

## Unit 5

# Our Church Year

The lessons in this unit encompass the major observances in our Church year. You may wish to reproduce these pages for the students to take home if their books are required to stay in class. The pages are provided for use at the beginning or end of a regular lesson, preferably the week before the observance.

This year the feast day is explained in relationship to the troparion, which is a short poetic verse that tells something about the feast or the special intention for which the Divine Liturgy is offered. After the students read the explanation, they are asked to read scriptural passages and the troparion to help them understand the ways of God and the connection to the liturgical life of the Church. They will need their New Testaments and the Church's prayer book to complete this activity. Because there are several observances that occur during the summer, you may wish to spend the last class learning about them.

<i>Nativity of the Theotokos</i> .....	<i>September 8</i>
<i>Exaltation of the Holy Cross</i> .....	<i>September 14</i>
<i>Entrance of the Theotokos</i> .....	<i>November 21</i>
<i>St. Nicholas</i> .....	<i>December 6</i>
<i>The Maternity of St. Anna</i> .....	<i>December 9 (8)</i>
<i>Nativity of Our Lord</i> .....	<i>December 25</i>
<i>Holy Theophany of Christ</i> .....	<i>January 6</i>
<i>Three Holy Hierarchs</i> .....	<i>January 30</i>
<i>The Meeting of Our Lord</i> .....	<i>February 2</i>
<i>The Annunciation</i> .....	<i>March 25</i>
<i>The Entrance into Jerusalem</i> .....	<i>The Sunday before Pascha</i>
<i>Great and Holy Week</i> .....	<i>The week before Pascha Pascha</i>
<i>Ascension</i> .....	<i>Forty days after Pascha</i>
<i>Pentecost</i> .....	<i>Fifty days after Pascha</i>
<i>Birth of St. John the Baptist</i> .....	<i>June 24</i>
<i>Saints Peter and Paul</i> .....	<i>June 29</i>
<i>Prophet Elias</i> .....	<i>July 20</i>
<i>The Transfiguration of Christ</i> .....	<i>August 6</i>
<i>The Dormition of the Theotokos</i> .....	<i>August 15</i>
<i>Beheading of St. John the Baptist</i> .....	<i>August 29</i>

# NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

## THE BIRTH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

*For a long time, Saint Joachim and Saint Ann prayed to have a child. God answered their prayers*

*and gave them a daughter, Mary. The troparion for the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God calls Mary "Mother of God" and announces that the birth of Mary heralds "joy to the universe." We call Mary the Theotokos, which means the Mother of God. The birth of the Theotokos heralds or announces our salvation because through Mary we have received Jesus Christ, who saved us from the curse of death and "gave us everlasting life." As we sing in the troparion, Jesus Christ is the "Sun of Justice."*

*When we sing the troparion for this feast, we praise the Theotokos; and we look to her Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior.*

**Read Luke 1:46-49. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God from your Church's prayer book. How does the birth of the Theotokos herald "joy to the universe"?**

*(The Theotokos' birth foretells that Christ will be born and will bring joy to us because He will unite us to God.)*



# EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

## THE GREAT SEARCH

*In the fourth century, Saint Helen went looking for the cross on which Christ died. When she found it, the Bishop of Jerusalem, named Macarius, held it up for the people to see. In the icon Saint Helen is wearing a crown because she is the mother of the Emperor Constantine.*

*Through the ages the cross was known as a sign of disgrace, a way to humiliate and torture criminals. Because Jesus had to endure this humiliation, Emperor Constantine, a Christian, outlawed crucifixion in the Roman Empire. Also, during Constantine's reign, the cross became a great sign for Christians. In the troparion for this feast, we call to the Lord to "save Your people and bless Your inheritance." The cross calls to mind the suffering and death that Christ was willing to endure to save us from eternal death. Through the cross and Christ's Resurrection, we have been granted eternal life.*

*The cross continues to be a great sign for all Christians. We begin our prayers with the sign of the cross, and we pray in front of the cross in our homes and churches. The sign of the cross reminds us that Jesus Christ saved us and He blesses us, His inheritance.*

