**Redeeming the Year**

**September 1st:** beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year-Resolve to commit the year to God and truly make it the “Year of the Lord”

**September 8th**: The Nativity of the Theotokos; first of the twelve major feasts; always commemorated on this day (immovable). The church year begins with her birth and ends with her falling asleep (August 15th) Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**September 14th**: Exaltation of the Holy Cross; second of the 12 major feasts; always on this day (immovable) Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**November 15th:** The Nativity Fast begins today and ends on December 24th; 40-day fast to prepare our hearts to receive God’s gift of His Only-Begotten Son; we fast, but not as strictly as Great Lent; we are given a blessing to eat the traditional Thanksgiving Day meal and then we are to resume the fast on Friday; the fast turns strict two-weeks prior or on December 12th. There are not additional church services for this fast.

**November 21st:** Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple; third of the 12 major feasts; always on this day (immovable). Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**December 25th**: Holy Nativity; fourth of the 12 major feasts; always on this day (immovable); we feast (no fasting) from today until January 4th. The first of twelve days of Christmas; Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**January 1st:** Circumcision of Christ; the eighth day after His birth Jesus is circumcised according to the Jewish custom and given a name. Immovable feast.

**January 6th:** Holy Theophany/Epiphany: Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan by John; fifth of the 12 major feasts; Immovable; always a feast day however the day before January 5th is a strict fast day. A Great Blessing of the Water is done on this feast or on the eve of the feast. Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**February 2nd:** Presentation of our Lord; on the 40th day after birth; sixth of the 12 major feasts; Immovable. Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**February-May:** Triodion period begins; Great Lent; Holy Week, etc; Movable!

**Triodion Period:** Three Sundays before Lent begins; first Sunday is the Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee; the following week is fast-free; then the second Sunday (Prodigal Son) is a normal fasting week; the next Sunday is Meatfare Sunday and the last day for meat until Pascha; dairy is permitted even on Wednesday and Friday of Meatfare Week; the last Sunday is known as Cheesefare Sunday and the last day for dairy until Pascha. This is a time to ease yourself into Great Lent and prepare yourself for the journey. Since the church triumphant will accompany us on our journey we remember the departed (Saturday of Souls) on the two Saturdays preceding Great Lent.

**Great Lent:** The beginning of our 40-day journey to Pascha begins with Clean Monday; Movable; time of strict fasting, additional worship services, and repentance. **Mark your calendar** and plan to attend services the first week of Lent, Monday thru Friday. Then **mark your calendar** and plan to attend Great Compline on Mondays, Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts on Wednesdays, and the Salutations to the Theotokos on Fridays. The third Saturday of Souls takes place on the first Saturday in Lent. The five Sundays of Lent have special significance so mark your calendar for those five Sundays.

**March 25th:** Annunciation-the announcement to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel that she would give birth to God; seventh of the 12 major feasts; Immovable; fish, wine and oil permitted; Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**Lazarus Saturday:** Jesus raises His friend Lazarus from the grave and foretells His Resurrection. We transition out of Great Lent and into Holy Week; Movable; mark your calendar and join us for the divine services; following the divine services we enjoy a pancake breakfast; following that we tie palms for Palm Sunday and clean the church. Please plan on staying later that day

**Palm Sunday**: Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem; eighth of the major feasts; Movable; plan to stay for our annual luncheon and enjoy a delicious fish meal. Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**Palm Sunday evening**: the tone changes as we now journey with Christ to the Cross. On Sunday, Monday and Tuesday evening we come to church for the beautiful and moving Bridegroom Services.

**Holy Week:** Take the whole week off and join us for the beautiful and moving services. Mark your calendars and cancel other plans. You won’t want to miss a thing!

**Holy Ascension:** 40-days after His Resurrection Jesus ascends into the heavens taking His human body with Him. Movable depending on when Pascha falls but always on a Thursday; ninth of the major feasts; a man is now in heaven! Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**Holy Pentecost**: 50-days after His Resurrection and 10-days after His Ascension, the Holy Spirit is sent as tongues of fire resting upon the 12. Movable depending on when Pascha falls but always on a Sunday. Tenth of the 12 major feast days. The Kneeling Prayers of Pentecost are prayed on this day. Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**Apostles Fast:** the length of this fast depends on when Pascha falls; it begins eight days after Pentecost and goes until June 28th. The reason for this fast is to prepare us for the hard work of being an apostle in a post-Christian world. This fast is not as strict as Lent and fish is permitted except for Wednesdays and Fridays.

**August 1st-14th:** Dormition Fast- a two-week fast because the mother of the house is dying and she calls us home (church) to keep vigil at her bedside. As she eats less, we eat less; as she prays more, we pray more; as she rejoices in the promises of God, we to rejoice. There will be Paraklesis services each day of the fast.

**August 6th:** Holy Transfiguration-Jesus’ divinity is revealed to Peter, James and John on Mt Tabor; Immovable; eleventh of 12 major feasts; our potentiality as men and women is revealed; it is traditional to bless grapes (first fruits) on this day. Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!

**August 15th:** Dormition of the Theotokos-the falling asleep of the Virgin Mary; last of the 12 major feasts; Immovable; reveals to us what a Christian ending to our life really means and the deathless death that is possible for all of us. Mark your calendar for this one and don’t miss church!