

# Blessed is the Kingdom: An Orthodox Church School Curriculum



## Lesson 8

## Preschool

### The Liturgical Year

Objective: Through a look at the Liturgical year, students will understand that there is a cycle of fasting and 12 Great Feasts.

#### Lesson Introduction

5 min

**Hold up** a calendar, if possible an Orthodox Calendar that has feast days and fasting days marked. **Ask:**

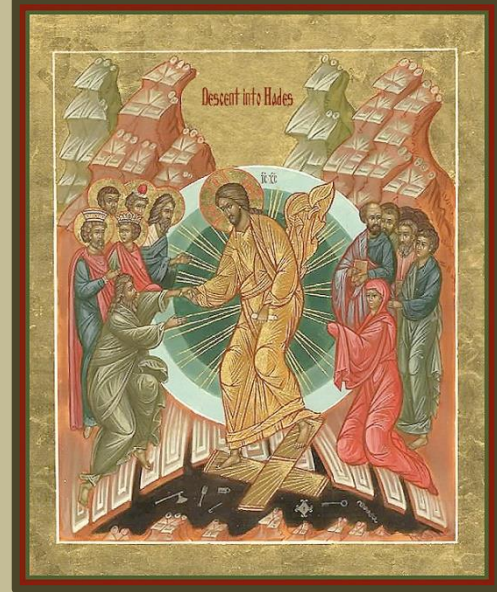
*What is this? (calendar) Where have you seen a calendar before? (school/home) What does it tell us or help us do?*

**Take** answers. **Guide** them to things such as: time of year, what day, month, or year it is. It also tells us when we have appointments or events or holidays. **Play** your favorite video or audio recording of the Paschal Troparion. **Ask** them:

*When have you heard this before? (Pascha) Pascha is considered the Feast of Feasts! It is the center of our faith. Christ died on the cross and is risen from the dead on Pascha! All of our church year leads us to Pascha and Christ's resurrection. How do we prepare for Pascha? (prayer, attend church, fast)*

**Show** the icon of the Resurrection and point out Christ. Show how He is standing on the cross, and how He is pulling on Adam and Eve—renewing His connection with them by defeating death. **Look** at the calendar if you have an Orthodox one with shaded fast days. **Ask:**

*What do these shaded days mean? (We fast or avoid certain foods during that time to help us prepare for feasts.) We have two major fasting times before Pascha and before Christmas. Can you think of any other important days in the church year?*



#### Opening Prayer

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who art everywhere 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.

#### Liturgy Link

##### Daily Troparia & Kontakia

<https://www.oca.org/media/video/20th-aac-thursday-morning-divine-liturgy>

Skip to 35:15-37:37 for this portion

#### Teacher Resources

**OCA Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction**

<https://www.oca.org/cdn/PDFs/2023-0609-EOCB.pdf>

Chapter 4 Worship

# Lesson—25 min

## Supplies Needed

- Icons of the 12 Great Feasts and Pascha (these can be printed, shown on a screen, or actual icons at the church)
- Holy Water
- Video or Audio of Pascha Troparion and Nativity Troparion

## Teacher Resources

### Fasting and Almsgiving

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/prayer-fasting-and-almsgiving/fasting>

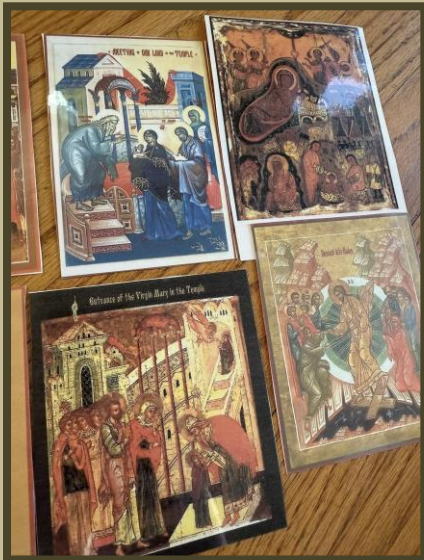
<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/spirituality/prayer-fasting-and-almsgiving/almsgiving>

