

Fasting in the Orthodox Church

In order to help you to fast during Lent and throughout the year, the following is a brief description of fasting and abstinence in terms of categories of food as well as times of abstinence of foods from the various categories. The purpose of this outline of the regulations on fasting is to help educate you on fasting and abstinence in general. This is the “letter of the law”. It is important for you and your family to participate in the “spirit of the law”, working this out with your priest and family for your salvation.

Fasting literally means not eating. In monasteries, one fasts during the day, taking one light meal of abstinence in the late afternoon.

Abstinence is abstaining from certain types of food.

Categories of Foods:

Category I Meat and Meat Products (includes beef, pork, chicken, etc., as well as items which have beef gelatin [such as some commercial brands of gelatin], lard [some commercial breads and crackers], etc.)

Category II Dairy Products (includes butter, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, etc., as well as items containing dairy whey [some commercial breads and margarine], milk extracts, etc.)

Category III Fish (includes sardines, tuna, trout, bass, shark, etc., but not shellfish such as lobster, shrimp, crab, oysters, scallops, clams, mussels, etc.)

Category IV Olive Oil (according to some, this extends to all oil) and **Wine** (which includes all alcoholic beverages such as whiskey, beer, etc.)

Foods Permitted throughout the Year:

Shellfish (such as lobster, shrimp, crab, oysters, scallops, clams, mussels, squid, etc.)

Vegetables, Vegetable products and Fruit (including grains [rice, wheat, flour, pasta (non-egg pasta), etc.] bread [without dairy or eggs], vegetable gelatins, etc.)

Fasting during Great Lent

Weekdays during Lent Abstinence of Categories I, II, III, & IV
No Abstinence of Shellfish, Fruit, Vegetables and Vegetable products During, this period, we should regulate both the amount of food we consume as well as the frequency of eating. In ancient times, one would fast during the day, taking one meal of abstinence in the late afternoon. In modern practice, at meal times, smaller quantities than normal may be eaten and no food eaten between meals.

Saturdays & Sundays during Lent Abstinence of Categories I, II, & III
No Abstinence of Category IV or of Shellfish, Fruit, Vegetables and Vegetable products. On Saturdays (except Great Saturday on which a strict fast is kept) and Sundays during the Great Fast, the quantity and frequency of meals are not restricted.

Feast of the Annunciation (3/25) and Palm Sunday Abstinence of Categories I & II
No Abstinence of Categories III & IV or of Shellfish, Fruit, Vegetables and Vegetable products. On these Great Feasts of the Church, the quantity and frequency of meals are not restricted.

Fasting during the year:

Wednesdays & Fridays Abstinence of Categories I, II, III, & IV
No Abstinence of Shellfish, Fruit, Vegetables and Vegetable products.

Fasting Prior to receiving Holy Communion (throughout the year)

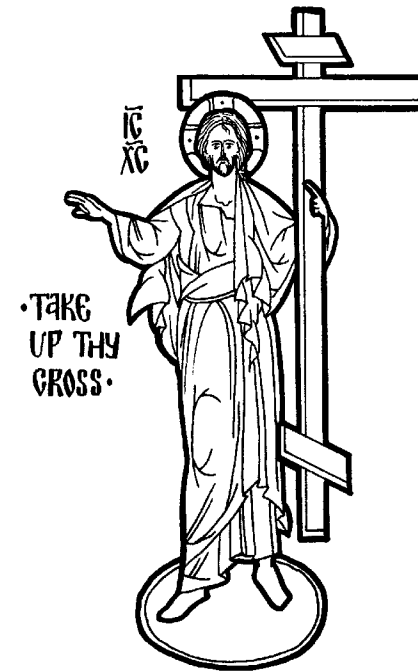
Sundays & Morning Liturgies Complete fast from all food and drink from bedtime on Saturday evening (this includes coffee, tea, etc.). Ideally, Saturday evening should be a quiet time of prayer and preparation for communion.

Evening Liturgies Complete fast from all food and drink from noon (or 6 hours before the Liturgy).

Fasting Seasons and Days in the Orthodox Church *(not an exhaustive list)*

Wednesdays & Fridays	Abstinence of Categories I, II, III, & IV No Abstinence of Shellfish, Fruit, Vegetables and Vegetable products.
Cheesefare Week	One week prior to the beginning of Great Lent. Abstinence of Category 1.
Great Lent	Forty Days prior to Holy Week, beginning on Pure Monday.
Apostle's Fast	Begins on the Monday after All Saints Day (Sunday after Pentecost) and lasts until the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul on June 29. The fasting regulations are slightly less than that of Great Lent.
Dormition Fast	August 1-14 inclusive. Broken on the Feast of the Dormition on August 15. The fasting regulations follow that of Great Lent, with the exception of the Feast of Transfiguration (August 6) on which Categories III & IV are allowed.
Beheading of John the Baptist August 29	A strict fast day on whatever day of the week it occurs. Abstinence of Categories I, II, III, & IV.
Elevation of the Holy Cross September 14	A strict fast day on whatever day of the week it occurs. Abstinence of Categories I, II, III, & IV.
Advent Fast	November 15-December 24 inclusive. The fasting regulations follows that of Great Lent, with the exception that the regulations are a bit more relaxed up until December 20 with Categories III & IV allowed on all days except Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
Eve of Christmas and Epiphany Dec. 24 & Jan. 5	A strict fast day on whatever day of the week it occurs. Abstinence of Categories I, II, III, & IV.

A Guide to Fasting and Abstinence in the Orthodox Church



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