

THE NATIVITY FAST

"The Nativity Forty-day Fast represents the fast undertaken by Moses, who, having fasted for forty days and forty nights, received the Commandments of God, written on stone tablets. And we, fasting for forty days, will reflect upon and receive from the Virgin, the living Word - not written upon stone - but born, incarnate, and we will commune of His Divine Body." - ST. SYMEON OF THESSALONIKI

The Orthodox Church prepares its faithful to welcome Christmas in a worthy manner by means of a 40-day Nativity fast, which lasts from November 15th to December 25th.

Please note the following guidelines for fasting: On most days of the Fast we abstain from Meat & Meat Products, as well as Dairy Products. There's no abstinence of Fish, Shellfish, Vegetables & Vegetable Products, Olive Oil, Fruit & Wine. On Wednesdays & Fridays during the Fast, we abstain from Meat & Meat Products, Dairy Products, Fish, Olive Oil & Wine. There's no abstinence of Shellfish, Vegetables, Vegetable Products, & Fruit.

The Thanksgiving Holiday: Several years ago, responding to the request of the faithful under its jurisdiction in America, the Patriarchate of Constantinople applying "*economia*", discreetly granted its blessing for those who live in America to choose to pause the fast on Thanksgiving Day while focusing on the unity of the family and the "*eucharistic*" aspects of this feast, but quickly return to the observance of the fast immediately afterwards. The non-Orthodox cultural norm is thus transformed through our theology and this pastoral approach to a positive element for the strengthening of family bonds, while keeping with the necessity of our spiritual asceticism of fasting.

As you observe Thanksgiving Day, may the remembrance of all of the Lord's blessings be on your hearts and minds. May this be a day of giving thanks to God for His grace, and may His abundant blessings be on each of you and your families. Through your thanksgiving and your joy in His blessings may you offer a witness to the world of the life and love we have in Him.

Have a joyful Thanksgiving Day and a blessed Nativity Fast!

BASIC FASTING GUIDELINES

When to fast. There is the weekly fast of every Wednesday and Friday. There is the Day before Theophany. We fast on the feast days of the Exaltation of the Cross (Sep 14) and the Beheading of John the Baptist (Aug 29). Then there are five fasting periods. These are Great Lent, Holy Week, Fast of the Apostles, Fast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (August 1-14), Fast of Nativity of Christ (November 15- December 24). In modern usage a strict observance of this fast commences after December 12. (The

celebration of the Marriage Service which is generally prohibited during fasting periods is permitted between November 15 and December 12).

How to fast. The strictest way of fasting to abstain from all food.

The next level is to abstain from all animal products such as meat and dairy products along with oil and wine.

Then the next level is to allow wine and oil.

Then to allow fish.

The most common fast today is to abstain from the eating of meat.

This common fast is not what the tradition of the church suggests we do, but it may be a starting point as we are so attached to eating of meat in our current culture compared to the earlier periods of Church history when eating meat was considered a luxury.

For us today, this may be a difficult first step to take but don't end here. We begin our practice of fasting with the weekly fast on Wednesday and Friday. This makes us think during the week about our purpose to come closer to God. It reinforces our prayer life. It also prepares us for participating in the sacrament of Holy Communion each Sunday which will further support our spiritual growth. The Church publishes a calendar which has the traditional guidelines for each day on fasting. Once you have succeeded in abstaining from meat on these days then you can look at this calendar and make your fast stricter.

For a **Short Guide on Fasting** click [HERE](#)