### Orthodox Calendar

<https://orthocal.info/calendar/>

### The 12 Great Feasts

<https://www.oca.org/fs/icons-of-twelve-great-feasts>



Start by **saying:** *Today we are going to look at the 12 Great Feasts of the Church year. Our church year starts on September 1<sup>st</sup>, so let's start with the first of the 12 Great Feasts that takes place on September 8<sup>th</sup>.*

Your goal in each of these icons is to find Mary or Jesus, and give an idea of what is happening. If additional questions come up, they can be answered, but the focus with this age group is to see if either or both of them are present in the icons.

**Hold up** the icon of the Nativity of the Most-Holy Theotokos, and **begin:** *This is the icon for the Nativity of the Most-Holy Theotokos. Let's look at the icon and see if we can find Mary.*

- *Do you see the infant Mary being bathed by midwives?*

**Continue** this process for all 12 icons following the guidelines below.

*Here is the icon of the Elevation of the Life-Creating Cross that celebrates the finding of Christ's cross by St. Helen. **Practice** making the sign of the cross.*

- *Do you see Mary or Jesus? (No)*
- *But can you find Jesus's cross?*

*On November 21<sup>st</sup> we have the Feast of the Entrance or Presentation of the Theotokos into the Temple. Mary's parents dedicated her life to God, as they were thankful for being able to have a child so late in life. At the age of 3, they took Mary to the temple in Jerusalem.*

- *Can you find Mary as a young girl in the temple?*
- *Do you see her parents, Joachim & Anna?*

*The next one you should all know about! You might know it as Christmas, but what is another name for it? (The Nativity of the Our Lord Jesus Christ) **Listen** to a video or audio of the Nativity Troparion.*

- *Can you find Jesus & His mother?*
- *What else do you notice in this icon? (animals, wise men, shepherds, star)*

*Following Jesus's birth, we have His baptism or Theophany on January 6<sup>th</sup>. If possible, **have** Holy Water for each student to have a sip of. Remind them that we bless water on this feast day.*

- *Can you find Christ being baptized by John the Baptist?*
- *Can you find a dove descending as the Spirit of God?*

# Lesson Continued

## 5 Minute Bonus

Have students choose a feast day that they most look forward to and share why. Examples could be holding palms on Palm Sunday, blessing fruit on Transfiguration, or shouting Christ is Risen on Pascha.

## Supplemental Ideas

### Living Icon Gallery

Choose an icon with a similar number of people in it as your class size. Have students recreate the icon stances as in a living art gallery. Discuss who they are and what each of their roles are in the icon. If time allows, you may recreate more than one. Bonus for bringing in props for them to hold or costumes for them to wear.

### Feast Troparion

Pick the next Feast day that is approaching. Have students put their icon on their Feast display board. While they are studying the icon, play an audio or video of the upcoming Feast Troparion. Discuss what they noticed or heard.

*Here is the icon for the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple. This takes place 40 days after Jesus's birth as this was the time when new moms would bring their baby to the temple.*

- *Can you see Jesus held by St. Symeon?*

*The Annunciation to the Most-Holy Theotokos shows the moment where Mary was told she would be the mother of Christ.*

- *Do you see Mary & the Angel?*

*The Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem or as you may know it as Palm Sunday takes place the Sunday before Pascha.*

- *Can you find Jesus?*
- *What is he riding on?*

After discussing the icon, **process** outside to find leaves to process back into the classroom while **singing or listening** to: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!"

