

# THE CHURCH FASTS



*“Consecrate a fast,  
Call a sacred assembly”  
(Joel 1:14)*

## “FAST”

- **“Soam”**: صوم – *Hebrew*
  - Covering the mouth
  - Stopping the mouth from food and speech
- **Nesteuo** – *Greek (Bible)*
  - Abstain from doing anything – especially sin
- **Fast** – *English*
  - Abstinence – of tongue, mouth
- **Break-fast**
  - Breaking the rite of fasting, by eating in the morning



## CHURCH FAST

- Abstinance from food and drink for a specified period, beginning at midnight, and breaking the fast with light meals, free from animal products



## THE FIRST BIBLICAL FASTS

- In the Garden of Eden
  - God ordered Adam and Eve to eat of all trees except one:
  - *“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat ; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat’ ” (Gen 2:16-17)*
- After the Fall
  - God permitted man to eat only vegetarian food and herbs:
  - *“You shall eat the herb of the field” (Gen 3:18)*
- Meat was not allowed until after the flood (Gen 9)



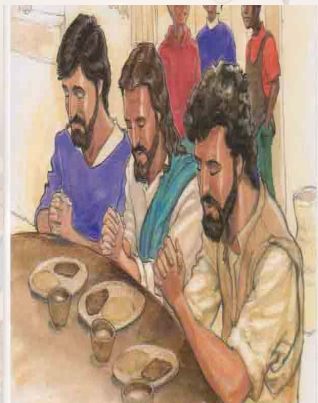
## THE CHURCH FASTS

- General (congregational) fasts
- Preparatory fasts for sacraments
- Special fasts
- Personal fasts



## GENERAL (CONGREGATIONAL) FASTS

- Wednesdays and Fridays
- Advent
- Nineveh's Fast
- Holy Great Fast
- Apostles' Fast
- Virgin's Fast
- Paramoun





## LEVELS OF GENERAL FASTS

- Level 1:
  - Observed with strict ascetism and abstinence
  - No seafood is allowed
    - Wednesdays and Fridays
    - Nineveh's Fast
    - Great Fast
    - Holy Pascha Week
    - Paramoun



## LEVELS OF GENERAL FASTS

- Level 2:
  - Less strict than level 1
  - Seafood is allowed
    - Advent
    - Apostles' Fast
- Level 3:
  - Originally not mandated by the church as general fast
  - Seafood is allowed
    - Virgin's Fast

## WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS

- Level 1 Fast
- Strict ascetism
- Abstinence until the ninth hour (3 PM).
- Without seafood
- Established in the Apostolic age
- Every week, except:
  - Holy Fifty Days
  - Major Feast of the Lord
- Wednesday recalls the betrayal of Christ
- Friday recalls the Crucifixion.



## ADVENT FAST

- Level 2 Fast
- Abstinence until the ninth hour (3 PM).
- Seafood is allowed
- Joyful fast – Kiahk praises
- 43 days
  - 40 days – Moses' fast to receive the word of God – the Ten Commandments
    - We fast like Moses to receive the Word of God
  - 3 days – for the moving of the Mountain of Mokkatam
  - Concluded with the Feast of Nativity (29 Kiahk)



## NINEVEH'S FAST

- Level 1 Fast
- Strict ascetism
- Abstinenace until sunset (6 PM).
- Without seafood
- Fast of repentance
- 3 days
  - Established by the Syrian Orthodox
  - Mandated by Pope Abraam Ibn Zaraa
  - Commemorates the fast of the people of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah
  - Occurs two weeks before the Great Fast



## HOLY GREAT FAST

- *The holiest of the fasts*
- Level 1 Fast
- Strict ascetism
- Abstinenace until sunset (6 PM).
- Without seafood
- Fast of repentance



## HOLY GREAT FAST

- 55 days
  - Preparation week
    - To prepare for the Holy 40 days
    - To replace the Saturdays of the 40 days, on which there is no abstinence
  - 40-day fast commemorating Christ's fasting on the mountain
    - Originally fasted immediately after the Feast of Epiphany
    - Pope Demetrious I united it with the Pascha week
  - Holy Pascha week



## HOLY PASCHA WEEK

- *The holiest week of the year*
- Level 1 Fast
- Strict ascetism
- All six days are fasted, including Saturday
- Concluded on the seventh day (Resurrection Sunday) at the crowing of the cock.
- Bright Saturday is the only Saturday fasted with abstinence
  - All other Saturdays are without abstaining because Saturday signifies the day on which the Lord rested.
  - This Saturday is fasted because the Lord was buried.
  - According to rites, Liturgy of Bright Saturday should end immediately before sunset.