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:18. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross from your Church's prayer book. What is Christ's inheritance? (The people He saved by His death on the Cross.)**



# ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS

## HERALD OF THE SALVATION OF MANKIND

*God knew that He wanted Mary to become the mother of His Son Jesus—He planned it! To fulfill God's plan, Mary had to be prepared to become the Mother of God. In the icon, Mary's parents, Saint Ann and Saint Joachim, are taking her to the high priest in the temple so that she could learn about God.*

*The troparion for the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos tells us that the presence of Mary in the temple is "the prelude of God's generosity." The Jerusalem temple was the holiest shrine in Israel, and Mary's presence foretells Christ who will be the ultimate temple, the presence of God in the flesh. The troparion ends with praise for Mary who said "Yes" and allowed God's plan to take place.*

**Read Luke 1:41-45. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos from your Church's prayer book. How is the Theotokos the "Fulfillment of the Creator's plan"?**

(The Theotokos fulfills God's plan by giving birth to Jesus who will unite God and His people.)



**ST. NICHOLAS****ST. NICHOLAS THE BISHOP**

*Saint Nicholas was a bishop who lived in the fourth century. He was a very good man who helped the less fortunate and anyone who was in danger. In the icon we see the vision Saint Nicholas had before he was chosen to be a bishop. In the vision he saw Christ handing him the Book of Gospels and the Mother of God placing the special bishop's vestment, the omophorion, on his shoulders.*

*In the troparion for his feast day, Saint Nicholas is called "a teacher of moderation, a model of faith, and an example of virtue." These words describe the lifestyle for which Saint Nicholas is known. Throughout his life, he lived humbly and shared his wealth with those who needed help. Saint Nicholas has become one of the most well-known saints because of his kindness to all people. From his example, we learn that by following Jesus Christ's teaching, we can attain "greatness through humility and wealth through poverty."*

**Read Matthew 19:29-30. Then read the troparion of the Feast of Saint Nicholas from your Church's prayer book. How is Saint Nicholas' life "a model of faith"?**

(By sharing his wealth and living a humble life, Saint Nicholas shows us how to live a Christian life that witnesses to a faith in Jesus Christ.)



# THE MATERNITY OF ST. ANNA

## THE THEOTOKOS, COMES INTO THE WORLD

*Saint Joachim and Saint Ann prayed for a child, and their prayers were answered with the birth of their daughter Mary. In this icon we see them embracing as a sign of their love for one another. This feast day helps us remember that all things are possible for those who believe God's Word.*

*The troparion for the Feast of the Maternity of Saint Ann tells us that "the bonds of childlessness are loosed" even though Saint Joachim and Saint Ann are older. We hear how God had promised them a child "from whom the indescribable would be born as a man." Through these words, we are reminded that Mary's birth will lead us to the birth of Jesus Christ. As in all Marian feasts, we are asked to look to Christ.*

**Read Luke 1:45. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Maternity of Saint Ann from your Church's prayer book. How does the troparion remind us that all things are possible with God?**

(We are reminded that their prayers were answered as "He promised against all hope" that Saint Ann would give birth.)



# NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

*The troparion for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord proclaims "the light of knowledge" that Jesus Christ's birth brought to the world. In the icon for this feast, we see the light projected from on high that Jesus brought to the world. The black mouth of the cave is symbolically the fallen world in which the "Sun of Righteousness" or "Sun of Justice" has dawned. In both the icon and troparion, Christ is the "Sun," the light of the world.*

*In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, we read about the three wise men who followed the light of the star, and they found Jesus Christ. In the troparion we read that "those who worshiped the stars have learned from a star to worship you." Through these details we learn how the wise men looked for and followed the light and knowledge that Christ brought into the world. The wise men "recognize [Jesus] as the Orient from on high," a sign that Christ came for all people.*

**Read Luke 2:6-14. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord from your church's prayer book. What does it mean by "those who worshiped the stars have learned from a star to worship You"?**

(The wise men who looked to the stars for their knowledge would now look to Jesus Christ, whom they found by following a star.)



