

Rule for Fasting and Abstinence

Fasting for the Eastern Catholic means there is no consumption of solid food from midnight until noon. Abstinence is refraining from eating meat, dairy products, eggs, alcohol, fish and olive oil. Three approaches to fasting and abstinence have developed. These might be called 1) the Law - that is required of us, 2) the Tradition - that which devout followers adhere to, and 3) the Compromise - that which is most widely accepted.

The Law - that which is required

- The first day of Great Lent is a day of fast and abstinence (February 15, 2010)
- All Fridays of Great Lent are days of abstinence from meat
- Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence (April 2, 2010)

The Tradition - that which the devout follow

- Every day of Great Lent is a day of fast and abstinence
- On Saturday and Sunday fish, wine and olive oil are permitted.
- Saturday and Sunday are not Fast days - food may be taken at any time.
- Certain feast days are treated like Saturday and Sunday

Customary Compromises

- The First, Middle and Last weeks of Great Lent are kept strictly. The other weeks are relaxed.
- Abstinence from meat on all days of Lent.
- Abstinence from meat on all Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent.

The idea of “fasting and abstinence” is to gain self control, a simplification of life-style, solidarity with the poor and hungry, and to return to Paradise. As such fasting and abstinence should always be focused towards making life simpler not more complicated. Additionally there is a liturgical fasting with no Divine Liturgy on weekdays. The daily prayers are emphasized. Special services are offered on the various days of the week: Wednesday is the presanctified Liturgy, Fridays is the Akathist Hymn, etc.

Fasting

Fasting in our Eastern Church holds a special place in our Lenten practice. We read in Holy Scripture about certain demons that can only be chased out by ‘prayer and fasting’. (Mark 9:29) Some of our Eastern Fathers speak about the demons or evil passions that we struggle with on our Christian walk. [Gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, despondency, envy, sloth, pride, & vain glory] They are also known as the Seven Capital or Deadly Sins. Fasting helps us both identify and overcome these demons (vices) in our lives. During Great Lent we practice the discipline of fasting with greater intensity and greater zeal.