

Fasting Days and Periods

Wednesdays and Fridays

The Orthodox fast on these weekdays throughout the year, except during the four fast-free weeks (the weeks after: the Nativity or Christmas, the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, Pascha, and Pentecost). The Wednesday fast recalls the day on which Judas betrayed Jesus to the Jewish Council, and Friday commemorates the day on which our Savior died on the Cross.

The Great Fast (or Great Lent)

The Orthodox fast from the Monday after Cheesefare Sunday through Holy Week, until after the resurrection Liturgy on Pascha. This is the strictest fast period in the Orthodox Church; no animal products, fish, wine, or olive oil are consumed during this fast. The exceptions are that wine and olive oil may be allowed on weekends, and fish is allowed on Palm Sunday. The fast is particularly strict during the first week of great Lent, as well as during Holy Week and especially on Holy Thursday, Holy Friday, and Holy Saturday.

The Apostles' Fast

This fast starts the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints (the first Sunday after Pentecost) and continues until the feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June). This fast is less severe than that of Great Lent, allowing fish on weekends, and on several feast days during the Fast. In addition, wine and olive oil are allowed on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Dormition Fast

This is a fourteen-day fasting period, from 1 August through 14 August. Fish is allowed on the Feast of the Transfiguration (6 August), and wine and olive oil are allowed on weekends.

The Nativity Fast

This forty-day fast period begins on 15 November and last through 24 December. Until 20 December, fish, olive oil and wine are allowed on weekends; from 20 through 24 December, only olive oil and wine are allowed on weekends. As during the Apostles' and Dormition Fasts, wine and olive oil are also allowed on Tuesdays and Thursdays

The Fast Before Holy Communion

Often misunderstood and misinterpreted, for those who receive Holy Communion frequently, the fast is from after the evening meal on the day before until after the Divine Liturgy on the day of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. The evening meal should be a modest one, not a feast or banquet, since excessive food intake causes lethargy and has a detrimental affect on the spiritual life. Following the meal, nothing is allowed until after receiving Holy Communion.

In the case of an evening Liturgy, such as the Presanctified Liturgy or the Vespereal Liturgies on the Feasts of the Nativity and the Theophany, it would be better to fast throughout the day, but it is permitted to fast from the midday meal or a mid-morning meal until after the Liturgy.