

Lents of the Church

What is Lent?

- The Holy lent in Orthodox tradition is a process and a spiritual exercise to reach out to God.
- It is a preparatory workshop for believers for spending more time in prayers, confession, forgiveness, kindness, humility, chastity along with holy traditions and scriptures.
- The period of Lent is a time of fasting. Fasting is more than just controlling food; rather it is considered an exercise of forgiveness, compassion and controlling one's emotions.

Canonical Lents of the Church

The church directs us to observe Wednesday and Friday of every week as lent days. The exception to this is the 18 days between three day lent and fifty day lent, fifty days after the Feast of Resurrection and Moranaya Feast days.

Wednesday is the day of Annunciation to the Mother of God and hence this day is observed as a day of the mothers and also observed as a day of mourning, as on this day, Judas Iscariot betrayed the Lord.

Friday lent is for remembering the persecution and sufferings of the Lord on this day of crucifixion. The church observes this day as a day of sorrow.

The Three Day Lent (Nineveh Lent)

This is a 3 day lent commemorating the repentance of Ninevites and remembering the three days that Prophet Jonah spent inside the belly of the fish. It is also compared to the three days that Jesus spent in Sheol between his crucifixion and resurrection.

The fast is observed for 3 days starting Monday three weeks before the commencement of the fifty day lent. It falls in January or February every year.

The Great Lent (Fifty Days Lent)

The Great Lent or fifty days lent is the oldest and the most important lent of the church. This lent is observed for fifty days, forty days as the Lord observed and ten days to remember his passion.

The main aim of this lent is preparation for the Feast of Resurrection. In order to avoid a break in the fasting, Holy Qurbana is celebrated only on Saturdays and Sundays during this lent. The other days are set apart for prayer, meditation, fasting and prostrations. Exemptions are Annunciation Day, Mid lent, Fortieth Friday of the Lent and Maundy Thursday.

Important Features of the Great Lent:

- Shubkono, Mid lent, Fortieth Friday, Sundays of the Lent

Apostles' Lent (Thirteen Day Lent)

This lent is observed in the name of the apostles numbering 12, plus one being the Lord. This Lent is related to the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. Every year this lent falls between June 16th and 29th.

Sacred tradition says that after having rejoiced for fifty days following the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, in order to prepare for their departure from Jerusalem to spread the Gospel, the Apostles began a fast with prayer to ask God to strengthen their resolve and to be with them in their missionary undertakings.

Fifteen Day Lent (Dormition Lent or Soonoyo Lent)

This feast commemorates the 'falling asleep' or death of Mary and her body being taken up into heaven. Every year, we celebrate this lent from August 1st to 15th. This lent ends on the day of the Feast of Dormition or Assumption of Mother Mary.

Twenty Five Day Lent (Advent or Eldo Lent)

This lent is observed in connection with the birth of Christ. Every year it falls between 1st and 25th December. It ends on the day of the Feast of Nativity.

This lent is observed as a time of spiritual cleansing, recollection and renewal to prepare for the birth of Christ. This lent symbolizes the expectation and the waiting of the Jews for the Messiah. At the birth of Jesus, the Jews could not identify that he was the awaited Messiah; this lent is a preparation for us to identify him as the Messiah.

*Taken from the OVBS (Intermediate) study material