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Meeting ID & Password  
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**VCS 2020 "The Major Feast Days" Supplemental Packet**



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Annunciation ♦ March 25

# Annunciation

March 25

Luke 1:26-38

- The Archangel Gabriel is offering the Virgin Mary God's blessing because of her faith and goodness.
- The Virgin Mary's pose, with her right hand in the air, represents that she humbly accepts to do the will of God.
- The light-blue half-circle on the top represents Heaven. The ray of light that comes to the Virgin Mary represents the Holy Spirit coming to her and conceiving baby Jesus in her womb.
- Often, there are flowers in the icon (a rose or lily). They represent the Virgin Mary's purity—and the beauty of her faith and life "never fades" and is more beautiful than a flower, whose beauty does fade over time.





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Birth of Christ ♦ December 25

# Birth of Christ

## December 25

### Matthew 1:18-2:23, Luke 2:1-20

- The Virgin Mary and baby Jesus are in the center of the icon and bigger than usual because that is the focus of the icon.
- Jesus is in swaddling clothes, just as the Gospel says.
- A calf and a colt are behind baby Jesus as the Old Testament said would happen (prophesied).
- Joseph is usually in a corner with a look of “not being sure” what is happening. Joseph always listens to the Archangel Gabriel, but it’s hard for him to understand how the Virgin Mary is having a child!
- The angels in the background are what the shepherds saw that night, telling them that Jesus was born.
- The shepherds are in the background listening to the angels and ready to visit Jesus. Sometimes, the sheep of the shepherds are also in the background.
- The Magi, dressed like kings, are usually in the background riding horses. They are following the star that led them from the east to where Jesus was. They bring their gifts: gold (for a king), frankincense (for a priest) and myrrh (for Jesus’ death later on).
- There is a star that comes from a beam from Heaven, that is just above Jesus’ head. This is the star that led the Magi to Jesus.
- Sometimes, a woman is bathing the baby Jesus. This is just a helper to the Virgin Mary.
- Sometimes, in the corner talking to Joseph, is a man, who looks like he’s wearing animal skins. This represents the devil trying to tempt Joseph not to follow the instructions of the Archangel Gabriel. Of course, Joseph doesn’t listen to the devil and follows God’s word.





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Presentation to the Temple ♦ February 2

# Presentation to the Temple

## February 2

### Luke 2:22-38

- Jesus was brought to the Temple (the place where the believers in God worshiped before churches were built) by His mother, the Virgin Mary, and her “fiancé”, Joseph. This happened on the 40th day after His birth. We still do this today! Babies are brought to church by their parents on the 40th day after birth to the church for the first time!
- The Temple is represented by the structure with the roof on it behind Jesus. It was in Jerusalem.
- The Virgin Mary is handing the baby Jesus to Symeon, a holy man who lived a very long time because he believed so strongly in God. Symeon holds him and says a prayer to God because God allowed him to see the Savior, Jesus, before he died. We still use a part of that prayer to this day in the 40-day blessing of the children coming into the church!
- Joseph is behind the Virgin Mary.
- Next to Joseph is the Prophetess Anna. She was also very holy and faithful, like Symeon, and she also says a prayer and tells the Virgin Mary that Jesus would suffer so that all people would be able to go to Heaven.





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Baptism of Christ ♦ January 6



# **Baptism of Jesus**

## **January 6**

### **Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-18, John 1:19-28**

- *Jesus is standing in the Jordan River, where He was baptized.*
- *John the Baptist is there to baptize Jesus.*
- *Heaven is depicted on the top of the icon with the half circle of blue/white. A beam of God's light with a dove in it, comes to Jesus. The dove represents the Holy Spirit. After Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to everyone who is Baptized!*
- *Angels are in the background ready to do whatever God needs them to do.*
- *Sometimes there are people riding a red and blue fish in the river. The red fish represents the Red Sea, which God, through Moses, opened up so the Israelites could escape from Egypt—it was like their baptism. The blue fish represent the Jordan river, which also opened up so Joshua could cross it when the Israelites came into the Promise Land 40 years after Moses opened the Red Sea. Both of those openings are like "baptisms" for those people going through. But this is the real baptism.*
- *Sometime there is an ax in the tree in the corner. This represents the teaching of John the Baptist (and Jesus) that if a tree does not produce fruit, it is chopped up and thrown into the fire. This means that as Christians, we should be showing that we are Christians by producing good and holy works. This shows we love God and our neighbors.*
- *At the Baptism, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity were present: the Father (His voice), the Son (Jesus Himself), and the Holy Spirit (the dove).*



