

THE FEAST OF CREATION

An ancient liturgical feast, a recent ecumenical gift

How September 1 became a celebration of God's Creation



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Many names for September 1



Ancient Orthodox names

Feast of the Indiction

Ecclesiastical New Year

Newer ecumenical names

(since 1989)

World Day of Prayer for Creation

Creation Day

Feast of Creation

Feast of Creation in Christ

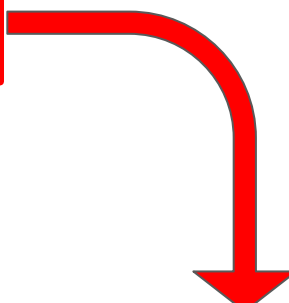
Even if informally called "Feast of Creation" by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the official title of the liturgical feast remains "Feast of the Indiction" in Byzantine liturgical calendars, based on its ancient history.

Ancient roots – September 1: a day of “beginnings”

- *[ancient times]* **Beginning of the agricultural year** (“early rains” of September)
- *[3rd-6th century]* **Beginning of the civil and fiscal year** in Roman-Byzantine empires (“Indiction”)
- *[7th century]* **Beginning of God’s creation** of the universe (*Anno Mundi* calendar)
- *[8th century]* **Beginning of the liturgical year**, as a feast with liturgical status
- *[later]* **Beginning of Christ’s public ministry** (Lk 4:16-22)
(effect of proclamation of new year, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”)

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Ancient symbolism that inspired the
“newer” Creation-related emphasis

Anno Mundi calendar system



Byzantine “Creation Era” calendar (*Anno Mundi* system) used by the Ecumenical Patriarchate from the 7th to the 18th century.

It stipulated that the cosmos was created on September 1 of 5509 BC (with calculations from the Septuagint).

Beginning of God's creation of the universe



September 1 represents “the day of Creation”, when God began the creation of the universe.

It symbolizes the expression
“In the beginning” (Gn 1:1, Jn 1:1).

E.g., Menologion of Basil II (10th century)



“Indikton is celebrated by the Church of God, from the ancients, because it is thought to be the beginning of time from this day... Therefore, the first day of September is also a defining month and the beginning of the whole year.”

(“Menologion” = liturgical calendar)

Parallel with Jewish calendar



Also follows (still today) an *Anno Mundi* system based on biblical chronology.

Also celebrates its **New Year**, the feast of *Rosh Hashanah*, **in September** (or early Oct), also gravitating around the Autumn Equinox (but as a movable date, given Jewish lunar system).

Parallel with Jewish calendar



As stated in the Talmud: “In Tishri the world was created” (Tishri is the lunar month corresponding to the beginning of the Northern autumn).

On that feast of **Rosh Hashanah** (Tishri 1), some Jewish liturgies proclaim:

“Ha-yom harat olam” – “Today is the day of the world's creation”.

“The beginning” of the liturgical year

Blessed Ecclesiastical New Year



Orthodox Church transitioned from *Anno Mundi* system to Western *Anno Domini* system in the 18th century.

But the tradition was kept alive, keeping September 1 as “the beginning” of the liturgical year and the creation theme remains prevalent in the feast’s hymnography.

EXAMPLES OF LITURGICAL TEXTS

FEAST OF THE INDICTION



**“O Creator of the universe,
Thou didst appoint times by Thy power;
bless the crown of this year with Thy
goodness, O Lord.
Preserve in safety Thy rulers and cities:
and through the intercessions of the
Theotokos, save us!”**

– Troparion, Feast of the Indiction



“O Creator and Master of time and the ages,
Triune and Merciful God of all: grant
blessings for the course of this year, and in
Thy boundless mercy save those who worship
Thee and cry out in fear: “O Savior, grant
blessings to all mankind!”

– *Kontakion, Feast of the Indiction*
(Greek rubrics)



“O Christ our King Who livest in the highest, **Creator and Maker of all things, visible and invisible, Who hast fashioned days and nights, seasons and years:** bless Thou now the **crown of the year**; preserve and keep in peace Orthodox hierarchs, this city and Thy people, O greatly Merciful One.”

– *Kontakion, Feast of the Indiction*
(*Slavic rubrics*)

Central psalm in Indiction



** The “beginning” of agricultural year in the Mediterranean;
Indiction is a time of preparation for the early rains of September.*

“You visit the earth and water it;
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.
You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
The pastures of the wilderness overflow;
the hills gird themselves with joy;
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks;
the valleys deck themselves with grain;
they shout and sing together for joy.”

— Psalm 64 (65):9-13



“O Word of the Father from before the ages,
Who, being in the form of God, broughtest
creation into being out of nothing
Thou Who hast put the times and seasons in
Thine own power:
Bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness;
give peace unto Thy churches, victory unto Thy
faithful hierarchs, fruitfulness unto the earth,
and Great Mercy unto us.”

