

## **PHILLIP'S FAST**

### **(The Preparatory Season for the Nativity of Our Lord)**

The first mention of a preparatory period before Christmas is mentioned in a decree of the Council of Saragossa (380). The Council Fathers stated that every Christian should daily go to church from December 17 until the Theophany (January 6th). At the Synod of Mac (581), in present day France, it was decreed that, from November 11, the day of St. Martin, until December 24, every Christian should fast three times a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday). Our pre-Nativity period of preparation developed rather late. Scholars do not agree about the exact time it began. Some hold that it began in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Others believe it began in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century. The present Liturgical pre-Nativity season was finally established at the Council of Constantinople (1166). The Council decreed that the fast would begin on November 15 and last until December 24, inclusive. Thus, there was created another 40-day fast. The pre-Nativity fast is often called "Phillip's Fast" because it begins on the day after the feast of St. Phillip. The fast was introduced to prepare the Church for a worthy celebration of the great and holy day of the Birth of Christ. To worthily meet our Lord and Savior, we should sanctify the pre-Nativity season of the Phillipian Fast. Sanctifying means spending our time in faith and in the service of God, and in kindness towards our neighbor, especially those who are in need of our assistance. And, we should think of what we would have been, had Christ not come to our lowliness and poverty. Together with the whole of the Byzantine Church, we should try to meet Christ as He deserves to be met and as it will, in His mercy, best serve our spiritual benefit.