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Transfiguration ♦ August 6



# Transfiguration

## August 6

### Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36

- The bright white/blue light around Jesus in the shape of an almond is called the mandorla. It represents the Light of God, or the Essence of God, being a part of Jesus. It's also in the Resurrection icon, the Ascension icon, and in any icon at the top when something is coming from Heaven.
- The light surrounding Jesus shows that not only is He human, He is also God.
- The voice of the Father was heard at the Transfiguration.
- The three disciples are St. Peter, St. Iakovos (James) and St. John. Those three were present at nearly all the most important events during Jesus' ministry.
- The disciples are knocked over in confusion and because the light that was shining out of Jesus was so bright—it literally knocked their sandals off—just look at the icon!
- The Transfiguration took place on Mt. Tabor.
- The two figures next to Jesus are the Prophets Moses and Elijah. Moses delivered the Law to the Israelites after the escape from Egypt through the Red Sea. Elijah was one of the greatest, holiest, and bravest of the prophets. He never died but was taken directly up to Heaven on a chariot (we have that icon in the church in the southwest corner). Moses and Elijah are the two greatest people who lived in Old Testament times and the most faithful to God.



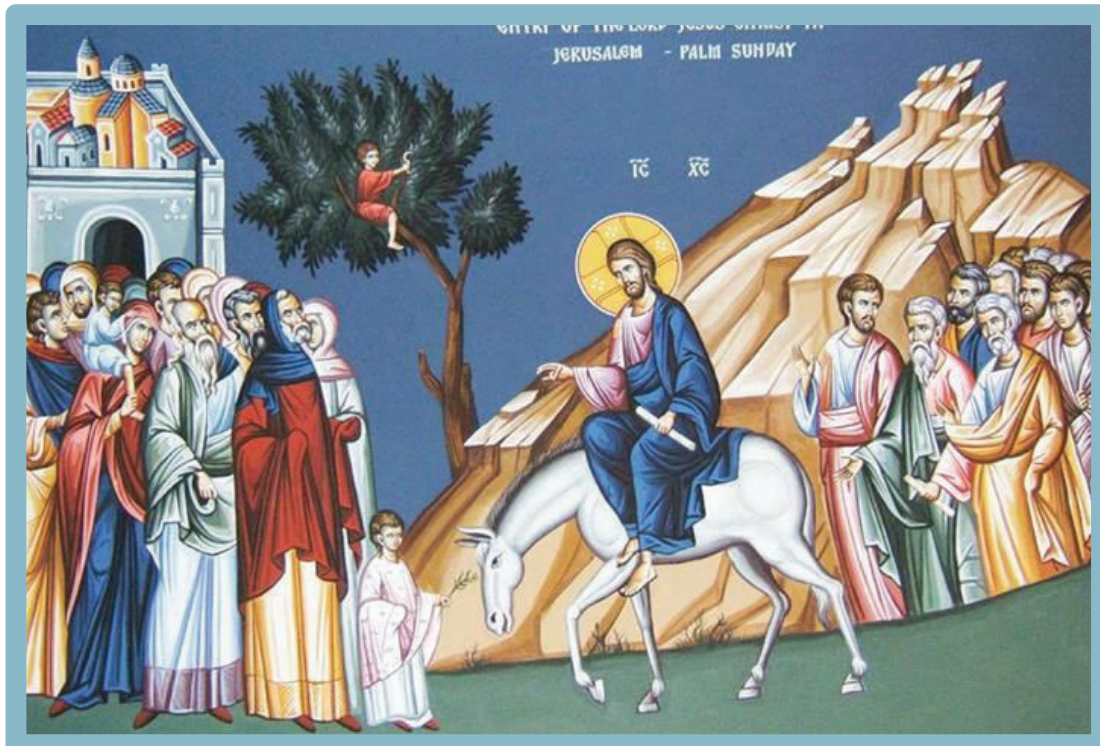


# Raising of Lazarus

## Sunday before Palm Sunday

### John 11:1-46

- This took place in Bethany, not far from Jerusalem.
- Lazarus' sisters are Mary and Martha. All three of them were friends of Jesus and loved Him very much. Mary and Martha are usually seen at the feet of Jesus.
- Behind Jesus are the disciples, and behind the disciples—or in another area—are other people of Bethany that were comforting Mary and Martha because Lazarus had died. Some of the people look like they're covering their faces. That's because the body of Lazarus, having been dead for 4 days, started to stink.
- Lazarus is seen having come out of the tomb at Jesus' command. Jesus is in a position of motion, blessing Lazarus and calling him to come forth.
- Others are following Jesus' commands and are loosening Lazarus from his funeral wrappings.
- The tomb looks like the tomb of Jesus. The wrapping around Lazarus is the same kind that was around Jesus when He was placed in the tomb. This icon is like a preview of what was to happen at Jesus' burial and resurrection. The difference is that Jesus rose from the dead on His own; Lazarus was raised by Jesus.





# **Palm Sunday**

## **Sunday before Pascha**

### **Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, John 12:12-19**

- This took place as Jesus entered Jerusalem the Sunday before Pascha.
- Jesus is sitting on the foal (offspring) of a donkey – just like the Old Testament prophecy stated.
