SAINT SERGIUS SCHOOL

2026–2027 · YEAR 1

SAINT SERGIUS SCHOOL

LESSON 5

How Orthodox Christians Celebrate a Feast

Date: October 18, 2026

Term: I — Entering the Life of the Church

Book Study: The Law of God — Archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy

Lesson Focus: A feast as worship, Scripture, icon, hymnody, fasting, remembrance, and participation in the life of the Church.



LESSON 5

How Orthodox Christians Celebrate a Feast

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Introduction

1. What makes a day feel special or important?
2. What feasts of the Church do you already know
3. What do you notice at church on a feast day?
4. Why might Christians prepare before a feast?

What Is an Orthodox Feast?

An Orthodox feast is more than a special date on the calendar. The Church sets aside holy days to celebrate God's saving work and to honour the saints who lived faithfully in Him.

1. PREPARE — Before the Feast

The Church teaches us to prepare our hearts. Depending on the feast, preparation may include prayer, fasting, learning the story of the feast, attending services, and preparing ourselves to worship attentively.

Fasting is not simply about food. It helps us turn our attention toward God.

2. GATHER — Entering the Feast

A feast belongs to the worshipping life of the whole Church. We gather together to pray, listen, sing, and participate.

The Orthodox liturgical day begins in the evening. This is why the celebration of a feast may begin with Vespers on the evening before the calendar date.

When the Church gathers, many things point toward the feast:

prayers · hymns · Scripture · icons · incense · light

Vespers

The Church's evening service and the beginning of the liturgical day.

Important Point

Not every feast has the same fasting rule or service schedule. The Church's calendar has different patterns of preparation and celebration.



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3. CELEBRATE — The Church Proclaims the Feast

SCRIPTURE
We hear the Word of God proclaimed. Scripture helps us understand the saving event or truth the Church celebrates.

HYMNODY
The Church sings about the feast. Troparia, kontakia, and other hymns help teach us what the feast means.

ICON
The festal icon shows the holy persons and events being celebrated and bears witness to the reality of God's work.

WORSHIP
We do not merely study a feast. We gather and participate in the Church's prayer.

What Does "Remember" Mean?
When the Church remembers a feast, we are not simply thinking about something long ago. The feast becomes part of our life today.

4. CARRY — After the Feast

A feast does not end when we leave church. We carry it with us by remembering what God has done, continuing in prayer, showing love to others, and living according to what the feast teaches.

For many major feasts, the Church continues singing festal hymns for several days afterward in an afterfeast.

Main Point to Remember
We do not only learn about a feast. We enter it through the worship and life of the Church.

Key Vocabulary
Feast — A holy celebration in the life of the Church.
Vespers — The Church's evening service.
Hymnody — The hymns the Church sings in worship.
Liturgical remembrance — Remembering in worship so that the feast becomes present in the Church's prayer.
Afterfeast — Days when the Church continues celebrating a major feast.



COURSE WORK

How Orthodox Christians Celebrate a Feast

Discussion Questions

1. What is an Orthodox feast?

2. Name two ways Orthodox Christians may prepare for a feast.

3. Why can the celebration of a feast begin on the evening before the calendar date?

4. Match each part of the feast with what it does:
Scripture · Icon · Hymns · Worship

A. gathers the Church in prayer
B. proclaims God's Word
C. teaches and praises through song
D. shows the feast visually

5. Why is celebrating a feast different from only reading about the event in a book?

6. Choose one feast you already know. How could that feast change the way you live after the service is over?

ACTIVITY

How Orthodox Christians Celebrate a Feast

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Activity — A Feast from Beginning to End

Choose a feast you already know, such as the Nativity of the Theotokos, the Elevation of the Cross, the Protection of the Theotokos, or another feast familiar to your parish.

PREPARE

Before the feast, I might...

_____

GATHER

When I come to church, I notice...

_____

CELEBRATE

The feast teaches us...

_____

CARRY

After the feast, I can...

_____

PREPARE · GATHER · CELEBRATE · CARRY

TEACHER'S REFERENCE

Delivery & Differentiation

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Lesson Purpose: Students learn that an Orthodox feast is not merely a date or a history lesson. The Church prepares, gathers, worships, remembers, and participates in the saving reality being celebrated.

Core Teaching: An Orthodox feast is a holy celebration in which the Church remembers God's saving work, worships together, and participates in the life of Christ.

Early Learner Emphasis: Feast = holy celebration. We prepare, come to church, pray and sing, see the icon, and carry the lesson home.

Elementary Emphasis: Introduce preparation, Vespers, Scripture, festal icons, hymnody, worship, and afterfeast.

Older Student Extension: Introduce the liturgical day beginning in the evening, the Church's "today" language, liturgical remembrance, and different degrees of festal observance.

Theological Safeguard: Do not reduce a feast to decorations, food, or a classroom theme. Its primary setting is the worshipping life of the Church.

Main Point to Remember
"We do not only learn about a feast. We enter it through the worship and life of the Church."

Fasting Note
Do not say that every feast has a special fast. Fasting practices differ according to the feast and the Church calendar.

Parish Practice Note
Do not imply that every parish celebrates every feast with exactly the same schedule of services.

Icon Guidance
A01 — primary feast-cycle image.
A02 — wide contextual support for the rhythm of the Church year.
A03 — approved reserve / secondary image.

Activity Guidance
Early Learners: Draw or dictate one idea in each section.
Elementary: Complete all four sections.
Older Students: Explain how the feast's meaning should shape Christian life afterward.

TEACHER'S REFERENCE

Answer Key & Resource Control

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Discussion Questions — Teacher Answer Key

1. What is an Orthodox feast?
Answer: A holy celebration in the worship and life of the Church.

2. Name two ways Christians may prepare.
Answer: Appropriate answers include prayer, fasting where appointed, learning the feast, attending services, and preparing attentively for worship.

3. Why can the feast begin the evening before?
Answer: The Orthodox liturgical day begins in the evening.

4. Matching:
Scripture → B. proclaims God's Word
Icon → D. shows the feast visually
Hymns → C. teaches and praises through song
Worship → A. gathers the Church in prayer

5. Why is celebrating different from only reading?
Answer: Christians do not only learn facts; the Church gathers and participates in the feast's meaning through worship.

6. How could a feast change the way you live?
Answer: Answers vary. Encourage a concrete response consistent with the feast and Christian life.

The Law of God
Supporting Reading: Part IV, Chapter 6, feast-and-fast calendar section (PDF pp. 922–925 / book pp. 495–497); Part V, Chapter 1, The Concept of Serving God, Divine Services (PDF pp. 970–973 / book pp. 523–524).

Controlled Sources
SSS Year 1 Annual Curriculum MASTER v1.1; OCA — The Church Year; OCA — Vespers; OCA — Fasting & Fast-Free Seasons; OCA — Icons.

Image Provenance
See lesson Sources & Rights record.
A01 — Hermitage, Resurrection with Feasts — primary.
A02 — Arkhangelsk feast-cycle strip — wide support.
A03 — Chazen Museum, Great Deesis with Twelve Feasts — reserve.