

VARIOUS WAYS TO OBSERVE THE GREAT FAST

Our religious *tradition* encourages us to integrate some sort of *fasting* into our lives during the Great Fast. Why? To help us focus more intensely on our spiritual growth. Spirituality must not be viewed as something that does not concern the body. Spirituality is something that is made possible through and within the body. The desires and needs of the flesh can all too often overpower the spirit. Fasting is a means of restoring balance between soul and body - a means of bringing the flesh under the control and will of the mind and spirit.

Recommended Minimal Effort

- Abstain from meat and dairy products on the first day of the Fast (*February 15th*) and Great and Good Friday (*April 2nd*)
- Abstain from meat on **All Fridays** of Lent and Holy Saturday (*April 3rd*)

In order to enter into the spirit of the Great Fast this is seen as a minimal effort

A Strict Lenten Tradition

- Abstain from *meat products*, even weekends, the day after Meat Fare (*February 8th*) until after Easter services (*April 4th*)
- Abstain from *daily products*, even weekends, the day after Cheese Fare (*February 15th*) until after Easter services (*April 4th*)

This is seen as the most traditional way to observe the Great Fast

Українська Греко-Католицька Церква

Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church



Modified Strict Lenten Tradition

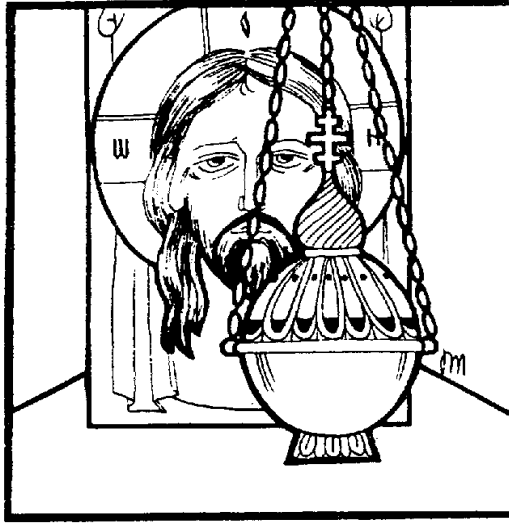
A *modified version* of the strict tradition calls for us, in addition to the *minimal effort* suggested, to *abstain from meat* on all Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent and all the days of Great and Holy Week (*March 29th to April 4th*) and pray more frequently.

However we observe the Great Fast, it should never be done out of a feeling of *obligation*. In order to benefit from this time, we have to freely embrace practices that can help us to spiritually grow (*the emphasis is placed on FREELY*).

As we have already seen in the weekends of preparation for the Great Fast, we have to *desire* to become more like Jesus - we have to *desire to* spiritually grow and want to return to our Heavenly Father's house.

There may be many reasons why a person can't observe the Great Fast in either a *minimal* or *strict* way (*i.e., age, health*). Your effort is something that must be between you and God. If we are honest and sincere with God, He accepts our decision on how we observe the Great Fast.

Our main purpose of the Great Fast is to build our relationship with God!



PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM

The single most important Lenten Prayer of the Easter Church is that of St. Ephrem. It typically is said at all services during the week-days of the Great Fast and at morning and evening prayer

O Lord, Master of my life, grant that I may not be infected with the spirit of slothfulness and discouragement, with the spirit of ambition and vain talk. (*Prostration*)

Grant instead to me your servant, the spirit of humility, the spirit of patience and neighborly love. (*Prostration*)

O Lord and King, grant me the grace to be aware of my sins and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed forever and ever. Amen. (*Prostration*)