*Ascension happens 40 days after Pascha when Christ is taken up into the Heavens in front of the Apostles.*

- *Do you see Jesus ascending surrounded by light?*
- *Can you find the Theotokos?*

*Pentecost or the Descent of the Holy Spirit happens 50 days after Pascha. It shows where the Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles and allowed them to preach in different languages.*

- *Do you see Jesus? Or Mary? (No)*
- *But look at all of Jesus's Apostles or followers!*
- *And God is there as the Holy Spirit descending from the light up above.*

*Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ is celebrated August 6<sup>th</sup>.*

- *Do you see Christ on the mountain?*
- *Christ has light around him to show that He is God*

*Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos (sleep) on August 15<sup>th</sup>*

- *Do you see the Theotokos slumbering but also in Christ's arms?*





# Lesson Activities

## Feast Display Board—10 min

**Supplies needed:** 4.7 x 7 inch mini clipboards; gem stickers, permanent markers, craft printable feast day icons on cardstock, laminator and laminating sheets, sealable sandwich bags

Prior to the lesson, print and cut out the feast day icon sets one per student. Laminating the sets will help them last longer, but it is not necessary. Place each set into a sealable sandwich bag.

Student will decorate the edge of their clipboard with permanent marker drawings and gem stickers. Discuss what feast day is coming up next, and help students to place this feast icon onto their clipboard display. Encourage them to take this home and display it in their icon corner. Remind them throughout the church school year as feasts approach to replace their icon that is on display.



## Feast or Fast—10 min

**Supplies needed:** if played outside: 10 to 30 balls (ping pong or ball pit or playground size); if played inside: a bag of pom poms or cotton balls

Split the class in half and have a group on each side of the room with an adult to help them. If playing outside, do the same in the grass. Using cones or some type of marking, designate sides. Place the items (ball if outside; pom poms if inside) along the center line. Instruct the students to not touch them until signaled.

Explain that when you yell feast, the students will scramble to the front line and grab as many items as they can. But when you yell fast, students must throw as many items as they can to the other team. When we fast, the church encourages us to give to others and think less of ourselves, and when we are called to feast, we celebrate the day gathering together. Continue to alternate back and forth between yelling feast or fast and having students gather items or give items away.

In this game, there is no winner! The point is to have fun, use up some energy, and to remind students that there are fast periods and feasting periods in the church year.