# HOLY THEOPHANY OF CHRIST

## GOD IS THREE PERSONS

*Before Jesus began to teach us about God, He wanted to be baptized. He went to His cousin, John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. The heavens opened and the voice of the Father said, "This is my beloved Son." The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove appeared above Jesus. This first appearance of the Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is recalled on the Feast of Theophany. This feast is one of the first celebrated by the early Church.*

*The troparion proclaims our "worship of the Trinity" that was shown to us at the Baptism of Jesus. Our Church calls this feast the Holy Theophany, which means the appearance of God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The troparion praises "Christ God, who appeared and enlightened the world" by revealing the Trinity to us.*

**Read Matthew 3:13-17. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Holy Theophany of Christ from your Church's prayer book. How was the "worship of the Trinity" revealed at Christ's Baptism?**

*(God the Father called Jesus His beloved Son, God the Son was being baptized, and God the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove.)*





# THREE HOLY HIERARCHS

## THREE IMPORTANT BISHOPS

*On this feast day we remember three bishops or hierarchs. On the left is Saint Basil, in the middle is Saint John Chrysostom, and on the right is Saint Gregory the Theologian. Each is wearing on his shoulders the special bishop's vestment called the "omophorion."*

*The troparion for this feast calls these bishops "teachers of the universe, equal to the Apostles." They continue to teach us today through the words they had written: Saint John Chrysostom's Divine Liturgy is the one we celebrate on most Sundays; on Sundays during the Great Fast we celebrate Saint Basil's Divine Liturgy; and Saint Gregory was given the title Theologian for his great writings that help us understand more about how Jesus was both God and man. In the troparion we ask these three bishops to pray for us.*

**Read Hebrews 13:7-8. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs from your Church's prayer book. Why are these three bishops called "Teachers of the universe"?** (Their words that were written in the fourth century continue to teach us about Jesus Christ and help us worship and praise God.)



# THE ENCOUNTER OF OUR LORD

## JESUS IS RECEIVED AT THE TEMPLE

*Saint Simeon and Saint Anna were in the Temple when Jesus was brought there 40 days after His birth. When Saint Simeon held Jesus, he knew Jesus was the Savior for which the Jewish people had been waiting. He said, "Now my eyes have seen the light." He knew that Jesus was the Light of the world and the Savior of all humanity.*

*The troparion for this feast praises the Theotokos for giving us "the Sun of Justice, Christ our God, shining upon those who are in darkness." The troparion celebrates Simeon who held Jesus, "Who has given us Resurrection." On this feast day, we are honoring the Theotokos for giving us Jesus, Simeon for recognizing Jesus, and Jesus Christ for granting us eternal life.*

**Read Luke 2:25-38. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Encounter of Our Lord from your Church's prayer book. Why are the Theotokos and Saint Simeon honored in this feast day's troparion?** (The Theotokos brought Jesus into the world; she brought light into the darkness and Saint Simeon recognized Jesus as the Light when he saw Him.)



# THE MEETING OF OUR LORD

## JESUS COMES INTO THE WORLD

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# THE ANNUNCIATION

## JESUS COMES INTO THE WORLD

*In this icon for the Feast of the Annunciation, we see the Archangel Gabriel telling Mary that she would be the Mother of God. Mary is surprised by the angel and his message. Her hand is up as if to ask, "How can this be?" Then she says, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say."*

*The troparion for this feast announces this Gospel event as "the revelation of an eternal mystery: the Son of God becomes a virgin's Son." Mary's response to Gabriel shows us how we are to answer God's call to do as He asks. If we say "Yes" as Mary did, we too can be filled with Grace. Our Church gives us a prayer that lets us praise the Theotokos as did Gabriel who exclaimed, "Hail, O Woman Full of Grace, the Lord is with you." This prayer called the Akathist to the Mother of God honors and praises the Theotokos for allowing God to fulfill His plan.*

**Read Luke 1:26-38. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Annunciation from your Church's prayer book. What does it mean that Jesus is "the revelation of an eternal mystery"?** (It means that God had a plan to be united with His people, and Mary's answer of "Yes" to God allowed the plan to take place.)



