

FASTING

The Orthodox Church, regarding man as a unity of soul and body, has always insisted that the body must be trained and disciplined as well as the soul. "Fasting and self-control are the first virtue, the mother, the root, source, and foundation of all good."

Fasting is not a set of dietary laws or legalistic requirements. Rather, fasting accompanied by prayer, is a spiritual aid which disciplines the body and soul and enables them to strive together to bring the whole person closer to God, especially during the preparation periods of the great feasts of the Church.

The following are fast days and seasons:

1. The day before Epiphany - January 5.
2. The second Wednesday and Friday of the Triodion.
3. The last week before Great Lent, although dairy products may be eaten.
4. Great Lent.
5. Holy Week.
6. Holy Apostles Lent - Monday after the week following Pentecost through June 29. Since Pentecost is a moveable feastday of the Church this Lenten period may vary in time, refer to your Church Calendar.
7. Dormition of the Mother of God Lent - August 1 through August 14.
8. Beheading of St. John the Baptist - August 29.
9. Exaltation of the Holy Cross - September 14.
10. Christmas Lent - November 15 through December 24.
11. All Wednesdays and Fridays, except those noted below.

The following are fast days on which fish is allowed:

1. Annunciation Day - March 25. If, however, Annunciation Day does not come during Great Lent, then the day is completely fast-free.
2. Palm Sunday.
3. Transfiguration of our Lord - August 6.

The following days are completely fast-free:

1. The first week of the Triodion, including Wednesday and Friday.
2. Easter Week (Diakainisimos or Bright Week).
3. The week following Pentecost.
4. December 25 through January 4.