

FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Set aside time during the Nativity Fast to reflect upon the following:

- ✧ What does the birth of Jesus Christ mean to you personally? How does this event affect your life?
- ✧ Where do you presently stand in your relationship with God, yourself, and with others? How have you fallen short of being the person God calls you to be? What steps might you take to change the things that need to be changed?
- ✧ How might you become a sign of God's love and presence among those who surround you?
- ✧ How, through prayer, might you draw closer to God? How could this improve your relationships with others?
- ✧ Who might benefit by your concern and help during the Nativity Fast and during the remainder of the year? What can you do to reach out to others in love?

The season of the Church year during which we prepare for the celebration of the Great Feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ is called the Nativity Fast.

The Nativity Fast begins on November 15 and continues through the Eve of the Nativity. During this time, we are challenged to think more seriously about our relationship with Jesus Christ, our Savior, who took on our humanity in order to reveal God's love for us.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

PREPARING FOR THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST



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REJOICE, O ISAIAH!

... *A Virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name Him Emmanuel—God with us!*
(Is 7:14)

With these words, the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah anticipated the coming of the Savior. Isaiah's prophecy embodies the longings, hopes, and desires of God's People as they prepared to receive the one who comes to grant them new life.

During the Nativity Fast, we are like those who, in Old Testament times, anticipated and prepared for the Savior's birth. The joy we experience on the feast of Jesus Christ's birth depends on how well we've prepared ourselves to receive Him.

We spend a great deal of time getting ready for the Nativity. Countless hours are devoted to shopping, decorating, and menu planning. As important as these matters are, our spiritual preparation is critical if we are to catch the true Christmas spirit.

INCREASED PRAYER

Prayer is communication with God. Not only should we pray when we need help in our daily lives, but we should pray to thank

and glorify God for the many blessings He has given us. During the Nativity Fast, we should especially reflect on the gift of eternal life made possible by the birth of Jesus Christ.

REPENTANCE

Repentance is the conscious effort to change our lives and to turn from those things which create barriers between us, God, and others. During the Nativity Fast we are offered the opportunity to devote time to self-reflection, to reassess our relationships with God and others, and to be reconciled and reunited with those from whom we've grown apart. Our thoughts should turn to the miracle of God's love and forgiveness which Jesus Christ proclaims and to the new life He offers.

FASTING

When we fast, we should not only avoid certain foods and entertainments, but we should also avoid anything and everything which tends to control us. Fasting is doing without those things which are not essential for our lives. It enables us to gain power once again of those things which too often dominate us.

READING THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Bible is the word of God which reveals Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Because it records the story of God's plan for the salvation of His People, the Bible is essential reading for Christians. The Nativity Fast provides an ideal opportunity to read and study the Bible on a daily basis. Take time to read and reflect on the following prophecies concerning the coming of the Savior:

- ✧ Isaiah 7:14, 15; 9:1-5; 61:1-3
- ✧ Daniel 9:25
- ✧ Micah 5:2, 3
- ✧ Malachi 3:1

HELPING OTHERS

While we fast and repent, it is equally important to share our time, our talent, and our treasures with those around us, especially those who are poor, needy, hungry, or lonely. By being born as a little child in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ shares His love with us; by reaching out to others, we in turn share His love with others.