## Closing Thoughts— 5 min

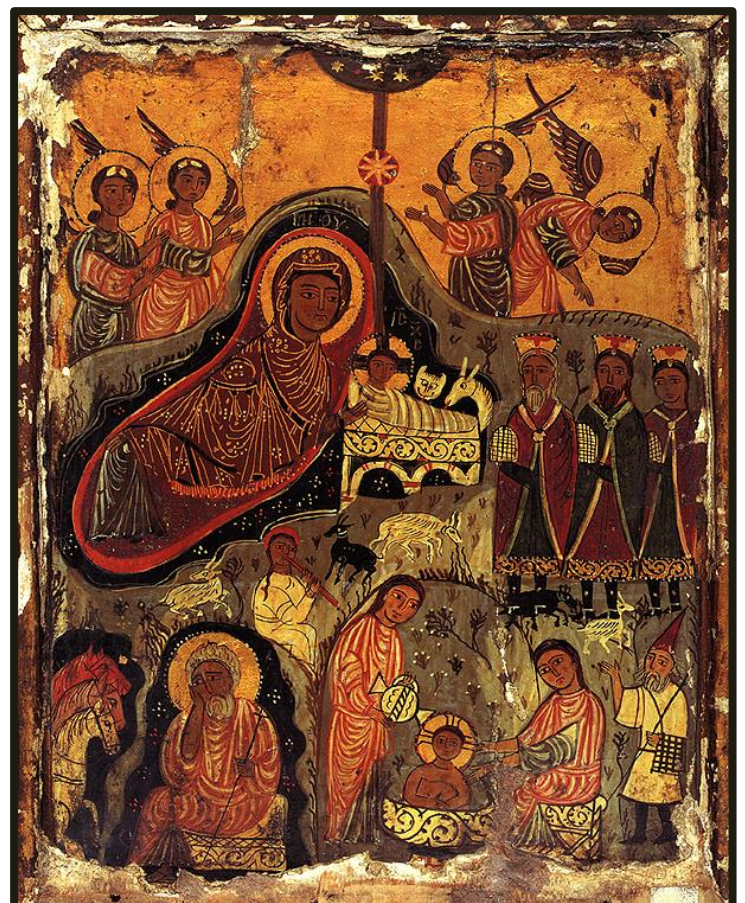
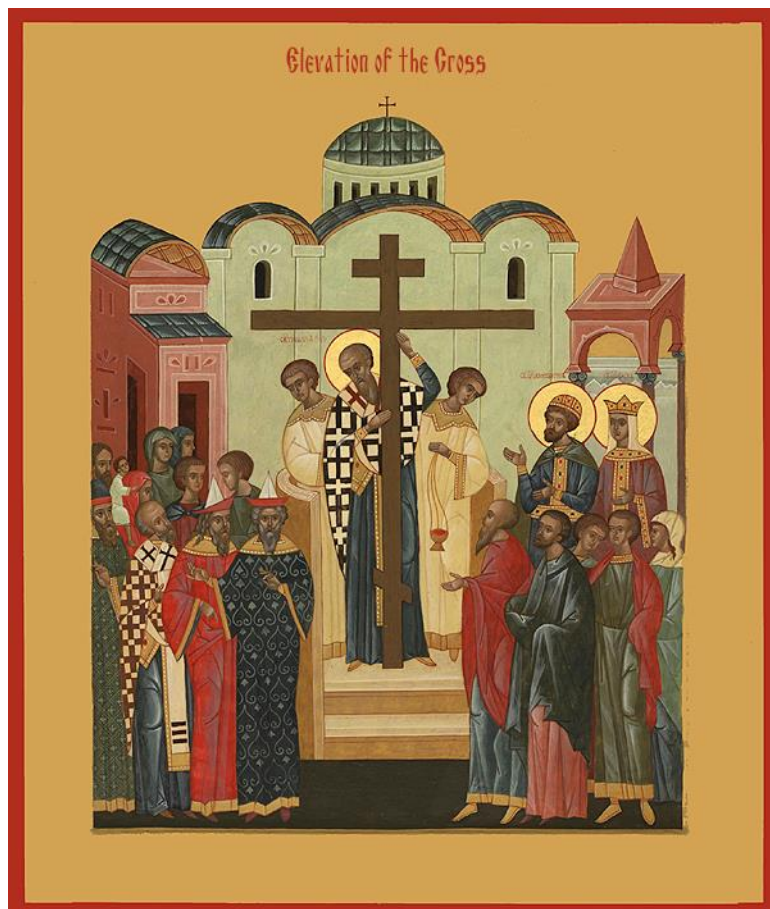
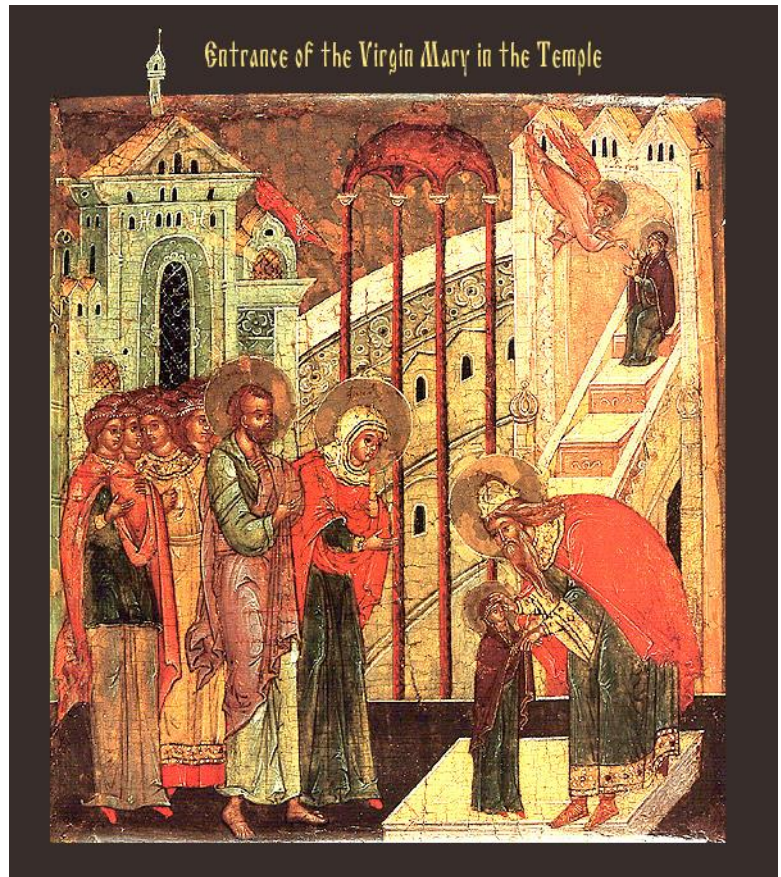
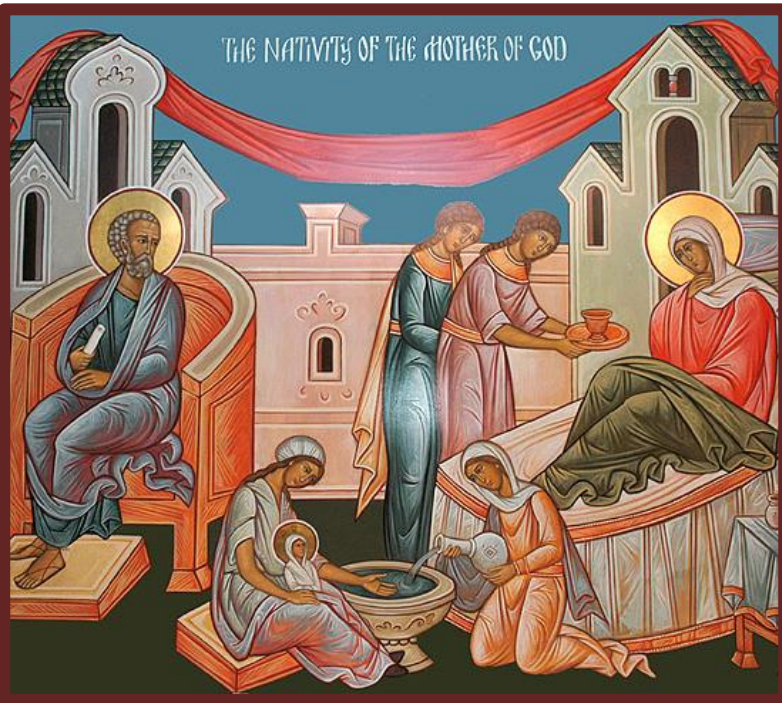
Remind students of an upcoming Feast Day or fasting period. Discuss where they plan to put their Feast Display Board to help them remember upcoming Feast days. This could be in the kitchen, dining room, an icon corner, or even on their refrigerator.

