

LITURGICAL LIFE

I. FEAST DAYS

PASCHA

The celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord, Holy Pascha (Passover), is the greatest feast of the Church. It is the centre of the entire liturgical year and the cycle of all moveable feasts. However, the cycle of immovable feasts begins with each new liturgical year, on September 1.

TWELVE GREAT FEASTS

In addition to Holy Pascha, there are twelve great feasts celebrated by the Church every year. Eight feasts are celebrated in honour of our Lord; and four feasts are celebrated in honour of the Mother of God. According to the Gregorian (Julian) calendars, they are as follows:

- Sept 8 (21) • The Nativity of Mary, the Mother of God.
- Sept 14 (27) • The Universal Exaltation of the Holy and Precious Cross.
- Nov 21 (Dec 2) • The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple.
- Dec 25 (Jan 7) • Christmas (Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ).
- Jan 6 (19) • Holy Theophany (Baptism of our Lord in the River Jordan and the Manifestation of the Trinity).
- Feb 2 (15) • The Encounter of the Lord in the Temple (Presentation).
- Mar 25 (Apr 7) • The Annunciation.
 - Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Holy Pascha).
 - The Ascension of our Lord (forty days after Pascha).
 - Pentecost - The Descent of the Holy Spirit - (fifty days after Holy Pascha).
- Aug 6 (19) • The Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Aug 15 (28) • The Dormition (The Falling Asleep) of the Mother of God.

HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

While the tradition of the Eastern Churches stresses the importance of the Twelve Feasts, the celebration of the following holy days (with participation in the Divine Liturgy) constitute a "minimum" obligation for all Eastern Catholics beyond Sundays:

- Dec 25 (Jan 7) • Christmas (the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ).
- Jan 6 (19) • Theophany (Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the river Jordan).
- Mar 25 (Apr 7) • The Annunciation.
 - Ascension of our Lord (forty days after Holy Pascha).
- Jun 29 (Jul 12) • The Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.
- Aug 15 (28) • The Dormition (Falling Asleep) of the Mother of God.

II. FASTING

WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS

Fasting on Fridays is obligatory. The minimum prescription is to abstain from all meat products.

- Traditionally, both Wednesdays and Fridays are days of fasting, unless some important feast takes precedence.
- The fast on Wednesday is in memory of the betrayal of our Lord.
- The fast on Friday is in remembrance of His Passion and Death upon the Cross.

SPECIAL FAST DAYS

The minimum prescription for fasting on the following fast days is to abstain from all meat products and dairy products.

Sept 14 (27)	• The Elevation of the Holy and Precious Cross.
Dec 24 (Jan 6)	• The Eve of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Jan 5 (18)	• The Eve of the Theophany.
Aug 29 (Sept 11)	• The Beheading of St. John the Baptist.

THE EUCHARISTIC FAST

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

- In preparation for Holy Communion, the minimum prescription for fasting is one hour of abstinence from all food and drink prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Water is permitted.
- Traditionally, the Eucharistic Fast begins at midnight, prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and Holy Communion.
- The experience of hunger reminds us of our need for God and for the Bread that comes down from heaven.

TIMES OF NO FASTING

There are four times during the year (zahalnytsi), during which we do not fast, due to the nature of these particular seasons. They are:

- The period from Christmas to Theophany, Dec 25 (Jan 7) to Jan 4 (17) inclusive;
- Before the Great Fast, from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee to the Sunday of the Prodigal Son;
- From Holy Pascha (Easter Sunday) to Thomas Sunday;
- From Pentecost to the following Sunday of All Saints;
- Saturdays (excepting Holy Saturday);
- Sundays (excepting the Exaltation of the Cross, if it falls on a Sunday);
- During liturgical fasts such as Great Lent, we may continue to abstain from certain foods (or things) on Saturdays and Sundays, without fasting.

LITURGICAL FASTS

There are four fast periods during the liturgical year. Minimal obligations for fasting are given only for Great Lent. However, the faithful are encouraged to observe - to the best of their ability - all four traditional periods of fasting.

The Great Fast and Holy Week

The Great Fast is a forty day period before Palm Sunday, beginning on the Monday after Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese-Fare) and ending on Friday evening before Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday.

Holy Week is a special Fast in honour of our Lord's Passion. It lasts from the evening of Palm Sunday until Holy Saturday inclusive. This Fast Period concludes with the festive celebration of Holy Pascha.

Eastern Catholics are obligated to abstain from all meat and dairy products on the first day of the Great Fast (Monday) and on Holy Friday. This is the minimum prescription.

For the weekdays of the Great Fast, the minimum prescription for Eastern Catholics is abstinence from meat products on Fridays.

Traditionally, for the entire period of the Great Fast including Sundays, Christians abstained from meat products beginning Monday, after Judgment Sunday (Meat-fare), and from all dairy products beginning Monday, after Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese-fare). This strict fast would continue until Holy Saturday inclusive.

The Fast of the Holy Apostles

The Fast of the Holy Apostles begins on Monday after All Saints Sunday (the First Sunday after Pentecost) and lasts until June 28 (July 11) inclusive. It concludes with the joyous celebration of the Feast of the Holy

Apostles Peter and Paul, a holy day of obligation. This Fast varies in length according to the date of Pascha.

The Dormition Fast

The Dormition Fast is dedicated to the Mother of God. It begins on August 1 (14) and continues until August 14 (27) inclusive. It concludes with the celebration of the Feast of the Dormition (Falling Asleep) of the Mother of God, a holy day of obligation.

The Advent Fast

The Advent Fast (also called the Nativity Fast, or St. Philip's Fast) begins on November 15 (28), the day after the feast of St. Philip, and lasts until December 24 (January 6) inclusive. It concludes with the festive celebration of Christmas, the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Flesh, a holy day of obligation.

For Eastern Catholics, the minimum prescription for the Advent Fast is to abstain from all meat and daily products on Christmas Eve, Dec 24 (Jan 6).

CHRISTIAN GREETINGS

Daily Greeting:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Glory forever!

At the distribution of antidoron and the anointing with oil (myrovannia):

Christ is among us!

He is and will be!

During the Christmas Season, from Christmas to the Eve of the Encounter:

Christ is born!

Glorify Him!

During the Easter Season, from Holy Pascha to the Eve of Ascension Thursday:

Christ is risen!

Truly He is risen!