

FASTS AND FEASTS

The original fasting tradition of the Western Church restricts both the type of food taken (called **abstinence**) and the time and number of meals (called **fasting**).

Abstinence. There is one type of abstinence which is observed all fast days and fast seasons: no meat, lard, meat-broth, eggs, or dairy products (milk, cheese, butter). Fish, shellfish, oil, and wine are always allowed.

Fast Days. No food at all is taken until after 3 p.m.—when Christ's suffering on the Cross ended. Only one meal is taken, no snacks. However, a repast of a piece of bread and a cup of wine is allowed later in the evening in addition to the meal.

Fast "Seasons" vs. Fast "Days." A fast season is one during which abstinence is continually kept. A fast day is one on which no meal is taken except one, and that after 3 p.m. All fast days are abstinence days.

Stations. Every Wednesday and Friday in the year are fast days except for a few exceptions noted in the annual calendar. Because the church day begins at sundown, no meat or dairy products are eaten from Tuesday night to Wednesday night, nor from Thursday night to Friday night, and only one meal is taken, after 3 p.m. If a Double Feast falls on a station, there is only abstinence, not a full fast (except in Great Lent).

Vigils. Fasted vigils are those before St. Andrew (vigil is 29 Nov.), Nativity (24 Dec.), Theophany (5 Jan.), Pascha, Pentecost (abstinence only), St. John Baptist (23 June), Sts. Peter and Paul (28 June), St. Laurence (9 Aug.), Dormition (14 Aug.), Nativity of Our Lady (7 Sept.), St. Matthew (20 Sept.), Sts. Simon and Jude (27 Oct.), and All Saints (31 Oct.). (Dates are given according to the Church calendar, not the civil calendar.)

Ember Days. To the Wednesday and Friday after: (1) First Sunday in Lent; (2) Trinity Sunday; (3) Holy Cross (14 Sept.); and (4) St. Lucy (13 Dec.) the next day, Saturday, is added as a day of abstinence. On these days we give alms, the church services are longer, and clergy are ordained.

Rogations. The three days before Ascension and Apr. 25 (unless Apr. 25 falls on a Saturday or Sunday) are Rogation Days, observed with abstinence. This tradition was ordained for England by the national Synod of the Orthodox held at Clovesho.

Saturdays and Sundays. These are never kept with full fasting, except that Holy Saturday, the day before Pascha, is fasted. Saturdays and Sundays which fall during fast seasons (Great Lent, Apostles' Fast, Nativity Fast) are abstinence days.

Apostles' Fast. This fast and that of the Nativity were confirmed for England by St. Theodore of Canterbury but were standard all over Western Europe already. From the Monday after Trinity Sunday, to June 28 (vigil of Sts. Peter & Paul), we abstain continuously, and on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, we also fast.

Nativity Fast. This season begins on Nov. 15 and is kept just like the Apostles' Fast until Dec. 13 (St. Lucy), when it begins to be observed with the rigour of Great Lent. The fast ends with Liturgy on the morning of Dec. 25 (3rd Mass of Nativity).

Great Lent. This is the strictest fast season of the year. Clergy and monastics begin it on Shrove Monday, all others begin two days later, upon Ash Wednesday. Those who can, take no food till Vespers (about 6 p.m., or sundown). The fast ends with Liturgy the morning of Pascha. Every weekday in Lent is a fast day, and candy is not allowed. On weekdays of Great Lent, the Liturgy is a Presanctified (p. 125).

Fast-Free Seasons. No day is fasted from Dec. 25 (Nativity) to Jan. 4 inclusive. No day is fasted from Pascha to the following Sunday, nor from Pentecost to the following Sunday. Otherwise, between Pascha and Pentecost, Wednesday and Friday are kept as abstinence, not fast, days.

Communion Fast. See p. ix. This fast applies to all who attend Liturgy, not only the communicants. Holy Communion, not a worldly food, does not break a fast.

Occasional Fasts. Fasting is observed before Holy Baptism, Ordination, Chrismation, icon-painting, building a church, and whenever the local Bishop orders fasting in his diocese to some end. Those who wish to fast above and beyond the church custom should ask their spiritual father for a blessing to do so.

Exemptions. Universal and local canons exempt from the full rigour of fasting: weak people, sick people, the aged, children, and anyone in strong necessity.

Prayer. Fasting and prayer are like the two wings of a bird. If one is missing, we cannot fly. Prayer should be increased during a fast. Prayers for dedicating your fast to the Lord are on p. qq.

Double Feasts. If a Double Feast falls on a Wednesday or Friday, there is abstinence, but not a full fast (except in Great Lent). Double Feasts are shown with capital letters in the Calendar on the next page. There are differing ranks of Doubles:

Principal Doubles are the Nativity (25 Dec.), Theophany (6 Jan.), Pascha, Ascension, Pentecost, Dormition (15 Aug.), Feast of the local church's consecration, and Feast of the local Patron Saint.

Greater Doubles are the Purification or Hypopante Domini (2 Feb.), Trinity Sunday, Nativity of St. Mary (8 Sept.), All Saints (1 Nov.), and Holy Relics (Oct. 15). In England, St. George (23 Apr.) is a Greater Double Feast.

Lesser Doubles are St. Stephen (26 Dec.), St. John (27 Dec.), Holy Innocents (28 Dec.), Circumcision (1 Jan.), Annunciation (25 Mar.), the three days after Pascha, Sunday after Pascha, the three days after Pentecost, Finding of the Holy Cross (3 May), Nativity of St. John Baptist (24 June), Sts. Peter and Paul (29 June), Transfiguration (6 Aug.), Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 Sept.), Conception of the Mother of God (8 Dec.), St. Michael and All Angels (29 Sept.), Presentation of Our Lady (21 Nov.), and Holy Apostle Andrew (30 Nov.).

Inferior Doubles are Holy Apostle Thomas (21 Dec.), Holy Apostle Matthias (24 or 25 Feb.), St. Gregory the Great (12 Mar.), St. Ambrose (4 Apr.), St. George (23 Apr.; in England, a Greater Double), St. Mark (25 Apr.), Sts. Philip and James (1 May), St. Augustine of Canterbury (26 May), Holy Apostle James (25 July), St. Bartholomew (24 Aug.), St. Augustine of Africa (28 Aug.), Holy Apostle Matthew (21 Sept.), St. Jerome (30 Sept.), St. Luke (18 Oct), and Holy Apostles Simon and Jude (28 Oct.).