

Introducing...

Feasts and Families: The Season of Christmas!



Dear Pastors, Teachers, Parishioners and Children,

Greetings from the educators and cooperating church school teachers and pastors involved in the preparation of the FOCUS Education program of the Orthodox Church in America. The third study unit, which focuses on preparation for the Feast of Christ's Nativity, is now available on the Focus Education page of the OCA website (focuseducation@oca.org).

Our new theme: *Feasts and Families: The Season of Christmas* provides Bible Stories for children, activities and projects for families, outreach activities for mixed age-groups, liturgical introductions to the services of Christmas as well as the days of preparation during the "Holy Week of Christmas". Six Resource Bins on the web-page contain:

- ❁ Complete contents of the texts of [The Services of Christmas](#), as well as separate selections of the following for easier access:
- ❁ [Liturgical verses](#) (only) for the Royal Hours, Vespers and Divine Liturgy of the Eve of the Nativity, plus verses for Great Compline, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy of the Feast.
- ❁ A selection of liturgical verses from the above, together with commentary and suggested activities related to [Biblical themes](#), for Teen and Adult groups, provided by Valerie Zahirsky. In addition, a [Bible Study on the Feast of the Nativity](#) by Prof. Veselin Kesich provides an introduction to the biblical texts.
- ❁ A study unit on [The Incarnation in Poetry and Song](#), by Prof. David Drillock and Dr. Constance Tarasar helps Teens and Adults to understand the educational dimension of the liturgical verses that are sung during the feasts.
- ❁ Fr. John Tkachuk offers suggestions for how [The Parish Prepares for Christmas](#), while Fr. Thomas Hopko reflects on the theme of the Christmas season as the "[Winter Pascha](#)", making comparisons using parallel themes taken from texts on the death and resurrection of Christ.
- ❁ Michele Jannakos, Alexandra Safchuk and Valerie Zahirsky initiated the basic outlines of this study unit, enlarging the theme from the initial DRE books on the "Season of Christmas" and contributing objectives, activities, and additional Bible stories for Mrs. Koulomzin's [God is With Us](#) and the [Saints, Stories and Literature](#) Resource bin.
- ❁ Finally, many other teachers and pastors have contributed ideas for activities, crafts and family traditions that can engage children and adults together in home and outreach activities. These and other classroom ideas may be found in the [Activities and Projects](#) Resource Bin and in the [Quick Outline Activities Chart](#).
- ❁ Look through the contents of the Unit for additional aids such as the [Weekly Planning Chart](#) and the [Advent Calendar](#). We encourage all who use these materials and activities to send in photos and instructions for additional projects you have developed or good books for family reading, so that we may share them with others.