

Philip's Fast

by Father Michael O'Loughlin
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Philip's Fast begins today. This 40-day fast in preparation for Christmas, like the others (The Great Fast etc.), involves prayer (our communication with God takes on a tone of anticipation), fasting (denying ourselves certain earthly goods so that we are yearning for Christ's coming with our body as much as we are with our mind and spirit) and almsgiving (involving the wider community, especially the needy, in our preparations). We "empty ourselves of ourselves" through these penitential actions so that we may be "filled up" with Christ when He comes as an infant.

I've provided some resources to help you embrace this fasting season:

- Our Melkite brothers and sisters put together a great resource for walking through the Philip's Fast with a family. This was produced back in 2015, so some of the dates, like Thanksgiving, will be off by a few days, but it is great resource nonetheless. It is meant to be printed out, but it can be read from a screen as well. You can find the pdf file here: <https://melkite.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Christmas-Fast-in-the-Home.pdf>
- An article with ideas for family participation in the Phillip's Fast including a Byzantine Jesse Tree: <https://www.byzimom.com/post/november-15-observing-the-nativity-fast-abstaining-and-the-jesse-tree-devotion>
- Father David Petras published a book with spiritual reflections for each day of the Fast and all the way until Pre-Lent. "The Feast of Light-Meditations" is available in the gift shop or at https://www.amazon.com/Feast-Light-Meditations-David-Petras-ebook/dp/B07K2QM3P5/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=Petras+The+Feast+of+Light&qid=1605415311&sr=8-1

Suggestions for Intensifying/Adapting PRAYER

- Incorporate a tone of anticipation into your daily prayer. Here is the Troparion for the Pre-feast of the Nativity of our Lord: "Bethlehem, make ready, Eden has been opened for all. Ephrathah, prepare yourself, for the Tree of Life has blossomed from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb has become a spiritual paradise in which divinity was planted. If we partake of it, we shall live and not die like Adam. Christ is born to raise up the likeness that had fallen."
- You can also incorporate the scripture readings heard once a week at the Emmanuel Moleben. I've listed them below.
- The 15 Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120-134) are traditionally associated with pilgrimage. They can be prayed as we make this spiritual pilgrimage towards the Nativity of Our Lord.

Suggestions for intensifying/adapting FASTING:

- -The traditional and suggested regulations for fasting are as follows:{From the Typicon (The guide book for the prayer structure of the Church)}: "The 40 day preparation for the Feast of the Nativity (Christmas) begins Nov 15. During this fast it was the custom to observe a "strict abstinence" (no meat, dairy, wine or oil) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and a lesser

abstinence (wine and oil allowed) on Tuesday and Thursday. The fast is observed more strictly from Dec. 10 (in some traditions) or from Dec. 20 (in other traditions), with daily strict abstinence, and wine and oil only on Saturday and Sunday. The Ruthenian Metropolia has identified this period as a penitential season. This fast may be observed voluntarily, partially or in its entirety."

Suggestions for intensifying/adapting ALMSGIVING:

More intensely give your "time, talent and/or treasure" to those in need (almsgiving); Keep an eye on the bulletin for parish sponsored almsgiving opportunities. You can also call a friend or family member that you normally struggle to spend time with, and/or put a bit extra in the collection plate.

Week One

Old Testament Reading: Genesis 49: 2-8, 10

Epistle: James 5: 7-10

Gospel: Matthew 1: 1-17

Week Two

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 7: 10-14

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Gospel: Matthew 1: 18-24

Week Three

Old Testament Reading: Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25

Epistle: Philippians 4: 4-7

Gospel: Luke 1: 5-25

Week Four

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 23: 5-8

Epistle: Romans 1: 1-17

Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

Week Five

Old Testament Reading: Zephaniah 3: 14-18

Epistle: Romans 16: 25-27

Gospel: Luke 1: 39-45

Week Six

Old Testament Reading: 1 Samuel 1: 24-28

Epistle: Hebrews 10: 5-10

Gospel: Luke 1: 46-56

Week Seven

Old Testament Reading: Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24

Epistle: Titus 3: 4-7
Gospel: Luke 1: 57-66