

October

October is the second month of the liturgical year in the Byzantine Rite.

The feast of the Protection of the Mother of God

On **October 1**, we celebrate the feast of the **Protection** (or **Patronage**) of the **Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary**. This feast is particularly kept among the Slavs, and commemorates several occasions on which the Mother of God saved the city of Constantinople from plague or military assault. In our own times, we too have recourse to the intercession of the Theotokos. As we hear in the kontakion of the feast:

Today, the Virgin is present in the Church
and, with the choirs of saints, invisibly prays to God for us.
The angels worship with the hierarchs;
the apostles rejoice with the prophets;
because the Theotokos prays for us to the eternal God.

For parishes dedicated to the Protection or Patronage of the Mother of God, this is the feast-day of the parish church, and is celebrated as a vigil-rank feast.

The Sunday of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council

On the Sunday which falls between October 11 and October 17, we remember the 350 bishops who met at the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (in modern Turkey) in the year 767. This council took place during a long period of iconoclasm, during which those who objected to depictions of our Lord and of the saints removed and destroyed many icons, and persecuted those who defended them.

The First Ecumenical Council (held in 325, also in Nicaea) had opposed the Arian heresy, and established the original form of the Nicene Creed. The Seventh Ecumenical Council clearly taught that the veneration of icons was lawful, because "the reverence paid to the icon passes to the one whom the image represents." Furthermore, they held that this teaching was intimately connected with the doctrine of the Incarnation, that Christ was true God and true man. In remembering this council, we chant the following kontakion:

The Son shone forth from the Father indescribably.
In two natures he was born of a woman.
Recognizing this, we do not reject the representation of his human form;
rather, we depict it with honor and with faith.
Therefore the Church holds fast to the true faith
and kisses the image of the incarnation of Christ.

The First Ecumenical Council is commemorated on the Sunday between Ascension and Pentecost; the first six Ecumenical Councils are celebrated together on the Sunday between July 13 and July 19. On all three of these feast-days of the Council Fathers, the following troparion is sung:

The preaching of the apostles and the teachings of the Fathers
have confirmed the one faith of the Church, which she wears as the garment of truth,
woven from the theology on high,
as she faithfully imparts and glorifies the great mystery of devotion.

On these three feast-days, the prokeimenon praises the Lord as "the God of our Fathers", and the Alleluia verse refers to the fact that the Ecumenical (world-wide or universal) Councils brought together bishops from the entire world known at that time: "The God of gods, the Lord, has summoned the earth, from the rising of the sun to its setting" (Psalm 49:1).

The feast of Saint Demetrius

On October 26, we commemorate **the holy great-martyr Demetrius**. The title "great-martyr" is given to saints who suffered extreme tortures for Christ, often converting many of their onlookers to Christ, and for this reason were highly venerated in the Church. Saint Demetrius was one of the notable soldier-saints, who refused to offer the customary sacrifice to the emperors after their baptism. Saint George (April 23) and Saint Demetrius (October 26) are among the most illustrious of these military great-martyrs, and both feast-days have been celebrated with devotion in the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches.

Other feast days

In October, we celebrate the feast days of three of the Apostles:

- the holy apostle **Thomas** (October 6)
- the holy apostle **James Alpheus** (October 9)
- the holy apostle and evangelist **Luke** (October 18)

October 31 is the feast-day of the holy priest-martyr Theodore, **Bishop of Mukachevo** in western Ukraine. Born in Veliky Bychkiv in Carpatho-Russia in 1911, he came from a poor family and exhibited a vocation to the priesthood. Sent to Rome for studies, he was ordained in 1937 and sent to the country parish of Berzovo. In 1939, he was called to the seminary at Uzhhorod and taught there until 1944. In 1944, despite his youth, he was ordained bishop for the Mukachevo Eparchy. During the Soviet Army's occupation of Carpatho-Russia, he was tireless in his care for his flock and in his defense of the rights of the Byzantine Catholic Church. On October 27, 1947, he was severely wounded in a staged accident. He was taken to the hospital in Mukachevo, where he was subsequently poisoned, and died.

For a complete list of saints' days as celebrated in our church, see the Calendar of Saints.