

The Lenten Fast

In the Orthodox Church fasting is not an individual practice, but a communal habit. In addition, the Lenten Fast does not offer suggestions on what to “give up.” Rather, it prescribes the common rule the faithful are to follow as they fast together. Individuals may choose to “give up” additional items during Lent, but such choices should not replace the Lenten fast, and should be made in consolation with individual’s spiritual father.

In Orthodox churches in the Western tradition, the Lenten Fast consists of the following:

- ✘ Fasting on all weekdays (Mon-Sat) in Lent
- ✘ Fasting and abstinence on all Fridays in Lent
- ✘ Fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday
- ✘ Fasting and abstinence on Ember Wednesday, Ember Friday and Ember Saturday in Lent. (*The Ember days are in the week after the First Sunday in Lent.*)

Those who, for medical or other legitimate reasons, find it difficult to observe the Lenten Fast should speak with their spiritual father concerning legitimate modifications in order to keep the spirit of the Fast.

NOTE

FASTING consists of not eating until after noon; and then eating only one full meal with a collation (about 1/4 of a meal) permitted as a second meal.

ABSTINENCE refers to refraining from flesh meat (pork, beef, chicken, etc.) and their juices or broths. Shell fish and fin fish as well as dairy products are permitted.

All Orthodox communicants and catechumens in the Western tradition are asked to follow these rules; however, only those between the ages of 21 and 60 are obligated to observe the fasts of the Church, and those who have completed their seventh year of age are bound to the law of abstinence.