



The Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia

November 12, 2021

The Nativity Fast

Dear to God,

Christ is in our midst! The Church in her wisdom gives us various periods of fasting for us to get back on the proper path. We drift away so easily from Christ and His teaching and consequently take on attitudes of the world around us. As we enter into the Nativity Fast let us, fast with our eyes by refraining from frivolous entertainment. Let us fast with our ears by turning away from course jesting, idle talk and gossip. Let us fast with our tongues by not talking about others but seeking to be reconciled.

St. John Chrysostom was asked why do we not see miracles in the Church today, like the early Church saw? He responded, ‘When he train our feet not to go to the theater, which was quite immoral in his day, but to bring us to Church, visit the sick or the prisoner, we healed the legs that were lame. I am certain he would say the same about refraining from casinos. When we taught the eyes not to look upon impure things, but to read the Holy Scriptures, we healed the eyes that were blind. When we train the hands not to be grasping and greedy, but generous with the poor, we healed the wither arm. When we train the tongue not to gossip and criticize, but to encourage, build up and give praise to God, we healed the tongue that was mute.’

The Nativity Fast is an opportunity to turn more fully to Christ by fasting not only from particular foods, but from sinful behaviors. As the prophet Isaiah says “cease to do evil and learn to do good.” As Christians, we are not simply called to abstain from sinful behavior, but to cultivate virtuous behavior. Let us use the time of the fast to visit the sick, the shut-ins, feed the hungry, clothe the naked and pray for our enemies.

I pray that our embracing the fast will help us to draw closer to the Lord and consequently closer to one another. Have a Blessed Nativity Fast! Be at peace within yourself and with one another.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

+ Mark

+ MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania



325 N. Walnut Street * Bath, Pennsylvania 18014-1201
Telephone: 484.281.3406 * <http://www.doepa.org> * Email: dioceseoepa@gmail.com
Chancellor: V. Rev. Raymond Martin Browne * Mobile: 570.906.1388
Diocesan Treasurer: Mark Linnehan * treasurer@doepa.org

“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee.” Augustine