– *Orthros*

1989: its Creation symbolism is expanded

Ancient tradition

+

“Signs of the times”

(ecological crisis)

=

World Day of Prayer for Creation

Institution of the World Day of Prayer for Creation



“We invite through this our Patriarchal Message the **entire Christian world**, to offer together with the Great Mother Church of Christ (the Ecumenical Patriarchate) **every year on this day** prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both as **thanksgiving for the great gift of Creation** and as **petitions for its protection and salvation.**”

– *Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, 1 September 1989*

“The Green Patriarch”: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I



Right after his election in 1991, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew convened an ecological gathering in Crete, opened by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. In the following year, Patriarch Bartholomew called an unprecedented meeting of all Orthodox Patriarchs and Primates, submitting an historical expression of unity and inviting all Orthodox leaders to inform their churches about the critical significance of this issue for our times. All Primates endorsed 1 September as a day of pan-Orthodox prayer for creation.

Pan-Orthodox implementation



**OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION
FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT***

September 1

Apolytikion
Fourth Mode

Intonation: #10
Allegro ♩ 150

Un. 

Lord and Sav-iour, who as God brought all things in-to be-ing

Un. 

by a word, es-tab-lish-ing laws and gov-ern-ing them un-



err-ing-ly to your glo-ry, at the prayers of the Moth-er of Thy

* Patriarch Demetrios of Constantinople made September 1st a day of special prayer for the Environment and commissioned the hymnographer Monk Gerassimos of the Holy Mountain to compose a special office for it. This service was translated by Archimandrite Eifrem (Lash) and is available online at: <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/creation.htm>

www.alexandriaecumenical.org/creation.htm
Text © 2008, Archimandrite Eifrem

1990: New liturgical service composed for Creation Day



1992: All Orthodox Primates jointly endorse September 1 as day of pan-Orthodox prayer for creation

Ecumenical explosion: Official endorsements of global/regional bodies

- **KEK and CCEE** (Joint European Ecumenical Assembly, 1997)
- **World Council of Churches** (2002)
- **Roman Catholic Church** (Pope Francis, 2015)
- **Ecumenical committee** by WCC, Vatican, and many worldwide communions (2016), to animate Creation Day celebrations and larger “Season of Creation”

“Nicknames” pop up

- KEK and CCEE (1997):
“Recommendation 5.1: plan, following the example of the Ecumenical Patriarch, the celebration of a common Feast of Creation.”
- Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (2003):
“Today, September 1, in many parts of the world Christian churches are celebrating ‘Creation Day’.”

Driven by Holy Spirit and "signs of the times", momentum accelerates since 2015



Annual statements by high-level leaders
continually promote Creation Day.



Growing grassroots momentum
thousands and thousands of local churches
celebrate the feast annually.

Extended “Season of Creation”

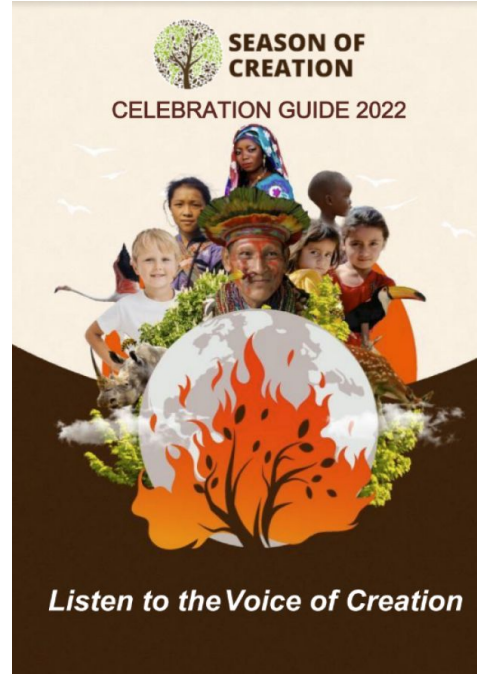


**Let Justice
and Peace Flow**
Season of Creation 2023
September 1-October 4



**TO HOPE AND ACT
WITH CREATION**
SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)



First global “Creation Day” ecumenical prayer

Assisi, 1 September 2018



All major denominations represented, mostly at global leadership level.

What's next for the Feast of Creation?

PRAYER: May God unite our churches to adopt the ecumenical Feast of Creation on September 1st as the celebration of the beauty of Creation (all “is good”) and the beginning of the cosmos (“let be there Light”) to promote eco-justice flowing from our Christian faith.

WISH: After this Assisi seminar and the 1700 years of Nicaea in 2025, I wish people would say “**Happy Creation-mas**” on **September 1st** for the Feast of Creation, as we say “**Happy Christ-mas**” on **December 25th** for the Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ!

GOD BLESS AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

2026 Update

Inspired by the “Assisi Process”, the Feast of Creation is starting to acquire even deeper Creation symbolism in the liturgical calendar of many churches.

See:

- 1) [Theological Overview of the Feast of Creation](#)
- 2) [‘Feast of Creation in Christ’: An enhanced liturgical title](#)