

# The Great Fast

**Objective:** The students will be able to state that the Great Fast is 40 days long and state two of the following: during those 40 days we pray, go to church, fast, give to others, and treat others with kindness more than during the rest of the year.

## For the Catechist

Two ideas underlie this lesson on the Great Fast. First, it is the 40 days before Holy Week begins. Second, although not reserved for this season, during the Great Fast Christians pray, fast, and give more—children should be able to see a difference in their home and church routines. At church the weekday services are the Presanctified Gifts, the Great Compline, and the Akathist.

**Forgiveness Theme.** While the season's theme of repentance may be too abstract, asking forgiveness is familiar. If possible, have the children begin the Great Fast with Forgiveness Vespers. This service provides a foundation for a later understanding of confession. On Cheesefare Sunday, the last day before the Great Fast, our Eastern tradition offers us a chance to reconcile ourselves with one another during the Forgiveness Service. As Church family we learn to love and forgive together, especially at this service.

## Young children's participation in the Great Fast.

While the young students may have little control over what their meals consist of or how much money they can give, they can make an effort to be more generous in their behavior—kinder, more willing to share. They may be the one who remembers to bring a can of food for the needy. While the theme of repentance may be a concept beyond them, the season can be described as a "time to be quiet" and their attention be turned to the quieter, somber music of the weekday services. They will be able to appreciate the movement from quiet to celebration when Pascha arrives.

## Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

### We Ask Forgiveness Before the Great Fast

“And so the day before beginning the Great Fast is

## Lesson Plan Overview

**Opening:** Prayer "All-holy Trinity" **Need:** Index cards with the parts of the prayer on each (see Introductory Notes for the complete prayer according to your jurisdiction). 1) All-holy Trinity.. 2) Lord... 3) Master... 4) Holy One... 5) for Your name sake.

**Introduction:** Discussion of discipline of the Great Fast **Need:** box or jar with coins, dish of pasta or cereal, piece of fruit, prayer book or service book from Presanctified, Akathist, or Great Compline.

**Read Text Aloud:** Ask questions noted on the following pages as text is being read.

### Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- Basic 1:* During the Great Fast I will try to...
- Basic 2:* The Great Fast
- Group:* “Great Fast” Guessing Game
- Craft:* “Great Fast” Collage Centerpiece

**Closing:** All-Holy Trinity

## Come Bless the Lord Icon:

Packet I:  
Packet II:

## Teaching Pics

Presanctified Liturgies (GL 3) and  
Orthodoxy Sunday (GL 5)

dedicated to the righting of our relationships on earth. We ask the forgiveness of anyone with whom we may be at odds and, in fact, with any of our family and friends, because we often offend people unawares. The experience of asking forgiveness and of giving it helps purify our hearts before we engage in the overtly religious observances of the Fast.”

"In church this often takes place after vespers on Sunday evening (actually the first service of the Fast). People in church ask forgiveness of one another and exchange the kiss of peace" (*DC 66*).

### **Marking the Fast**

"In addition to the fifty-day period of joyful celebration after Pascha, the Church has a forty-day period of penitential preparation for Pascha, called the Great Fast (Lent). In the Eastern Churches Lent begins on the Monday after Cheese-fare Sunday (always the seventh Sunday before Easter) and ends on the Friday before Lazarus Saturday, a period of exactly forty days" (*LLII 40*).

### **Forty Days**

"The number forty appears frequently in the Bible as a period of preparation before the entry into a mission given by God. Moses fasts on the mountain for forty days before receiving and handing over the law to the Israelites; Elijah fasts forty days before his vision of God telling him to anoint Hazael as king of Aram, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet; the Israelites themselves wandered for forty years in the desert as a penance before entering the Promised Land; and Jesus fasted forty days after His baptism before beginning His public preaching" (*LLII 40*).

### **The Great Fast: Preparation for Baptism**

"Lent was a period of instruction in the word of God, of practicing the Christian virtues, of charitable works, of being integrated into the community of faith, and of fasting as a purification of body and soul for the great mystery of adoption as children of God. This special season of preparation was not restricted just to the candidates for baptism. The whole community took part, both as a sign of solidarity with those joining the Church and as a renewal of each one's personal commitment to Christ. The Great Fast, even now, is a time for us to renew our baptismal promises and our union with God. Despite (or because of its dedication to repentance, it remains a season of great joy, a time of growing nearer to God)" (*LLII 40*).