## Closing Prayer

It is truly meet to bless you, 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 defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you!

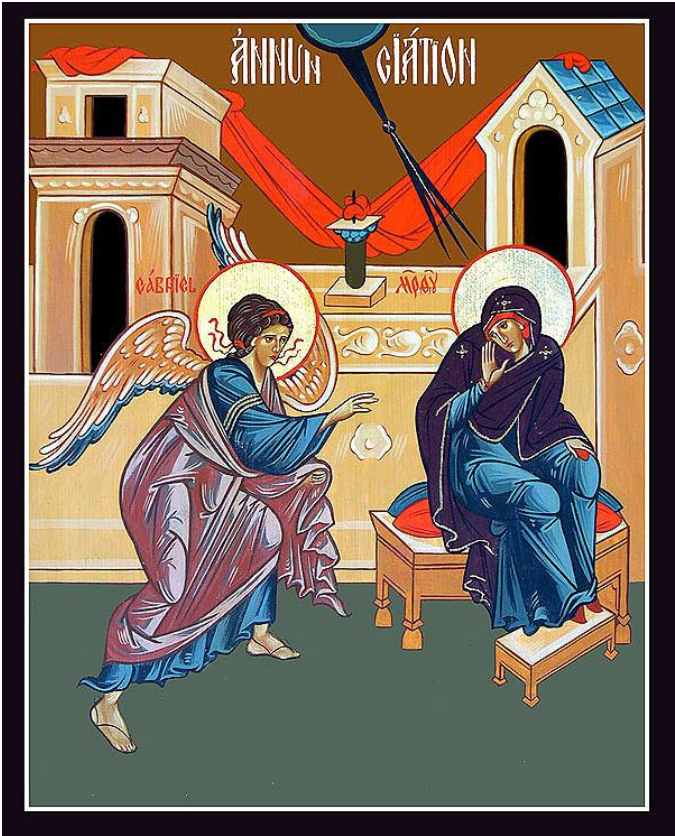