## THE ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

### JESUS HAILED AS KING

*Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead, and now it was time for Jesus to go into Jerusalem. As He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, people hailed Him saying, "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" They waved palm branches to give Him glory.*

*The troparion for this feast calls the palm branches "symbols of victory." At that time people used palm branches to welcome great conquerors. By raising Lazarus, Jesus Christ has shown us that He will conquer death for all of us through His Resurrection. The people praise Christ by calling Him "Conqueror of Death" and greeting Him with words that recognize Jesus as our Savior: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The Hebrew word Hosanna means "(O Lord), grant salvation." When we sing the troparion, we praise our Savior just as the people of Jerusalem did.*

**Read John 12:12-19. Then read the troparion of Palm Sunday from your Church's prayer book. Why is Jesus honored and praised by the people in Jerusalem? (He raised Lazarus from the dead, and they believed Jesus Christ would conquer death for them also.)**



# GREAT AND HOLY WEEK

## HOLY THURSDAY

*Jesus took bread and wine and said, "This is my body. This is my blood." It was the first Holy Communion. This day remembers the Last Supper when Jesus took bread and wine and said, "This is my body. This is my blood." This feast tells us that God wants us to live united to Him.*



## GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY



*Jesus was crucified at Golgotha. A soldier pierced His side with a spear to make sure He was dead. Then Jesus was taken from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea. He was wrapped in a linen shroud and placed in a tomb. Great and Holy Friday recalls Jesus' crucifixion and reminds us of how much God loves us and wants us to be with Him. To open the gates of heaven to us, God sent His only Son, whose suffering and death led to our resurrection.*

*In the troparion for Great and Holy Friday matins, we read that Christ's "being nailed to the Cross and pierced with a lance" led to our salvation. Christ's suffering and death, His "precious Blood," saved us and granted us eternal life through His Resurrection. This troparion is recited in the Divine Liturgy at the beginning of the prothesis, the preparation of the Holy Gifts.*

**Read John 19:31-42.** [Ask your priest for the troparion for Great and Holy Friday matins.] **How does Jesus Christ save us?** (Through His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ saves us and grants us eternal life.)

## JESUS IS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

*Pascha is the most important day of the year. It is the day when we celebrate that Jesus rose from the dead and opened the gates of heaven for us. In the icon Christ is trampling on the cross—a symbol of death. Christ won the victory over death and the cross. He is raising Adam and Eve to take them to heaven with Him.*

*Whenever we sing the troparion for Pascha, we are proclaiming our belief in Jesus Christ and all that He has done for us. We are announcing that Christ conquered death for all who believe in Him, and we are granted eternal life united to God. The troparion recalls that Christ granted life to those already "in the graves"—God wants all His people to be with Him. Our Church asks us to sing the Pascha troparion often throughout the Paschal season to glorify Christ and His Resurrection.*

**Read Luke 24:1-12. Then read the troparion of Pascha from your Church's prayer book. What does Jesus Christ's Resurrection tell us?** (His Resurrection tells us that we too will rise from the dead, and we will be granted eternal life with God.)



