



PHILIP'S FAST
(Pylypivka)

Philip's Fast (Pylypivka), the pre-Christmas fast, begins today. The Church begins the Fast the day after the feast of the Holy and All-Praiseworthy Apostle Philip. The Fast is a period of 40 days of spiritual preparation for the celebration of the Nativity/Theophany cycle of the liturgical (Church) year.

Historically, the Philip's Fast (Pylypivka) was a period of strict fasting on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday – days of strict fasting without meat, dairy products or oil (in Slavic countries).

Now the bishops have indicated that the Fast is lessened a bit also to include fasting, works of penance and doing charitable work. BUT today we observe the Fast on Wednesdays and Fridays by an abstention from meat and foods that contain these ingredients.

The Byzantine-Ukrainian Catholic Church teaches her faithful that “Penitential fasting practices, repentance and abstinence that aim to satisfy the sins committed and to achieve the highest level of perfection is the oldest tradition in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church” (CCEO: 882, § 1).

Recall, the Byzantine-Ukrainian Catholic Church maintains that “Abstention from meat and meat products is to be observed on all Fridays of the year except for compact weeks, patronal feasts and the twelve major feasts” (CCEO: 882, § 4).

DEFINITIONS

Abstinence means that we do not eat a certain type of food, for example meat and oil, or any other foods that have that as an ingredient.

Fasting means that we eat less food. A general rule is that for a day of fast, the amount of food of the main meal is less than the other two meals combined.

Those exempt from fasting and abstinence are:

Children under the age of 14
Adults over the age of 60
those who are gravely ill
pregnant women
post-partum mothers
breast-feeding mothers
travellers (if travel time exceeds 8 hours)
those engaged in heavy labour
those who eat from the table of others
the poor who live from charity

On December 24, the Vigil of the Nativity, there is an abstention from meat, dairy and eggs, and foods that contain these ingredients.

When we arrive at the Nativity on December 25, until January 4, there is no fasting or abstinence.

We keep the Philip's Fast because we believe that doing so it can help us to better understand and appreciate all of God's saving plan for each of us.

PHILIP'S FAST: Me... Fast?!?

When You Fast: Nativity Fast Traditions for Byzantine-Ukrainian Catholics

The Byzantine-Ukrainian Catholic Church invites all to participate more fully in the central mysteries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through her calendar of feasts and fasts.

The feast of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (Christmas, December 25) is one of the great feasts of the Church year, celebrating the coming or advent of the Messiah (which in Hebrew means "He who is anointed by the Spirit" or in Greek, Christos), Jesus Christ. Christ was born into the world through the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary to offer us the wondrous gifts of salvation and theosis, our transformation into the likeness of God by sharing in His holiness through the energies of His grace.

Through the mystery we celebrate in the Nativity, we too are invited to become the children of God, sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. But this transformation does not occur overnight. Rather, it requires a rediscovery of the essential disciplines of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Training for Body, Mind and Spirit

For Saint Paul, Christian discipleship is like an athletic contest in an arena, which requires both training and effort. This is the root of the Christian understanding of asceticism and praxis.

By training our body, mind and spirit with the help of God's grace to seek and follow His commands and cultivate the virtues of the saints, in turn we help to extract the poison of corruption, sin and death within our own lives and to realize the saving and transforming power of Christ's life given to us in Holy Baptism.

The Church has traditionally taught four main ways to engage in Christian asceticism, no matter what our state in life. These are prayer, fasting, almsgiving and love. By actively engaging in these disciplines of discipleship during the time of the fast, we unite ourselves more perfectly to Christ as we celebrate the joy of the feast of His Nativity.

Christian Praxis Activities

In anticipation of the advent or "coming" of the Messiah that we celebrate during the feast of the Nativity on December 25, Byzantine-Ukrainian Catholics enter into a time of preparation known as the "Nativity Fast" (or "St. Philip's Fast" since it begins each year on the Feast of St. Philip the Apostle, November 15).

As with most periods of fast before the great feasts, the season of advent is a time for a deeper interior conversion to Christ by embracing the four forms of Christian praxis. Below we offer some suggestions for ways to put into practice the four forms of Christian praxis or asceticism during the Nativity fast.

Prayer

- > Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening in prayer each day.
- > Pray the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." 100 times a day.
- > Display an icon of the Nativity in the prayer corner of your house or room and spend 10 minutes each day meditating on the saving mysteries surrounding the story of Christ's Birth.
- > Receive the Mystery of Repentance (Confession) at least once during the fast.
- > Use the prayer guide with family or friends.

Fasting

- > Abstain from meat and dairy products on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays. Dairy is allowed on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but still no meat.
- > Fast from certain foods, such as soda, alcoholic beverages or candy.
- > With each meal, eat only an amount that is sufficient for nutritional needs, without feeling full.
- > Fast from select forms of entertainment (television, movies, radio, internet, novels, etc.).

Almsgiving

- > Give your time, talent and/or treasure to a parish outreach or a special charity.
- > Increase your parish tithe for the season.
- > Clean out your house of any excessive items or possessions and share them with the poor and needy.
- > Purchase gifts for homeless or needy children or families.

Charity

- > Meditate on the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes and identify one or two of these to put into practice each week.
- > Examine your conscience each night, asking for forgiveness from God or others as needed.
- > Find opportunities to share your faith with others.

Jesus Prayer Self-Retreat

A good way to live and pray this Holy Season of the Nativity Fast is to participate, at home, the reciting of the Jesus Prayer one hundred and fifty times a day