

## Why are the Dates of Pascha & Easter Sometimes So Different?

FIRST, both “Pascha” and “Easter” refer to the Bright and Holy Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We use the more ancient Greek term, *Pascha*, because it refers to the *Passover* of our Lord from Death to Life, which occurred during the Jewish Passover season. This is the term used by the Apostle Paul: “For our *pascha* also hath been sacrificed, even Christ” (I Cor. 5:7). The word *Easter* is pagan in origin and refers to the Norse goddess of spring; from it, English receives the word ‘east.’

The difference in the determination of dates to celebrate Christ’s Resurrection results from the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, first by Catholics in the seventeenth century and then, eventually, over the next couple centuries by Protestants and non-Christians.

The Bright and Holy Resurrection of our Lord is celebrated, according to the decision of the First Ecumenical Council of 325 AD, on the Sunday that *follows* the *first full moon* after the vernal (spring) equinox because our Lord resurrected on a Sunday and the first full moon after the vernal equinox is how Jewish Passover is determined. If the full moon occurs on a Sunday, the Resurrection is celebrated the following Sunday. Both the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox use March 21<sup>st</sup> as the date of the vernal equinox. However, there is now a 13-day difference between March 21<sup>st</sup> on the Gregorian (or civil) Calendar and the Julian Calendar used by both the Orthodox Church and the non-Chalcedonian Christians (Coptic, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Armenian, Syrian, and Malankara Syrian Christians). Even though the Gregorian Calendar was adopted in a non-conciliar fashion by some Orthodox Christians in the 1920s, they did not dare to adopt it for the determination of Holy Pascha.

This means that some years the two ways of determining the date to celebrate Christ’s Resurrection produce the same date and some years they produce different dates. This particular year [2013] the two dates happen to be five weeks apart, which is one of the more extreme differences.

*Fr. Daniel*  
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