A Philip's Fast (Filipovka)
Message from Fr. Vasyl

For Christians following the new style of the Byzantine Calendar, November 15 is the official beginning of the forty-day period of fasting often called the Philips Fast, so called because it begins the day after the feast of the holy apostle Philip.

Unlike the western Advent, the Philips Fast is not multi-faceted in its focus. End-time themes happen on the Sunday previous to the beginning of the Great Fast, and on the first three days of Great and Holy Week (the days of the Bridegroom); the mission and preaching of John the Baptist is covered during the pre-festive days of the Theophany (days leading up to Jan. 6) and on the Sundays before and after Theophany.
Instead, what there are of propers (especially in the first five weeks of the Fast) are hymns that point forward to the celebration of the nativity of the Word-Made-Flesh, our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

When You Fast: Nativity Fast Traditions for Byzantine Catholics

The Byzantine Catholic Church invites all to participate more fully in the central mysteries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through her calendar of feasts and fasts.
The feast of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ (Christmas, December 25) is one of the great feasts of the Church year, celebrating the coming or advent of the Messiah (which in Hebrew means He who is anointed by the Spirit or in Greek, Christos), Jesus Christ. Christ was born into the world through the Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary to offer us the wondrous gifts of salvation and theosis, our transformation into the likeness of God by sharing in His holiness through the energies of His grace. Through the mystery we celebrate in the Nativity, we too are invited to become the children of God, sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. But this transformation does not occur overnight. Rather, it requires a rediscovery of the essential disciplines of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Training for Body, Mind and Spirit

For Saint Paul, Christian discipleship is like an athletic contest in an arena, which requires a lot training and effort. This is the root of the Christian understanding of asceticism and praxis.
By training our body, mind and spirit with the help God's grace to seek and follow His commands and cultivate the virtues of the saints, in turn we help to extract the poison of corruption, sin and death within our own lives and to realize the saving and transforming power of Christs life given to us in Holy Baptism.
The Church has traditionally taught four main ways to engage in Christian asceticism, no matter what our state in life. These are prayer, fasting, almsgiving and love. By actively engaging in these disciplines of discipleship during the time of the fast, we unite ourselves more perfectly to Christ as we celebrate the joy of the feast of His Nativity.

Christian Praxis Activities

In anticipation of the Advent or coming of the Messiah that we celebrate during the feast of the Nativity on December 25, Byzantine Christians enter into a time of preparation known as the Nativity Fast (or St. Philips Fast since it begins each year

on the Feast of St. Philip the Apostle, November 15).
As with most periods of fast before the great feasts, the season of Advent is a time for a deeper interior conversion to Christ by embracing the four forms of Christian praxis. Below we offer some suggestions for ways to put into practice the four forms of Christian praxis or asceticism during the Nativity fast.

Prayer

Spend at least 15 minutes in the morning and evening in prayer each day.
Pray the Jesus Prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.

Display an icon of the Nativity in the prayer corner of your house or room and spend 10 minutes each day meditating on the saving mysteries surrounding the story of Christ's Birth.
Receive the Mystery of Repentance (Confession) at least once during the fast.
Use the prayer guide with family or friends.

Fasting

As with the previous guidelines sent out, if you are looking to increase your fasting, along with prayer, one idea is to abstain from meat and dairy products on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays and allow Dairy on Tuesday and Thursday, but still no meat.
Fast from certain foods, such as soda, alcoholic beverages or candy.
With each meal, eat only an amount that is sufficient for nutritional needs, without feeling full.
Fast from select forms of entertainment (television, movies, radio, internet, novels, etc.).

Almsgiving

Give your time, talent and/or treasure to a parish outreach or a special charity.
Increase your parish tithe for the season.
Clean out your house of any excessive items or possessions and share them with the poor and needy.
Purchase gifts for homeless or needy children or families.

Love

Meditate on the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes and identify one or two of these to put into practice each week.
Examine your conscience each night, asking for forgiveness from God or others as needed.
Find opportunities to share your faith with others.