# HOLY ASCENSION OF CHRIST

## JESUS RETURNS TO HEAVEN

*Forty days after Pascha, Christ rose or ascended to heaven to be with His Father. He promised that we would not be alone because He would send the Holy Spirit. In the icon Mary, the Theotokos, is at the center, surrounded by the apostles. Jesus is seated on a throne as He ascends into heaven. Jesus is the ruler of all.*

*When we sing the troparion for the Feast of the Holy Ascension of Christ, we remember Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit. We join with the Apostles and are "delighted" with this blessing of the Holy Spirit. Just as the promise of the Holy Spirit assured the Apostles that Jesus Christ is "the Son of God, Redeemer of the World," we too believe and sing praises to Christ, our God.*

**Read Luke 24:50-53. Then read the troparion of the Holy Ascension of Christ from your Church's prayer book. How did Jesus Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit bless the Apostles? (They were blessed because they knew that God will be with them always.)**





**PENTECOST****THE APOSTLES BECOME FISHERS OF MEN**

*When Jesus called Andrew and Peter away from their work as fishermen to follow Him, He told them, "I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). They were to serve God by calling people to repent and give their lives to Him. After Christ rose from the dead, He promised His followers, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth " (Acts 1:8). Returning to His Fathers glory, the Lord sent the Holy Spirit upon them to give them the power and wisdom to be fishers of men.*

*In the troparion for the Feast of Pentecost we praise Christ for sending the Holy Spirit upon His followers. We remember how Jesus' first words to Peter and Andrew were fulfilled: "through them You caught the world in Your net." It was the Holy Spirit, come upon them at Pentecost, who enabled them to bear witness to Christ despite opposition and even death. All the Apostles, except Saint John, would be killed for preaching Christ. Still, Christ's promise was fulfilled: through the Apostles' preaching, people all over the world have been drawn to Christ.*

**Read Matthew 4:18-22. Then read the troparion of Pentecost from you Church's prayer book. How did the followers of Jesus become "fishers of men"? (Their words about Jesus caught the attention of the people and brought them to Christ.)**



# BIRTH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST IS BORN

*St. Saint John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus. Before John was born, God sent an angel to John's father, Zechariah, to tell him he would have a son. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were too old to have children, so Zechariah doubted God. The angel said, "You will be speechless until the day these things happen because you did not believe me." When his son was born, the people wanted to know what to name the child. Zechariah wrote "John" on a tablet as we see shown on the right side of this icon. The commemoration of Saint John's nativity is one of the oldest feasts in honor of any saint in the Church.*

*The troparion for the Feast of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist honors the importance of Saint John in the life of Jesus Christ. Through the preaching of Saint John, God's people were prepared for Jesus. That is the reason Saint John is called the "Prophet and Forerunner"—he announced Jesus' coming. Also, the troparion honors God's blessings at John's birth—his mother was freed from childlessness and his father was able to speak. This troparion reminds us that even though our words may not be able to give "worthy praise" to Saint John, we honor him for proclaiming to the world the "Incarnation of the Son of God."*

**Read Luke 1:76-80. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist from your Church's prayer book. Why is Saint John called the forerunner of Christ? (He came before Jesus and proclaimed that the Son of God will come to unite God and His people.)**



# SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

## TWO PILLARS OF THE CHURCH

*When Jesus was still on earth, Peter told Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus blessed him and said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." In the icon Saint Peter is shown holding keys. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Saint Peter led the apostles at the beginning of the early Church.*

*Saint Paul traveled and baptized many people and wrote many letters to the people he baptized. These letters are the epistles that we hear in church. In the letters Saint Paul teaches the new Christians how to live like Christ and tells them to be strong in their faith. The epistles are part of the New Testament, and in the icon Saint Paul is shown holding a scroll of the Scriptures.*

*The troparion for the feast day that honors both saints asks these "Leaders of the Apostles and Teachers of the world" to pray for us.*

**Read Romans 10:18. Then read the troparion of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul from your Church's prayer book. Why are Saints Peter and Paul "Teachers of the world"? (They taught the word of God to people from many different places.)**



