

Fasting According to the Ancient Discipline of the Byzantine Churches

With St. Paul, we urge all to leave the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. We all are sinners in need of *metanoia* (repentance) in order to be rid of sin, the passions, and everything that enslaves us with regard to food and drink, clothing, pleasure, jealousy, anger, hatred, pride, obstinacy, calumny, amusements, and superficiality. He who commits sin is not free, but is the slave of sin. Great Lent is a time of purity, holiness, prayer, and liberation from sin, evil and corruption: a time very pleasing to God, a time of salvation, and a spiritual springtime preparing us to shine with the light of the glorious Resurrection. We exhort the faithful to take on the discipline of fasting and abstinence that our fathers and ancestors always practiced. My brothers and sisters, “repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!”

What is the traditional fast and abstinence?

Fasting: is abstaining from all food and drink from midnight until Vespers (prayers at sunset). So, the person fasting eats only a single meal a day after Vespers or after the Liturgy of the Presanctified.

Abstinence: is abstaining from meat, dairy products, and eggs, while fish is permitted on the Annunciation and Palm Sunday. Wine and oil are permitted on certain days.

Days of fasting during Great Lent: Monday through Friday throughout Lent and Holy Week. Great and Holy Saturday is the only Saturday of the year on which one must keep a fast; otherwise it is forbidden to fast on Saturdays. Sunday, the day of Resurrection, is never a fast day.

Days of abstinence: the whole of Great Lent, including Sundays and all of Holy Week, except Annunciation and Palm Sunday when fish may be eaten.

Rule of fasting in the Eparchy of Newton

So as not to burden anyone’s conscience, the Holy Synod of the Melkite Church permits each eparchial bishop to ease the canonical obligations of fasting, while, at the same time, exhorts all the faithful to fast according to the traditional fast and abstinence.

The minimum rule that Melkites in the Eparchy of Newton must observe: **Fasting** from all food and drink from midnight until noon must be observed on the first day of Great Lent and on the last three days of Holy Week (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday). **Abstinence**, at least from meat, must be observed on every Friday of Great Lent. These requirements are the minimum. The faithful are encouraged to do more, such as also abstaining from meat every Wednesday or throughout the whole of Great Lent.

Fast and Abstinence as designed in CyberTypicon 2012

The days of fasting & Abstinence

- Wednesday and Friday of the Carnival Week
- Monday through Friday of the weeks of Lent and of Great and Holy Week with the exception of the Feast of the Annunciation
- Great and Holy Saturday
- Paramony of Christmas and Epiphany
 - Transferred to the preceding Friday if they fall on Saturday or Sunday

- Beheading of St. John the Baptist on August 29
- Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross on September 14

The days of abstinence

- Every Wednesday and Friday of the year with the following exception:
 - Easter to Ascension
 - Week of Pentecost
 - Twelve days between the Nativity and Theophany of our Lord
 - The week after the Sunday of the Pharisee
- All Saturdays and Sundays during Lent
- Annunciation fish may be eaten
- Palm Sunday fish may be eaten
- Before the Nativity beginning 15 November up until December 24
- For the Apostles, from Monday after the Feast of All Saints up until June 28
- For the Dormition from August 1 to August 14 except
 - The Feast of the Transfiguration