



The purpose of Great Lent is to prepare the faithful to not only commemorate, but to enter into the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. The totality of our lives as Byzantine Catholics centers around the Resurrection. Great Lent is intended to be a "workshop" where the character of the believer is spiritually uplifted and strengthened; where his life is rededicated to the principles and ideals of the Gospel; where fasting and prayer culminate in deep conviction of life; where apathy and disinterest turn into vigorous activities of faith and good works.

The three aspects of the Fast

According to Byzantine tradition, the discipline of the fast consists of three parts:

Corporal (bodily) fast, by which we give up certain foods, drinks and amusements, in order to break the hold that such things may have over us.

Spiritual or internal fast, by which we seek to turn from any sin, wickedness or evil habits in our lives, so that we may come into God's presence well-prepared to celebrate our Lord's Resurrection and our redemption.

Spiritual renewal, by which we seek a greater practice of the virtues, a deeper life of prayer, repentance for our sins, and a greater conversion (*metanoia*) of heart, which manifests itself in good works. All of these are oriented to a deeper union with God - *theosis*.

The Lenten discipline is summarized in the Prayer of Saint Ephrem the Syrian, which is recited by the clergy and faithful during the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts:

Lord and Master of my life,
spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair,
lust for power, and idle chatter.
Instead, bestow on me, your servant,
the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love.
Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins
and not judge my brothers and sisters;
for you are blessed forever and ever.
Amen

This prayer is often accompanied by prostrations - deep bows to the ground, made after each section of the Prayer of Saint Ephrem, or once at the end.

Every day when your family gathers together, light the candle and recite a prayer or the Prayer of St. Ephrem and may you grow closer to Jesus as you travel on your journey through Lent, the Passion, and the Resurrection.

God Bless