# The Lesson Plan

## Opening

*This Sunday we begin the season of the Great Fast or Lent. During the Great Fast we try even harder not to sin. Our prayer each week will ask God to forgive us and to heal us from sin. Here are five cards that have the five parts of the prayer. [Use the translation for your jurisdiction.] Let's go over the words. [Explain transgressions as sins; and if your version has infirmities, explain as illness or weaknesses.] Now, let's go to the icon corner and get ready to pray. Each of you will get to say your phrase. [Stand quietly for 20 seconds, make the sign of the cross, and let each child say his or her phrase.]*

## Introduction

*We are about to begin a special time of year. It is one of my favorite seasons of the Church year and it lasts for 40 days. I brought in a few items to give you a clue as to what our lesson is today. [Place on table: box or jar with coins, dish of pasta or cereal, piece of fruit, prayer book or service book from Presanctified, Akathist, or Great Compline.] There is one more clue—something I will show you. [Do prostration.] Now, can anyone tell me what season we are about to enter? [Allow guesses.] What clue gave it away for you, and why? [If not all items are mentioned, pick up those that aren't and ask the following:] Why is this a reminder of the Great Fast?*

*Today's lesson is about the Great Fast. Some call the Great Fast "Lent." It is a time of year, 40 days, when we [Hold up fingers as you enumerate:] 1) pray more, 2) go to church more, 3) fast, 4) treat others with kindness, and 5) give food or money. I've mentioned 5 things we do more of during the Great Fast. When we're done with the lesson, you should be able to tell me at least two of these. Let's say them together. [Repeat above.]*

## The Great Fast

Jesus lived long ago; He suffered, died and was buried.

One week each year, back into this time we let ourselves be carried.

Holy Week is its name—for seven days it will last.

To get ready for this special time, our Church goes through the Great Fast.



Our Great Fast is 40 days long to prepare for Holy Week.

To get closer to our Lord, Jesus Christ, is what we all do seek.

We take more time each week to be quiet and to pray.

We treat others with kindness, not a mean word do we say.



### Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

This lesson is a poem. In front of each stanza or section is a picture. This will help you know where I am in the reading. Let's look at each one. We have icons of Jesus to tell us to think about Him, peanut butter for the food we eat when we fast, a bank to remind us of the money we save for the poor, a profound bow to show us how to pray during this time, and a church to remind us that we go to church more often.

#### ... our Church goes through the Great Fast

The Great Fast prepares us for a special week. What is its name? (Holy Week)

#### ... not a mean word do we say.

How long is the Great Fast? (40 days) How do we treat others? (With kindness) Does this mean we can be nasty to others the rest of the year? (No) We should be kind all year, but even more so during the Great Fast.



Our meals are different, during this time—fruits and veggies are the best.

We also eat cereals and pasta—they make up the rest.

We've come to learn that during this time, only certain foods do we eat. It's the Great Fast, it's once a year, and it's no time for a treat.



As you can see, during the Great Fast we change the way we live.

Because we save money on food, we have more money to give.

In boxes and jars we drop our coins—what's not spent at the grocery store.

At Holy Week we'll bring them to church and give them to the poor.

#### ... and it's no time for a treat

What is best to eat during the Great Fast? (Fruits and veggies, cereals and pasta)

#### ... and give them to the poor.

[If your church uses mite boxes or a food drive, refer to these.] What can you give to help the poor? (Food, coins)

**... help me to sin no more.**

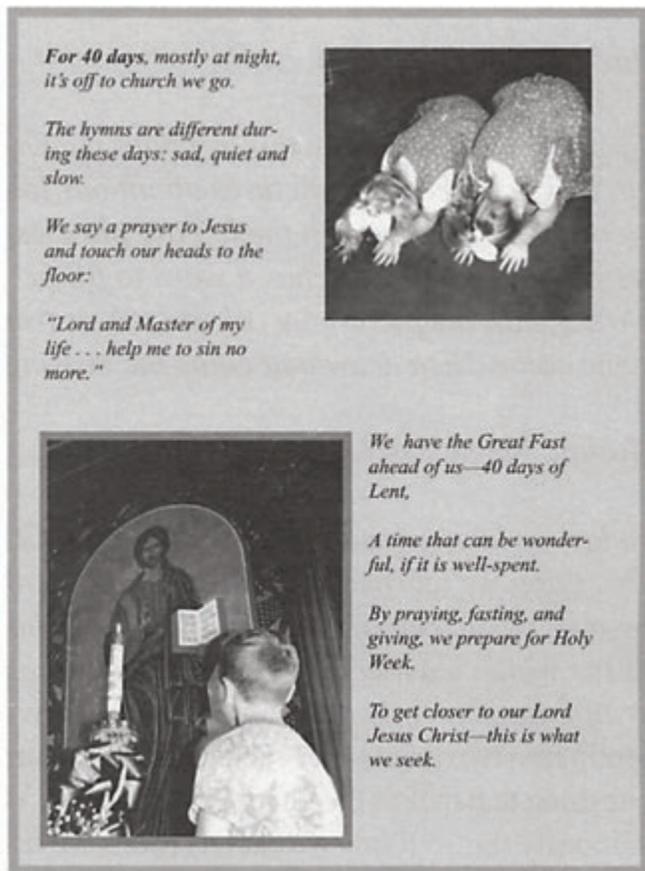
[If your parish prays the prayer of St. Ephrem, remind the children of this prayer that begins "Lord and Master of my life. .." and mention that they do a prostration when they say the prayer.]

*When you go to church during the Great Fast, listen to the hymns—the music is quiet and slow and kind of sad. You know, we all need happy times AND quiet times. The Great Fast is a quiet time. We will have a very happy time when Holy Week is over and Pascha is here.*

**... this is what we seek.**

*What do we seek during the Great Fast?  
(To get closer to Jesus) Why? (Because we love Jesus) That is why we go through the Great Fast.*

**Let's review:** *We learned so much about the Great Fast. Who can tell me one thing we learned? [Ask several times.]*



*For 40 days, mostly at night, it's off to church we go.*

*The hymns are different during these days: sad, quiet and slow.*

*We say a prayer to Jesus and touch our heads to the floor:*

*"Lord and Master of my life . . . help me to sin no more."*

*We have the Great Fast ahead of us—40 days of Lent.*

*A time that can be wonderful, if it is well-spent.*

*By praying, fasting, and giving, we prepare for Holy Week.*

*To get closer to our Lord Jesus Christ—this is what we seek.*

**Activity Tracks**

**Basic 1:** During the Great Fast I will try to...  
[This worksheet is in the student text.]

*Today we learned many things about the Great Fast. During the Great Fast we try to pray more, go to church more, fast from certain foods, and be kind and generous. You need to think about what you will try to do during the Great Fast, and I'll help you write the word in the sentence. Then you can draw yourself doing what your sentence says. [Words to insert: pray, go to church, fast, be kind.]*

**During the Great Fast I will try to...**

to...

## Basic 2: The Great Fast

Today we learned many things about the Great Fast. On this worksheet are pictures about our lesson. Two pictures are missing. On the left are phrases from the lesson, and one phrase has a word to fill in. Match the phrase with the picture by coloring their frames the same color. Then draw and color the missing picture.

### Group: "Great Fast" Guessing Game

Today we learned many things about the Great Fast. One thing we learned is that we eat differently. We eat breads, pasta, cereal, nuts, fruits. . . Let's have a game to see which team can name more ways the Great Fast is different than other times of the year. [Divide the group into two teams. Let each team take a turn to name one thing that makes the Great Fast different. You may wish to modify this to foods we eat OR foods we fast from and include "treats" as a broad category—they should be able to name many treats.]

### Craft: "Great Fast" Collage Centerpiece

**Materials:** "Great Fast" Collage worksheet, markers, magazines with pictures of food, glue, stapler, dinner size paper plates (3 for each student)

[Ahead of time staple the three plates together as shown.] Today we learned the many things we try to do more of during the Great Fast. During the Great Fast we try to pray more, go to church more, fast from certain foods, and be kind and generous. We usually say: pray, fast, and give alms or charity. You can help your family remember these by making a centerpiece. [Hold up sample.] There are three sides: one for praying and going to church, one for fasting, and one for giving. On two sides there are pictures to color. On the last side is room to paste pictures of the foods we eat during these 40 days—breads and cereals, pasta, vegetables. We'll use these magazines to cut out pictures for this side. I have worksheets for the other two sides; then we can staple it together.

Lesson 25 Basic 2  
"The Great Fast" Worksheet

## The Great Fast

Match each phrase with a picture by coloring their frames the same color. Draw something to remind you of the other two phrases.

1. We treat others with kindness, not a mean word do we say.
2. We also eat cereals and pasta—they make up the rest.
3. Because we save money on food, we have more money to give.
4. We say a prayer to J. E. S. U. S and touch our heads to the floor.

**Closing:** *Let's gather at the icon corner to pray "O Most-Holy Trinity." Here are five cards that have the five parts of the prayer. Let's go over the words again. What did we say "transgressions" meant? [If your version has infirmities] What does infirmities mean? Let's get ready to pray. [Stand quietly for 20 seconds, make the sign of the cross, and let each child say his or her phrase.]*

*God bless you. Have a good week!*

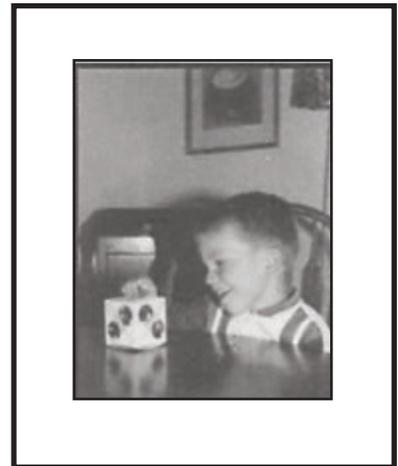
# The Great Fast

Match each phrase with a picture by coloring their frames the same color. Draw something to remind you of the other two phrases.

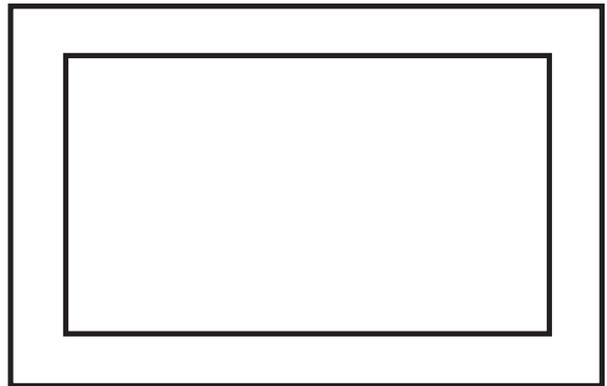
1. We treat others with kindness, not a mean word do we say.



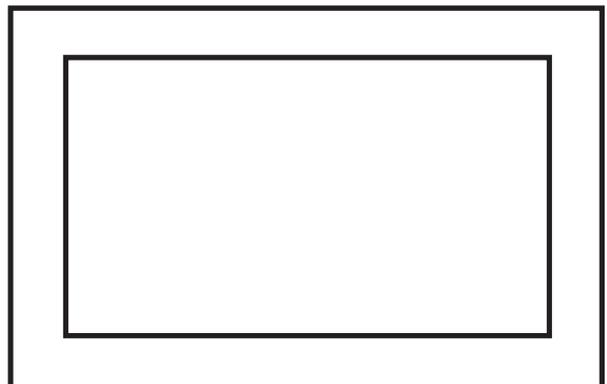
2. We also eat cereals and pasta—they make up the rest.



3. Because we save money on food, we have more money to give.



4. We say a prayer to \_\_\_\_\_ and touch our heads to the floor.



**During the  
Great Fast,  
we pray, fast  
and give**

Praying side of centerpiece



Mite Box for giving side