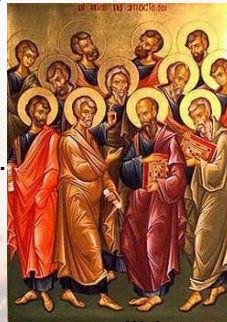
## HOLY PASCHA WEEK

- *“During these 6 days (Pascal Week), you eat only bread and salt with water. No meat or wine shall be consumed in these six days, because they are days of sorrow. As for Friday and Saturday, those who can, should fast them together as one day.”*  
(Awlaad al-Assal)



## APOSTLES' FAST

- Level 2 Fast
- Abstinance until the ninth hour (3 PM).
- Seafood is allowed
- Fast of service
- Commanded by the Lord:
  - *“But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.”* (Mark 2:20)
- 15 days – 49 days
  - Begins on the day following the Feast of Pentecost
  - Concluded with the Feast of the Apostles (5 Apip)





## VIRGIN'S FAST

- Level 3 Fast
- Seafood is allowed
- 15 days
  - Concluded with the feast of the assumption of her body into heaven on August 22 (16 Mesori)
  - Fasted by the Apostles to see the vision of the assumption of her body, as witnessed by St. Thomas
  - Originally fasted by ascetics and virgins
  - Church realized that everyone was fasting it, so it was added to the congregational fasts in the Council of Constantinople



## THE PARAMOUN

- “Paramino” – Greek – to await/anticipate
- The day before the feast:
  - Nativity, Epiphany
- According to Apostolic Tradition:
  - Fasting until sunset
  - Great spiritual preparation
  - Strict ascetism and abstinence
  - Without seafood



## THE PARAMOUN

- According to synexarion of Tobah 10:
  - *If Nativity or Epiphany falls on Wednesday or Friday, the saintly apostles ordained that the believers eat all the food that one is permitted to eat during the Pentecostal days. They are feasts to the Lord. The Paramouni days are fasted to compensate for the feast days, so that we may have the blessings of both the fast and the feast.*
- The paramoun is to replace the breaking of the Wednesday and Friday fasts.

## PARAMOUN DAYS

- If the feast falls on:
  - Saturday-Friday: 1 day
  - Sunday: 2 days  
(Friday and Saturday)
  - Monday: 3 days  
(Friday, Saturday and Sunday)



## PREPARATORY FASTS FOR SACRAMENTS

- Baptism
  - According to the Apostolic Canons
    - The priest and the catechumen fast
- Holy Eucharist
  - At least nine hours from midnight
  - Special arrangements for children and ill, with consultation of the confession father
    - At least fasting during the liturgy
  - Fasting of marital relationships (Pope Cyril II)



## PREPARATORY FASTS FOR SACRAMENTS

- Holy Orders (Acts 14:23)
  - Fasting before the ordination
  - Fasting after the ordination
    - Priests: 40 days
    - Bishops: 1 year
- Holy Matrimony
  - Rite: Crowning Ceremony is prayed in the morning, after the raising of incense and before the Divine Liturgy
  - Three Days after the Sacrament (Tobit)
- Unction of the Sick
  - The sick person and his family fast before the unction



## SPECIAL FASTS

- Fasts for unusual reasons
- Fasts that the church sets for the whole congregation, for some unusual reason
- Example:
  - The 3-day fast declared by Pope Demetrius before moving the Mokkalam Mountain



## PERSONAL FASTS

- Optional
- For repentance, seeking God's help
- A person should consult his Father of Confession before vowing a personal fast
- The Father of Confession may set a personal fast for a person as an aid in worship or as chastisement for sin



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  - Great Fast
  - Holy Pascha Week
  - Paramoun
- Level 2:
  - Advent
  - Apostles' Fast
- Level 3:
  - Virgin's Fast