

# Fasting

Ss Peter & Paul Orthodox Cathedral, Detroit  
12 Oct 2019

## Fasting Seasons<sup>1</sup>

*Nativity (St. Philip's Fast)* - Nov. 15 through Dec. 24

*Meatfast* - Monday after the Sunday of Last Judgment through Cheesefare Sunday

*Great Lent & Holy Week* - 1st Monday of Great Lent through Great and Holy Saturday

*Apostles' (Peter & Paul) Fast* - June 11 through June 28

*Dormition (Theotokos) Fast* - Aug. 1 through Aug. 14

## Fast-Free Weeks

*Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ to Theophany Eve* - Dec. 25 through Jan. 4

*The week following the Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee* - 2nd Week of the Lenten Triodion

*Bright Week* - The week after Pascha until St Thomas Sunday

*Trinity Week* - The week after Pentecost until the Saturday before All Saints Sunday

## Fast Days

*The Wednesdays and Fridays of the Year, except for Fast-Free Weeks*

*The Eve of Theophany* - January 5

*The Beheading of St. John the Baptist* - August 29

*The Elevation of the Cross* - September 14

The primary aim of fasting is to make us *conscious of our dependence upon God*. If practiced seriously, the Lenten abstinence from food - particularly in the opening days - involves a considerable measure of real hunger, and also a feeling of tiredness and physical exhaustion. The purpose of this is to lead us in turn to a sense of inward brokenness and contrition; to bring us, that is, to the point where we appreciate the full force of Christ's statement, 'Without Me you can do nothing' (John 15: 5). If we always take our fill of food and drink, we easily grow overconfident in our own abilities, acquiring a false sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency. The observance of a physical fast undermines this sinful complacency. Stripping from us the specious assurance of the Pharisee - who fasted, it is true, but not in the right spirit - Lenten abstinence gives us the saving self-dissatisfaction of the Publican (Luke 18: 10-13). Such is the function of the hunger and the tiredness: to make us 'poor in spirit', aware of our helplessness and of our dependence on God's aid.

Yet it would be misleading to speak only of this element of weariness and hunger. Abstinence leads, not merely to this, but also to a sense of lightness, wakefulness, freedom and joy. Even if the fast proves debilitating at first, afterwards we find that it enables us to sleep less, to think more clearly, and to work more decisively. As many doctors acknowledge, periodical fasts contribute to bodily hygiene. While involving genuine self-denial, fasting does not seek to do

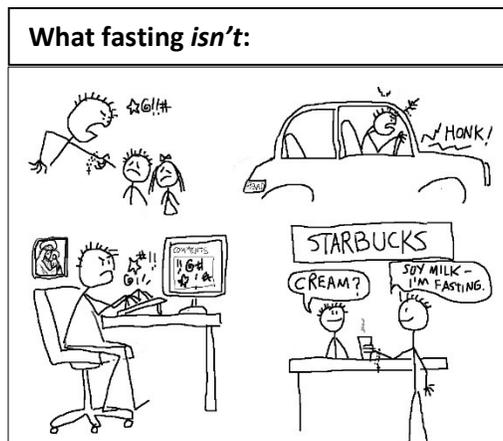


Image by Steve Robinson

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.oca.org/liturgics/outlines/fasting-fast-free-seasons-of-the-church>