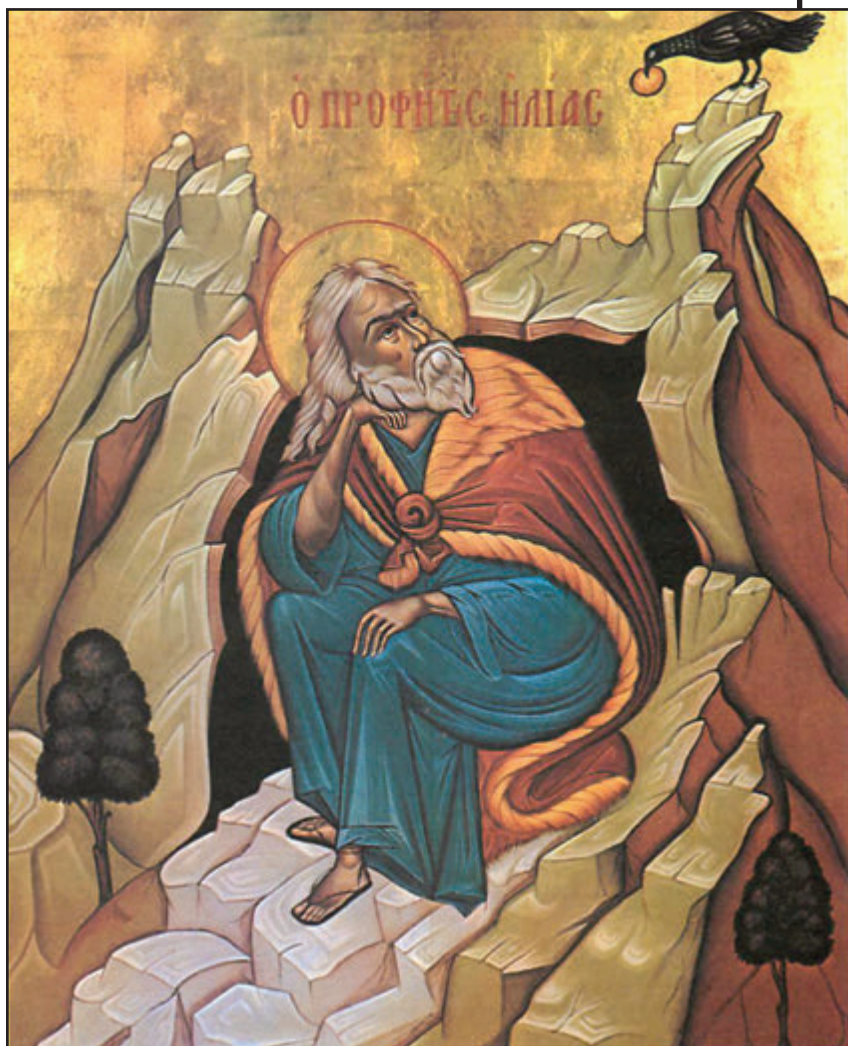
# PROPHET ELIAS

## “THE LORD IS MY GOD”

*A long time before Jesus was born, God's people began to worship other gods. God sent prophets to bring these people back to Him. The greatest of these was Elias (also called Elijah) whose name means "the Lord is my God." In the icon he is shown in a hairy garment because he did not care about things of the world. Like Saint John the Baptist, Elijah only wanted to live close to God and to do God's will. God took care of Elijah by sending ravens to bring food. Also, Elijah did not die—He was carried away in a fiery chariot!*

*The Eastern Churches consider Elias the greatest prophet because he exemplifies two main beliefs of the Church: faithfulness to one God and justice for the weak. The troparion for this feast day praises Elias for healing the sick and purifying the lepers and asks Elias to "intercede on behalf of those who honor him!" The troparion also honors Elias as a "pillar of prophets," who announced the coming of Jesus Christ.*

**Read Matthew 17:9-13. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Prophet Elias from your Church's prayer book. Why is Prophet Elias honored and praised by the Church? (He prepared God's people for the coming of Christ and helped those who were weak.)**