- The people were cheering for Jesus because: 1) they had heard He raised Lazarus from the dead 2) they knew about His other miracles and 3) many thought Jesus was going to make Himself a new leader, like a king, but that's not why Jesus came to earth. The people knew that Jesus was special, but were wrong in thinking Jesus was going to replace the leaders.
- The people were throwing palm branches and clothes on the ground in front of Jesus. This shows that they were treating Him like a king, like a king walking on a red carpet.
- The people were chanting from the Psalms, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Hosanna in the highest!" Hosanna means "save us now," or "we pray you save us". Using the phrase "Son of David" means that the people understood He was the Christ or "the Anointed One of God"\*, Who would save the people (though the people thought He would save them from a bad government; they did not really understand that He came to save everyone's soul and bring them to Heaven!)
- This event made the leaders of the Temple very angry because they saw Jesus was more popular than they were, and they thought they would lose their power, money and prestige. After this, the leaders decided to kill Jesus.

\*Also called the Messiah, the promised deliverer as prophesied.





# Resurrection

## Pascha Sunday

### Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-13, Luke 24:1-43, John 20:1-25

#### THE EMPTY TOMB ICON

- In this icon, we see the myrrh-bearing women coming to the tomb of Jesus early in the morning. They were bringing myrrh, fragrant oils, to put on Jesus' body so it wouldn't stink from death (however, Jesus' body never decayed because it wasn't in the tomb long enough).
- The angel is sitting near the tomb, pointing to it, and telling them that "Jesus is risen! He is not here. Look and see where they laid Him. But go and tell Peter and the rest that Jesus will meet them in Galilee just like He said before He was crucified."
- The women were astonished! 1) They didn't know who would roll the stone away from the tomb for them, and when they came it was already gone! 2) The soldiers guarding the tomb were basically "knocked out" from fear and because of the glorious light of the resurrection (you can see them as if they were sleeping, or even dead!). 3) They could hardly believe what the angel told them about Jesus rising from the dead, and they went away from the tomb to tell the disciples, and they were astonished and completely overcome with the "awesomeness" of Jesus' resurrection.
- Inside the tomb are the sheets of cloth that were used to wrap Jesus' body, but there is no body in there because He rose from the dead.
- It resembles the icon of the Raising of Lazarus.



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Resurrection



# Resurrection

## Pascha Sunday

### Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-13, Luke 24:1-43, John 20:1-25

