

## **RULES ABOUT FASTING ACORDING TO THE CANON LAW OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

All year round, except during Eastertide season (the period from Easter to Ascension), Christians should fast every single Wednesday and Friday from dusk to “the ninth hour,” or 3 P.M. (Sixth hour is noon. Christ died at the sixth hour and there was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. See Luke 23:44-47). **Wednesday**, because it was on a Wednesday that Christ predicted his upcoming passion, his betrayal, trial and his death and resurrection. His disciples, hearing this, were saddened. **Friday**, because what he had predicted on Wednesday was realized on Friday. (Canons no.4, 253).

No one should fast on Sundays. Whoever fasts on Sundays will be anathematized. (Canon no.1013).

Punishments for those who fail to fast on Wednesday and Friday:

1. Three weeks repenting and fasting in Church.
2. Giving alms to the poor.
3. If the offender still continues defying the Apostolic Canons, he should then be put in penance for three years and pay 30 Dram penalties to Church and only then receive the Holy Communion.
4. But if the offender is a statesman (azad) and refuses to repent, **“Let him pay 50 Dram penalty to Church and 30 Dram penalty to the poor.”** (Canon no.280).
5. The ox of the offender would be confiscated and given to the priest. (Canon no.926).
6. But if the offender is a clergyman, he should be relieved of his duties for seven years, during that time he should repent and only by the permission of the Bishop return to his duties. (Canon no.281).

### **Fasting of Catechumen’s week**

Christians should observe as well the Cathecumens’ week of fasting. (Arachavoratz Bahk or the fasting of St. Sarkis) and the forty-day fasting of the Great Lent. The canon of Sts. Nerses and Nershabouh warns us to be strict in fasting. “If anyone fails to fast, he cannot enter into church until he repents and gives alms to the poor.” (Canons #637, 865).

### **Great Lent**

Forty days of fasting is prescribed by the Apostles, that is “40 days preceding the passion of our Lord.” (Canon #8).

St. Gregory the Theologian is more specific about the observance of the Great Lent. He says: “Fasting of Easter is 40 days long including Saturdays and Sundays, as prescribed by the Apostles and the Church Fathers of the II Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 318. We may stop fasting on Saturdays and Sundays for the life-giving Badarak but without consuming drinks and greasy dishes.” (Canon no.1234). St. John of Otzoon has a very nice exhortation about fasting on Saturdays and Sundays of the Great Lent. He leaves it up to the person to decide. No one should judge another person. Fasting or not fasting on these days are acceptable by God and are according to the tradition of the Armenian Church. (Canon no.681).

How to observe the forty-day fast? In sanctity, including Saturday and Sunday. And when

they arrive at “the day of suffering of Our Lord (Holy Thursday and Good Friday), they should pray incessantly.” No one should smile but should cry with the Lord and then celebrate the glorious day of the Resurrection with joy and prayers that our Lord saved us with His resurrection. (Canon no.255). On Holy Thursday one should not stop fasting but instead consume grains. (Canon no. 903).

### **A week of fasting of cardinal feasts**

Christians should observe as well the weekly fasting periods prior to the cardinal feasts, i.e., Christmas, Easter, Transfiguration, Assumption and Exaltation of the Holy Cross. In the case of Christmas fasting, according to St. Ephrem, the clergymen should fast for 40 days and ordinary believers eight days, including Sunday within this period only. (Canon no.284).

Archpriest Fr. Nerses Manoogian

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