



Happy New Year: The New Ecclesiastical Year

Most of us have heard about Christmas in July and the annual sales many stores host six months before Christmas. Yet it is unlikely you have heard of New Year's Day in September. Well believe it or not that is when the Church celebrates the New Year, on September 1 (*Editor's note: September 14 according the Julian (Old) Calendar*). So what is going on? Is this just another matter that for Orthodox is different than everyone else? Well there are many reasons for celebrating the New Year on September 1 both historical and theological. For our purposes we will focus only on matters related to faith and our own spiritual growth.

Certainly the Jews following prescriptions from the Old Testament marked this day with religious ceremony. It is also true that early Christians marked September 1 as a day for religious observance. Tied as they were to older Jewish traditions from the Old Testament and to the natural rhythms of the harvest it was natural for Christians to keep the day as a turning point within the calendar year.



Photo by Andrey Kisilev, www.pravmir.ru

Within the liturgical year we run the course of Christ's life. The rhythm of time is marked by the major events of Jesus' earthly ministry and life. We observe His birth, entrance into the temple, death and crucifixion among other events. Each feast provides us with a moment of reflection and growth. Here too, on September 1, we find a feast that provides us with an opportunity to consider the spiritual year that has concluded and to look towards the spiritual year that is dawning. We close out the year and consider the progress and the journey we have made and perhaps evaluate our spiritual life up to this point. Like with the New Year that comes on January 1 we may take stock of our spiritual life and resolve to make certain changes or resolutions.

Another way to look upon this day is to place it within the context of the harvest. We know that the harvest begins with the sowing of seed and continues with the careful husbandry of the farmer, the watering, the



weeding, and pruning. Finally comes the ripening of the fruit, the maturation of the crops and the harvest itself. This earthly cycle can be compared to the spiritual life. Our Lord does as much in the Parable of the Sower where He speaks of a farmer sowing his seed. Over the past year we too have cast our spiritual seeds upon the earth of our souls and we have either carefully or carelessly overseen their development. As the year comes to a close we may find that our spiritual harvest is either bountiful or meager. No matter the outcome the Ecclesiastical New Year provides us with an opportunity to begin again. Learning from the past year we set out again upon the course of the Church Year with the intent to grow and bring about spiritual fruit.

I have taken time to consider where I am spiritually and I have made my own resolutions for this New Year. I encourage you to do the same, to take some time and review the past year and your spiritual progress. I also hope you will set new goals for yourself, goals that will strengthen and expand your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Source: [Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church](#)