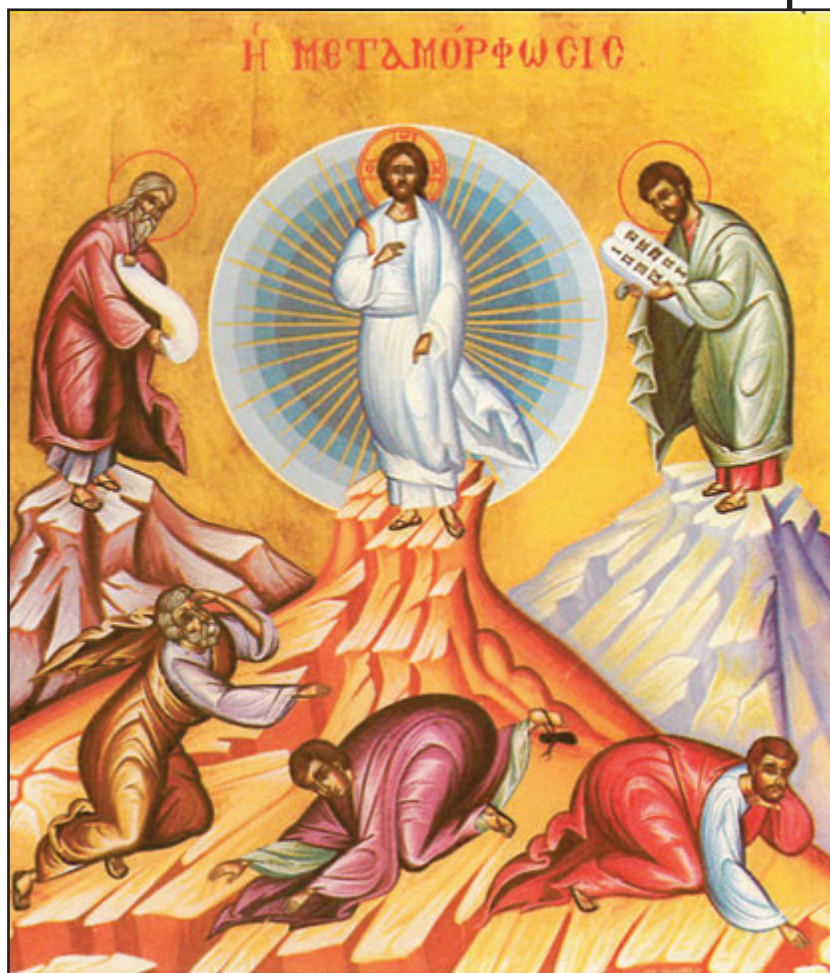
# TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

## JESUS IS RADIANT WITH LIGHT

*Peter, James and John did not know what they were in for when Jesus asked them to come with Him one day. When they arrived at the mountain, Jesus was surrounded by light—His face was dazzling as the sun, His clothes radiant with light. The Father's voice said, "This is my beloved Son." To Jesus' left was Moses (representing God's Law) and to His right was Prophet Elias (representing God's prophets). On the icon are Peter, John, and James located below Jesus.*

*The troparion for this feast emphasizes the light that Jesus brought into the world. We ask the Mother of God to pray for us so that Christ will let His "everlasting light shine also upon us sinners." We too ask to be transfigured by the "Giver of Light," Jesus Christ.*

**Read Matthew 17:1-8. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ from your Church's prayer book. How can we be transfigured by the Light of Christ? (By following the teachings of Jesus Christ, we can become more like Christ.)**



