

## The Holy and Great Fast

The Great Fast is our penitential preparation for the Fest of Feasts – Holy Pascha- our celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The forty days of the Fast symbolize the forty years the Israelites wandered in the desert in order to return home and be filled with all of God's blessings. During the Great Fast we imitate Jesus our Lord who fasted for forty days in the desert following His baptism. For Christians, the observance of the Great Fast is for the renewal of baptismal fervor. The day before the Great Fast Begins is Cheesefare Sunday on which we remember the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. During the Great Fast, the Royal Doors (symbolizing the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven) are opened less often and the readings are mostly from the Hebrew Scriptures as we relive the Hebrews intense longing for the salvific acts of Christ.

### Fasting Regulations

**STRICT FAST-** forbids the use of meat, eggs, dairy products and condiments made from animal fats and is observed on Pure Monday-the first day of the Great Fast and on Good Friday. The use of synthetic substitutes violates the spirit of the Great Fast.

If a person chooses this strict fast for the whole of the great fast it would be in accord with the Traditional Fast of the Italo –Greek Catholic Church.

If you choose the regular strict fast it is only for the Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.

All Byzantine Catholics are to keep the Fast. Infants, expectant and nursing mothers and those who are seriously ill or in poor health are exempt for the Strict Fast.