following her repose, the body of the Theotokos was taken in procession and laid in a tomb near the 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.



1) Parent Asks: “What do you see?”

- ❖ Jesus,
- ❖ Mary,
- ❖ angels,
- ❖ Apostles,
- ❖ Jesus holding a small saint wrapped in white, swaddling clothes)

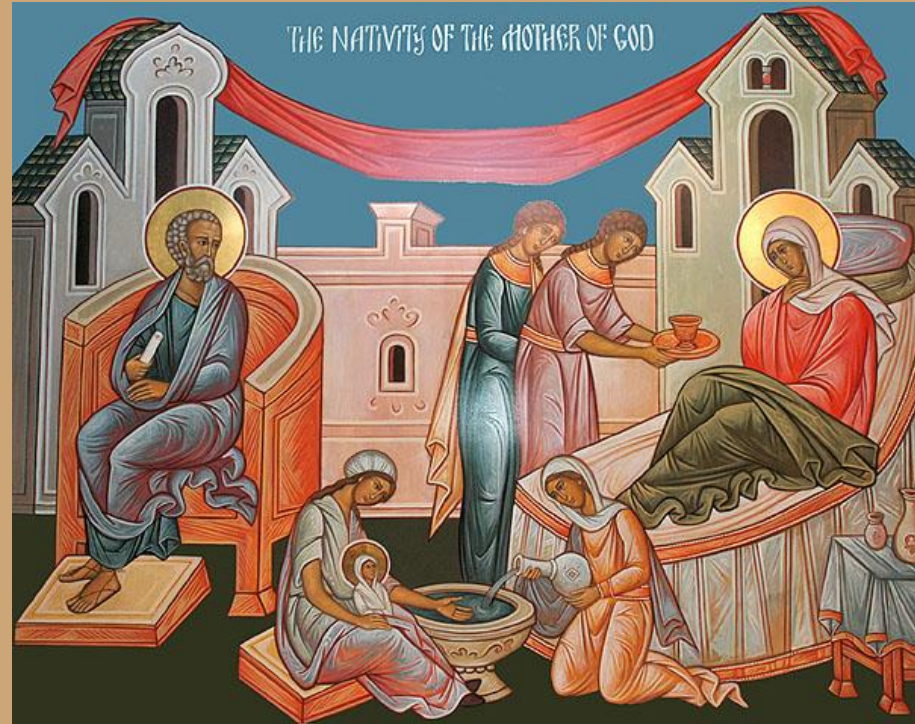
3) Listen to and sing the festal troparion: (In giving birth, you preserved your virginity. In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos. You were translated to life, O Mother of Life, and by your prayers, you deliver our souls from death)



Day 5: Nativity of Mary the Theotokos

2) Parent Explains: “The Feast of the Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is celebrated on September 8 each year. The Dormition, *death*, of the Theotokos is at the end of Church year and her nativity, *birth*, is at the beginning. Why do you think that is?” (She is the mother of Jesus, who is at the center of everything) “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, as they were praying, 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.”

1) Parent Asks: “What do you see?”
(Joachim, Anna, Mary as a baby, water)



3) Listen to and sing the festal troparion: (Your nativity, O Virgin, has proclaimed joy to the whole universe. The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, has shone from you, O Theotokos. By annulling the curse he bestowed a blessing. By destroying death he has granted us eternal life)



Day 6: The Exaltation of the Cross

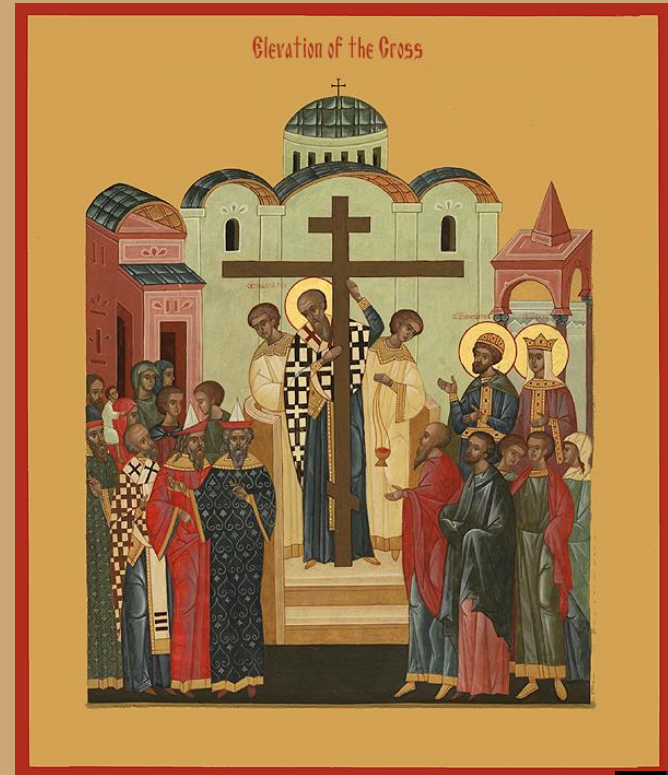
1) Parent Explains: “The Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross is celebrated each year on September 14. The Feast commemorates the finding of the True Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by Saint Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine.

This Feast also gives the Church an opportunity to relish the full glory of the Cross as a source of light, hope and victory for Christ's people. It is also a time to celebrate the universal work of redemption accomplished through the Cross: the entire universe is seen through the light of the Cross, the new Tree of Life which provides nourishment for those who have been redeemed in Christ.”

Parent Asks: “Where else do we see a tree in the beginning of Scripture?” (Garden of Eden, Tree of Knowledge, the tree that Eve took the apple from when she and Adam disobeyed God)

Parent Explains: “The icon of the Feast of the Precious Cross tells the story of the finding of the Cross and of its Exaltation. Patriarch Macarius is standing in the ambo elevating the Cross for all to see and venerate. On each side of the Patriarch are deacons holding candles. The elevated Cross is surrounded and venerated by clergy and lay people, including Saint Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine. The Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem was one of many constructed and dedicated by Emperor Constantine on the holy sites of Jerusalem.

2) Parent Asks: “What do you see?” (Cross, St. Marcarius, St. Helen, deacons, church)



3) Parent Asks: “What do we sing on this feast?”
(Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy resurrection, we glorify)



Day 7: Presentation of the Theotokos to the Temple

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

The icon of the feast tells the story of Mary's entry into the Temple. 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.

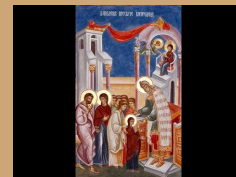
In some icons the young maidens who served as her escort are depicted standing behind her. Also, we see her parents, Joachim and Anna, offering their child to God and His divine service.

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.”



1) Parent Asks: “What do you see?”

- ❖ (Mary,
- ❖ Zacharias,
- ❖ Joachim,
- ❖ Anna,
- ❖ maidens,
- ❖ temple,
- ❖ steps,
- ❖ curtains,
- ❖ angel)



3) Listen to and sing the festal troparion: (Today is the preview of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. Let us rejoice and sing to her: Rejoice, O Divine Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation)