



Ukrainian
Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton

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St. Philip's Fast



Пилипівка – Різдв'яний Піст

Why Do We Keep Philip's Fast?

By Steve Puluka

Unlike the Great Fast before the Feast of the Resurrection (Pascha), the Philipian fast is seldom known or practiced in the Byzantine Church. Often it is confused with the Roman Catholic practice of Advent.

Since the Nativity / Theophany events hold less importance than Pascha – the Feast of Feasts – the Resurrection, a detailed structure never evolved for the Philipian Fast. Yet the Philipian Fast is an ancient practice in preparation for the Incarnation and Theophany of the Lord Jesus Christ. This 40 day fast is important and should be preserved and practiced. The Philipian Fast can help us to better understand and appreciate God's saving plan.

Without the structure and public events to guide us, the practice of the Philipian Fast has gradually fallen off. Theologically, the birth and the public ministry of Christ are inextricably linked. The Philipian Fast was created to prepare us to receive Christ into the world and begin His public ministry. They are two sides of a single coin. The Philipian fast prepares us to receive the public ministry of Christ announced at Theophany.

On arriving at Bethlehem and the Nativity on December 25th, we begin to prepare for the Theophany. We do not stop at the Nativity. In our joy at God's arrival, we press forward and see the Theophany. With Theophany we experience the beginning of Christ's revelation to us of the mysteries of God. Most important of all, this event points out the Mystery of the Trinity, a mystery long hinted in the Old Testament.

O COME O COME EMMANUEL

O COME, O COME Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

REJOICE, REJOICE, O ISRAEL,
TO THEE SHALL COME EMMANUEL. (2X)

Прийди прийди Еммануїл
З неволі вирви Ізраїль
Тужать вони в ярмі чужім,
Аж Бог Син не з'явиться їм.

РАДІЙ РАДІЙ О ІЗРАЇЛЬ
НАРОДИТЬСЯ ЕММАНУЇЛЬ (2X)

The Pylypiwka Wreath



Along with fasting, prayer, Scripture reading, church attendance and participation in the sacraments, the practice of praying with a Pylypiwka wreath adds meaning and a sense of preparation to the fast. This can be practiced at home as well as at church.

The circle or wreath is a Christian symbol for God who is eternal (no beginning and no end). Evergreen branches symbolize eternal life of which Jesus came to make us partakers. The candles represent Christ who is the light of the world.

One candle is lit each week along with the appropriate prayers.

The first candle is pink to express our welcoming of the Good News.

The second candle is purple to symbolize service and sacrifice.

The third candle is yellow expressing the light of Christ's message.

The fourth candle is red signifying love.

The fifth candle is orange for faith and courage.

The sixth candle is green to signify hope.

The seventh candle is the Pascal candle (Larger candle), representing Christ. It is lit along with the other six on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

First Week of St. Philip's Fast

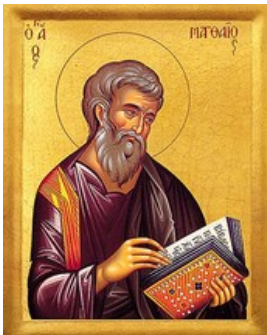
Feast of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew

Priest/Leader:

On the 14th of November our Church commemorates the feast of St. Philip. On the first day following this feast, we, as brothers and sisters in Christ, begin our journey towards the Nativity of Christ on Christmas Day with a period known as St. Philip's Fast (the Philipian Fast, Pylypivka).

As we can observe at this time of the year, the hours of daylight are decreasing, while the hours of darkness are increasing. So during the darkness of Philip's fast, we as a parish community are called by our Church to take the time to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ's light into our hearts. We are called to prepare for the rebirth of Christ in our lives.

To help us prepare our hearts to receive the great mystery of God's Son, the Light of the world, we remember the holy people of Scripture who walked this journey before us. We will honour them with lighted candles and ask them to pray with us and for us.



Timeline of St. Philip's Fast

Nov. 14. Feast of St. Philip

Nov. 15. Fast begins

Nov. 16 Feast of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist

Matthew

Nov. 21 Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple

Nov. 30 Feast of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called

Dec. 6 Feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

Dec. 9 Feast of the Conception of St. Anna, when she conceived the Most Holy Mother of God

Dec. 11-17 Sunday of our Holy Ancestors in Faith

Dec. 18-24 Sunday before the Nativity - The Genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Pre-Feast of the Birth of Our Lord

Kolach with a white candle is held in front of the Tetrapod facing the people:

Reader:

Lord God, as we celebrate this season of preparing for the birth of your Son, Jesus, the Bread of Life and the Light of the World, strengthen our faith, light our darkness and feed us with your divine life, so that we in turn may pass this life to others.

(Light white candle)

Priest/Leader:

The word "Bethlehem" means "the house of bread". Out of this house of bread we have received Jesus, the Bread of Life. Let us welcome Jesus, the Bread of Life and the Light of the World, symbolized by the bread and white candle. As the light shines brightly in front of each of you, I invite you to make the sign of the cross as a sign that we wish to:

- + proclaim the Good News
- + offer our service
- + bring light to others
- + perform loving acts
- + live our faith
- + bring hope and courage to others

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, You are the Guiding Light of my life!

Reader:

We look for the light and all is darkness,
We look for the brightness and walk in the dark.
Send forth your light and your truth,
Let these be my guide. (Isaiah 59:9; Ps.42)

Priest/Leader:

The first holy person we encounter at the beginning of this Philip's fast journey is the Evangelist St. Matthew whose feast is celebrated on November 16. St. Matthew is the first Evangelist to give us the infancy narratives in the Gospels, the first to announce the "Good News" of salvation.

St. Matthew brings us the joyful news of the Saviour and challenges us also to be heralds of joy and glad tidings.

Let us now light a pink candle, as a symbol of welcoming the "Good News" of salvation.

(Light pink candle)

All Together:

O Christ our true light,
Who enlightens every person coming into the world, let Your face shine upon us all, so that we may always walk in Your light and joy.
Christ's vast dominion will be without end.
Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Lord, come!
Peace, joy and justice, now and forever and ever.

Second Week of St. Philip's Fast

Feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple.

Reader:

Let us praise the glorious entrance of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, in songs. For today she is prophetically offered in the Temple as a precious gift being herself the temple of God. (from the Matins of the feast)

Priest/Leader:

Today on this second Sunday of our journey we prepare our hearts to receive the great mystery, the gift of God's Son, the Light of the world, who is coming to us in the fast-approaching time of Christmas. This day and this week we commemorate the Feast of the Entrance of Mary into the Temple.

This feast marks the first liturgical announcement of the birth of Christ during the Matins service:

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Christ comes from heaven! Let us go and meet Him!

Christ is on earth! May He be exalted!

Mary goes into the Temple to prepare her heart for God. She is the Temple where the Son of God will make His home until His birth.

She is the servant of the Lord, who offers her life to God and to us by giving us a Saviour.

All Together:

Behold the time of salvation is at hand.

Prepare yourself, O cavern, for the Virgin approaches to give birth to Her Son.

Be glad and rejoice, O Bethlehem, land of Judah, for from you the Lord shines forth.

O holy ancestors of Christ, help us to learn from God's servant, Mary, whom we call Mother of God.

May we journey with her in hope to the source of light and faith, and recognize in Jesus, our Saviour and Master. Amen.

Priest/Leader:

Let us light a green candle for hope-filled prayers.

(Light green candle)

All Together:

Nations shall walk by your light.

All gather and come to you. For the brightness of God's light is shining through you.

No longer shall the sun nor the moon be your light, for the Lord, the God of Glory, will be your eternal light.

Sixth Week of St. Philip's Fast

Sunday before the Nativity - The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Reader:

The Virgin now comes to Bethlehem
to give birth to Christ,
who has become an infant in the flesh.
Christ has voluntarily become poor.
Christ has become visible.
Let heaven and earth rejoice.
(from the Matins of the feast)

Priest/Leader:

Today on this sixth and last Sunday of our journey towards the birth of our Saviour, we remember the Jesus' ancestors in the flesh. These holy people waited and prayed with hope in their hearts that God send the promised Saviour to the world. They reminded the people to watch, to hope and to pray. In our liturgical prayers we also focus on Mary, the Mother of our God, who is on her way to Bethlehem - to give birth to the Saviour.

All Together:

Most holy Theotokos, honoured far above the heavens, you are both temple and palace. You are dedicated in the Temple of God to be prepared as a divine dwelling place for His coming.

Pray for us, that we may become worthy temples and dwelling places for Your Son and our Saviour and God. Help us to use our gifts and talents for God's glory and the good of others.

Priest/Leader:

Let us now light a purple candle as a symbol of our service and sacrifice.

(Light purple candle)

All Together:

Pray for us, O Virgin Mary,
Holy Mother of our Lord,
That, like you, we may
become
Holy Temples of our God.



Third Week of St. Philip's Fast

Feast of the Holy Apostle Andrew, the First- Called

Reader:

Rejoice, O heavens!
Proclaim everywhere the glory of God!
Today the first-called apostle Andrew stands in our
midst.

When He who is called the Morning Star,
the radiance of the eternal Father's glory, took His
abode on earth, you, O glorious Andrew, were the
first to meet Him.

For your heart was enlightened with the perfect
splendour of His divinity.

Priest/Leader:

Today on this third Sunday of our journey towards
the Nativity of Christ our Lord, we commemorate
St. Andrew, the first apostle who followed Jesus.
His feast day is November 30.

St. Andrew brought the light of Christ's message
into the darkness of our Slavic people.

In the liturgical prayers of our Church, we sing out
to Bethlehem to prepare, to adorn itself, to open
the gates of Eden for the Saviour of the world.

Bless Him, O youths! Exalt Him! Praise Christ,
all people, throughout the ages!

Righteous Fathers and Mothers of our faith, who
shone forth with faith and went to death
believing and trusting in God's promise, pray
that we may bring faith to the unbelieving,
courage to the disheartened and strength to the
weak!

Priest/Leader:

Let us light an orange candle for faith and
courage to be a part of our hearts and lives.

(Light orange candle)

All Together:

Those in need will turn to Him.
He will hear their cry.
He will rule with justice and joy,
consoling those who mourn.
He will lead us like a shepherd,
calling us each by name
He will walk in the favour of God
and we shall do the same.
Be hope to help unhappy hearts, and
love to light the earth.
We shall praise His name forever.
God is with us!

Fifth Week of St. Philip's Fast

Sunday of Our Holy Ancestors in Faith

Reader:

The Word of the Father comes forth from the Virgin and without change is born in a cave for my sake. Let all creation dance with joy and magnify His holy condescension and compassion with thanksgiving.

(from the Matins of the feast)

Priest/Leader:

Today, on the fifth Sunday of our travels towards the nativity of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, we commemorate the ancestors of our faith, the great men and women of the Bible who kept the promise of the Messiah alive through the ages. We honour the prophets, who foretold the coming of the Saviour. We especially admire the Prophet Daniel and the faith and courage of the three children who went into the fiery furnace believing that God would send us a promised Saviour.

All Together:

O holy youths, you shone as heaven's lights enkindled by the life of piety. You called forth the choir of all creation as you sang to the Master who saves all from temptation.

St. Andrew, as well, encourages, us, as brothers and sisters in Christ to be the BEARERS OF THE LIGHT OF JESUS TO OTHERS.

All Together:

O Glorious Andrew, the first to obey the Lord's voice. We bless you as the herald of the apostles of Christ.

Enkindled by His love, you brought the rays of light to enlighten those who sat in the shadow of darkness.

Pray for us that we may bring the light of Jesus to all who live in disbelief.

Priest/Leader:

Let us now light a yellow candle as a sign of our desire to bring the light of Christ's message to the world.

(Light yellow candle)

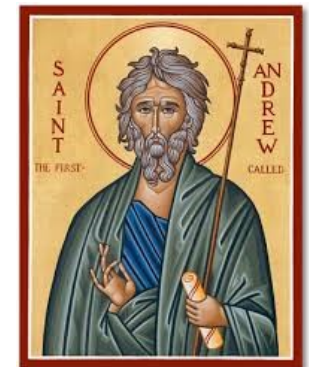
All Together:

Nations shall walk by Your light
All gather and come to You.

The glory of the Lord is shining
on you!

No longer shall the sun nor the
moon be your light.

For the Lord, the God of glory,
Will be your eternal light.



Fourth Week of St. Philip's Fast

Feast of St. Nicholas, the Wonderworker

Reader:

Make ready, O cave, for the Mother-Lamb comes bearing Christ in her womb.

Receive Him, O manger, Who released the dwellers on the earth from all lawlessness.

Priest/Leader:

Today on this fourth Sunday of our journey towards the birth of Christ, we commemorate St. Nicholas, the Wonderworker, a saint, especially connected with the birth of Christ. We celebrate his feast on December 6. St. Nicholas' life is an example to us all of preparing our hearts by loving acts for one another. In our liturgical prayers we ask the earth to open wide its arms to receive the Saviour. We ask the cave to offer its manger to the Lord, as we offer the gifts of love to each other by our acts of love, caring and compassion.



All Together:

Blessed Nicholas, who makes the world shine with wonders, pray for us that like you we may bring the bread of life to the needy, justice to the persecuted, comfort to the suffering and joy to the lonely.

Priest/Leader:

Let us now light a red candle as a symbol of our love and caring for one another.

(Light the red candle)

All Together:

The fruit of your good works, O holy Father, has brought joy to the hearts of the faithful. Who, indeed has not heard of your wonderful works, and not admired your patience and humility, the joy with which you fill the poor, and the compassion that you show to the afflicted? You have truly been an admirable example for us all. And now that your unfading crown has been placed on you, O holy Nicholas, pray for the souls of us servants. Amen.