#### CHRIST RAISING ADAM AND EVE ICON

- Christ is conquering Hades. Christ is Risen, but before He rose, He went down to Hades and destroyed death. Death is represented by the skeletal figure chained up at the very bottom. Above Death are the doors of Hades that Jesus broke down after He died on the cross (the doors are often in the form of a cross). All around that area are locks, chains, and keys that were used to chain people up after they died. Jesus smashed all those locks and chains and freed all the people who had died so they could go to Heaven to be with Jesus.
- Jesus is pulling Adam and Eve out of their tombs (Adam and Eve represent all of humanity). Look how Jesus is standing; He's in a position of movement; of action (notice the bent knees and leaning of His torso and back). Jesus is doing all the heavy pulling — all of the work — through His death and resurrection. Just look at the hands of Adam and Eve; they are limp and weak. Jesus lifts them out with the power of His resurrection.
- Around Jesus is the mandorla; showing that He is God (like in the Transfiguration and Ascension icons).
- Usually you can see the mark of the nails in Jesus' feet and hands.
- To the left are the people of the Old Testament that are a part of the family of Christ, including: John the Baptist, King David, King Solomon, etc. On the right, it sometimes varies, usually you have the prophets of the Old Testament. In the background, you often see angels.



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Ascension ♦ 40 days after Easter



# **Ascension**

## **40 days after Pascha**

### **Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:9-11**

- This happened 40 days after Pascha. Jesus led the disciples to Bethany (the town of Lazarus, Mary and Martha) and went on a nearby mount, Mt. Olivet (Mount of Olives).
- Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus was taken up to Heaven as on a cloud.
- You can see a mandorla, but circular, around Jesus, showing the light of His divinity (that Jesus is God).
- The Virgin Mary was present at the Ascension.
- Two angels appeared as men in white and told the disciples that Jesus will return at the Second Coming in the same way – like on the clouds, but with trumpets and noise and the power of God.
- Some of the disciples looked shocked as Jesus goes to Heaven – it was hard to believe what they were seeing.
- Sometimes, Jesus is seen in the icon sitting on a rainbow between the clouds. This comes from Old Testament visions of Jesus (Ezekiel and Daniel).
- Angels are depicted helping Jesus as He ascends.
- Ascension always falls on a Thursday.



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Pentecost ♦ 50 days after Easter



# Pentecost

## 50 days after Pascha

### Acts 2

- This took place 50 days after Pascha, and 10 days after the Ascension.
- It always falls on a Sunday.
- By the time of Pentecost, the disciples picked a new disciple to replace Judas. His name was Matthias (Mat-thias).
- They were sitting in a room when they felt a great wind.
- In the top center, you see the partial mandorla of the Heavens, and 12 rays coming from it. Those rays point to the heads of the disciples.
- On top of the disciples' heads are flames. That is the representation of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit gave them the ability to speak in different languages and to preach the Gospel with strength, fervor, and courage.
- The Virgin Mary was present, and some icons include her in the middle.
- Sometimes the icon shows other people, not just the disciples; like St. Paul, St. Luke, or St. Mark. That's because the Holy Spirit came upon them, too.
- From there, the disciples went into all the world to preach about Jesus.
- At the bottom of the icon is a man, like a king, with 12 scrolls. This person represents the world. His name is Kosmos. The scrolls are the scriptures. The disciples took the scriptures and the Gospel (the teachings of Jesus and the story of His death and resurrection) into all the world. That's why his name is Kosmos.
- The disciples are now called Apostles. Disciple means a student (from the Greek, *mathitis*). Apostles mean "those who are sent", like messengers. Their message is: Christ is the Son of God, became Man, worked countless miracles, taught the people, suffered, died, resurrected, and ascended for our salvation.



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Dormition ♦ August 15



# Dormition

## August 15

- The Virgin Mary has fallen asleep (died) and is going to Heaven. You see her on the bed.
- She is surrounded by the disciples. They were still alive when she fell asleep.
- She is also surrounded by saints that look like bishops. Those were some of the first bishops of the Church, like St. Iakovos (James) of Jerusalem.
- Jesus is behind or above her, usually in the light of the mandorla.
- Sometimes, Jesus is holding what looks like a little baby in swaddling clothes just like the clothes on Jesus when He was born. This is not a baby, but it represents the soul of the Virgin Mary going to Jesus. Sort of the opposite of Jesus birth, when the Virgin Mary holds Jesus in swaddling clothes, now Jesus holds the soul of the Virgin Mary on her "birthday" into Heaven, which is the day she fell asleep.
- Angels are usually present ready to help and do whatever Jesus needs them to do.
- A few days later, they went to see her body, but it was gone! It had been taken up into Heaven!
- There are no scriptural references of the Dormition, it is derived only from Holy Tradition.