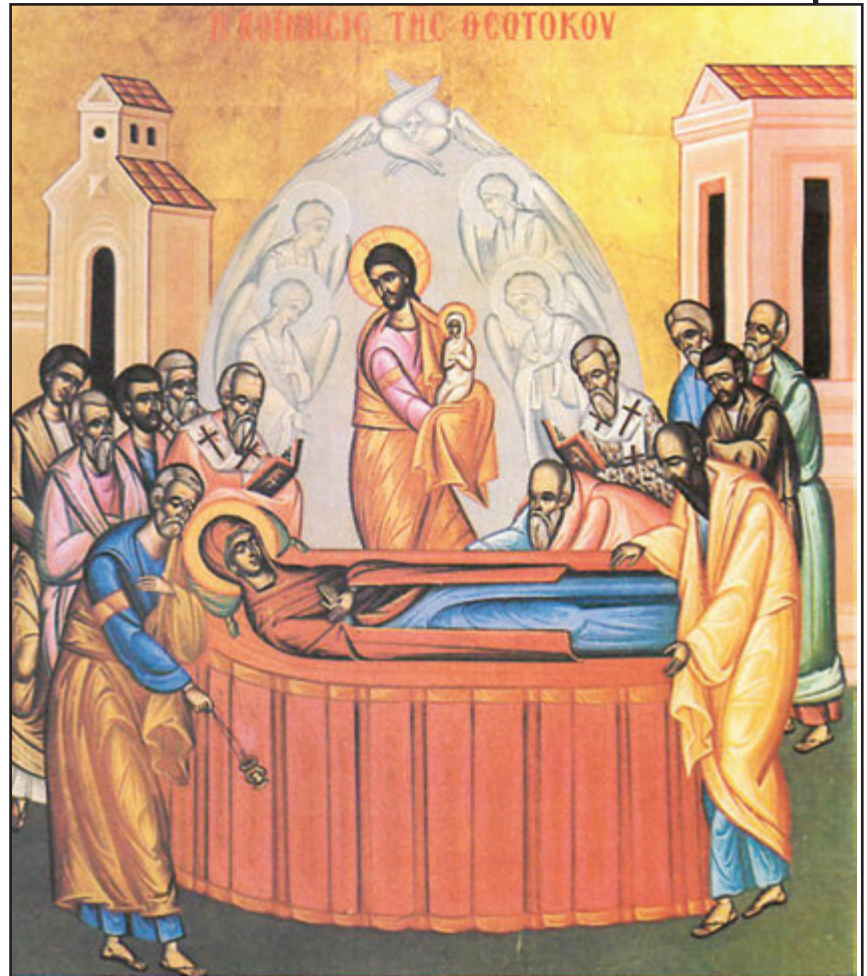
# DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS

## THE MOTHER OF GOD IS TAKEN TO HEAVEN

*After Jesus died, the Theotokos, the Mother of God, was beloved by the Apostles. When it finally came time for her life on earth to end, they surrounded her. In the icon Jesus is holding a little child that represents the soul of His Mother. Jesus has taken her to be with Him in heaven. This feast celebrates the Theotokos as the first of all the human race to participate fully in the Resurrection our Lord.*

*The troparion for the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos identifies the mystery of the Mother of God. She gave life to God and we wonder in amazement as we pray, "The Lord whom the heavens could not contain is contained in the Virgin." The troparion praises the Theotokos for her constant prayer and intercession for the deliverance of "our souls from death." She is the "Mother of Life," and she prays for us to be with God forever.*

**Read Luke 1:46-49. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Dormition from your Church's prayer book. Why do we call the Theotokos the "Mother of Life"? (It means she is the Mother of Christ who is our life and our resurrection.)**



# BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST DIES

*Many people obeyed John the Baptist when he told them to repent and change their lives. Others would not repent and became John's enemies. In Matthew 14:1-12 we read how John had criticized King Herod for taking his brother's wife, Herodias. John was arrested and put in prison. At Herod's birthday banquet, Herodias' daughter asked the king for the head of John the Baptist. Ashamed to say no before his guests, the king had John beheaded. The Church has remembered this event with a special feastday since the fourth century. In many places it is kept as a fast day to remind ourselves of what Herod did to please his friends.*

*The troparion for this feast day praises Saint John for baptizing Jesus whom the prophets announced. For that reason Saint John is called "more worthy of honor than the prophets." Jesus recognized Saint John as the greatest man born of woman: "the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you." The troparion praises Saint John who "suffered for the truth" and "announced the good news."*

**Read Luke 7:24-28. Then read the troparion of the Feast of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist from your Church \*s prayer hook. Why is Saint John "more worthy of honor than the prophets"? (He announced the coming of Jesus, and he baptized Jesus.)**

