

Preparation for the Great Fast

Some general helpful suggestions

What is Fasting, in reference to food?

Fasting is abstaining from all food and drink till a specified time/hour.

Fasting is vegan foods only.

Fasting is minimizing portions.

Yet, periods of “fasting” as set by the Church, are not just times in which our diet changes...

Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving is a triune act: an offering to God. Our goals during the Great Fast should reflect this offering in its entirety.

Listed below are some goals to set for yourself, so that you may perfect this offering to God and have greater spiritual benefit and blessings during the Great Fast.

1. **Let go of everything** – Trust God and let go. He is above time, and if an opportunity that presents itself is from God, it will still be there after the Resurrection. Limit distractions and offer this time directly to Him. This includes...
 - Relationships – considering spouses; moving to next steps
 - Purchases – small and great; from food to homes
 - Employment – seeking promotions or even new jobs
 - *Conclusion: be wary of any opportunities that come during the Great Fast.*
2. **Be disciplined, it starts with the stomach**
 - Don't weaken the effects of fasting on discipline by cutting corners
 - Don't satisfy your appetite
 - Avoid imitation food substitutes
3. **Ask yourself: are you a stumbling block to others?**
 - Generally – how you behave, what you say, the way you dress... etc. can all make you a stumbling block to people
 - Specifically – are you being a stumbling block to a *specific person*, think about *who* you might be causing to stumble
4. **Focus on struggling against a specific sin**
 - There are many sins in our lives that we struggle with, as you struggle, pick one that is feasible to focus on during Lent, i.e., gossiping, lying, etc.
 - Pick one and pray **“By the grace of God, I will overcome this sin through fasting and prayer.”**
5. **Be aware of the things that take us and time away from God**
 - Social media
 - Binge-watching...Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, etc...
 - Games
 - A bad or distracting relationship

- Friends or family who bring you down
6. **Spend more time with God** – Once we eliminate those things that take up our time, we discover we have more time to spend with God
 - Increase Scripture reading
 - Attend more Liturgies
 - Read more spiritual books/texts
 7. **Focus on a virtue**
 - Choose one virtue to work towards gaining
 8. **Remember charity – almsgiving**
 - Take this time to take care of the poor and needy
 - Give until it hurts
 - Tithing, sure, but giving of your time as well
 9. **Fast on behalf of someone**
 - There are people who cannot fast...people with certain illnesses who cannot abstain or fast, elderly people, etc...
 - There are people who choose not to fast.... Those away from God or living in sin... etc.
 - Identify one person *by name* to fast on his/her behalf
 - Offer your fast, as the fast he/she would have been offering, and in prayer say, **“Lord, as you look upon me fasting, see ‘-name-’ fasting, too”**. *This point will be further discussed later in the fast.*