# Craft Feast Day Printable Page 1



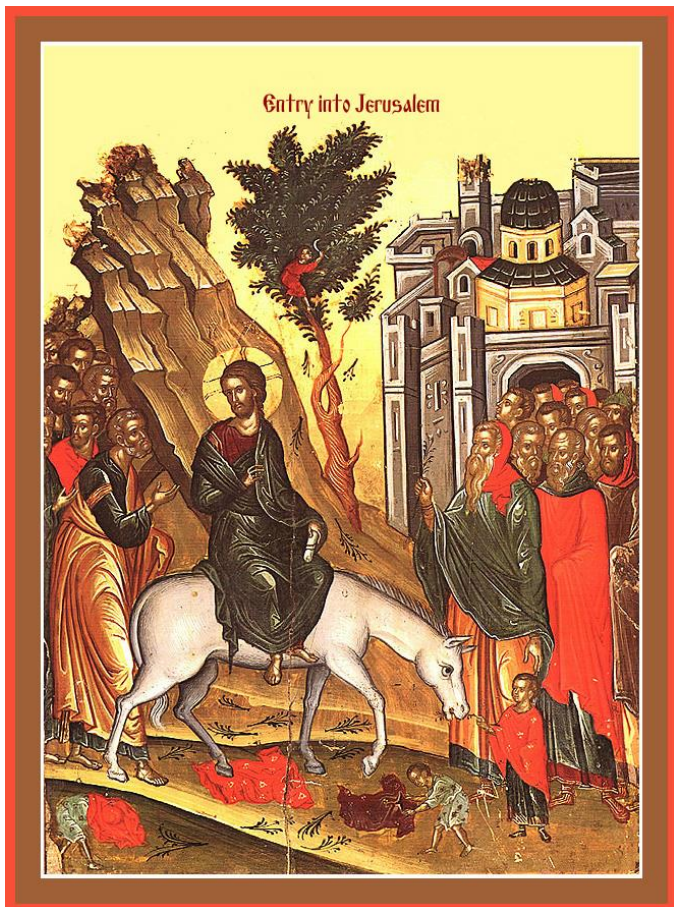
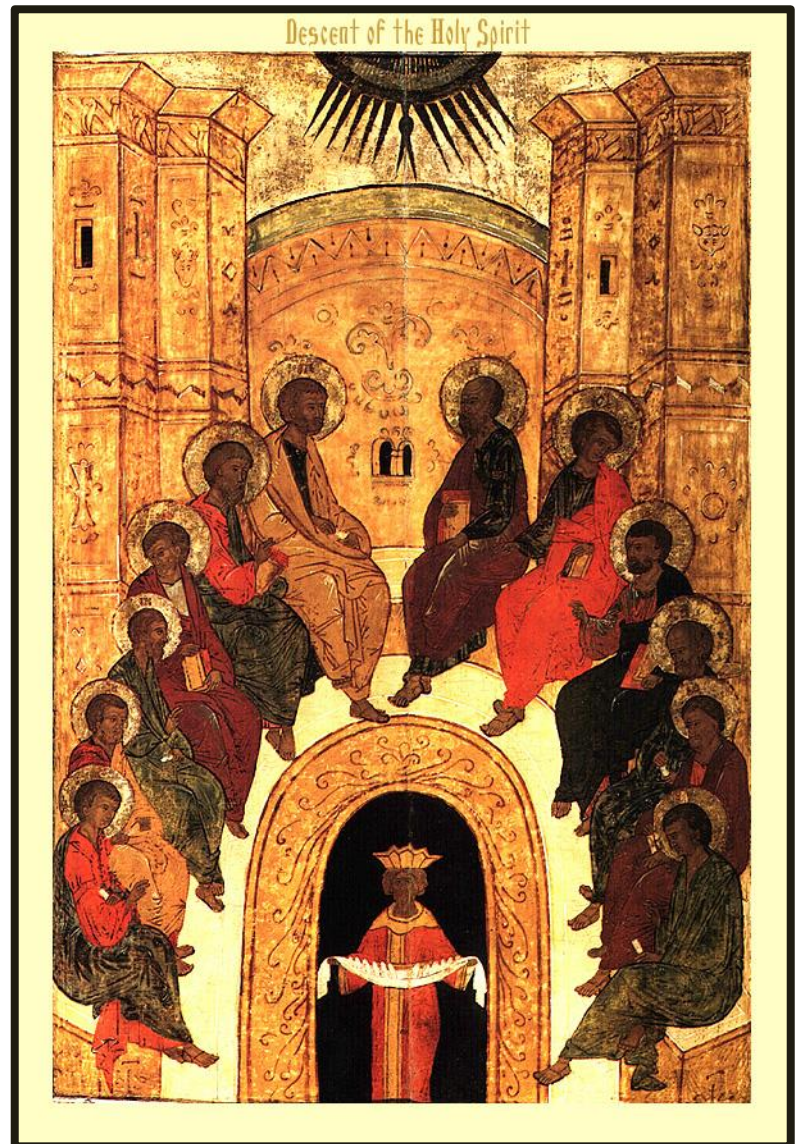
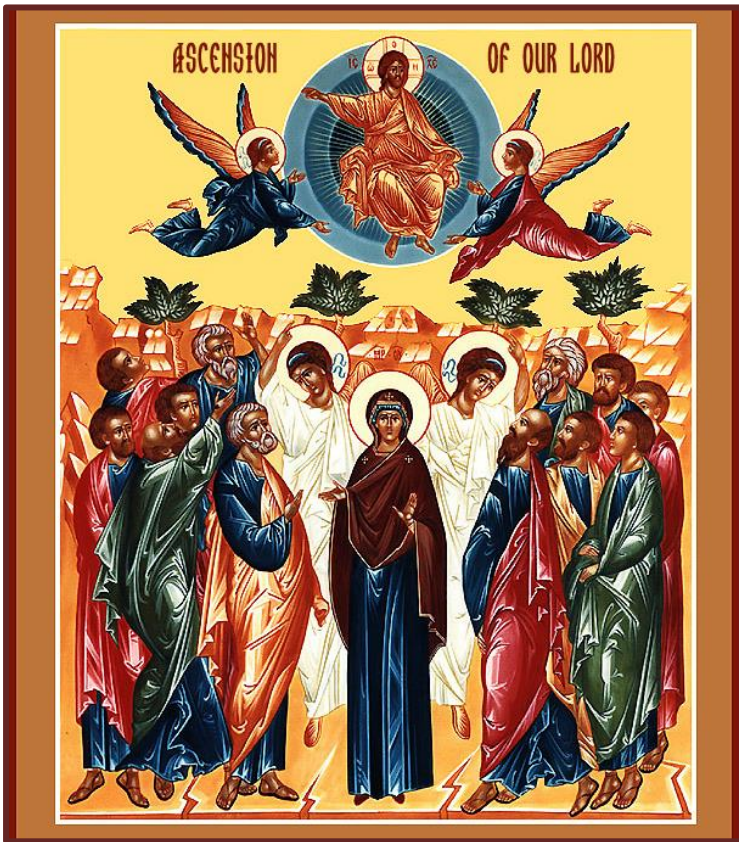


Craft Feast Day Printable Page 2





## Craft Feast Day Printable Page 3





# Craft Feast Day Printable Page 4

