

March

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BYZi KIDS

March 2025

FASTING

Learn, Play, and Grow
in faith as we journey
towards PASCHA!

Build your ByziClassroom, explore
the lives of St. John the Short and St.
Zakhary the faster and put your sense-
ability to the test with exciting activities.

Have fun with the Great Lent Grocery
game, join choir practice, and journey
through the countdown to Pascha
with us! Plus, keep track of all
your Lenten adventures with
the Activities Calendar!



Scan the QR code to see the links for the activities

March Activities Calendar

This month is filled with so many fun and interesting things to do!
 Visit the Activities Index on the ByziKids page at ByziMom.com for all the links!
<https://www.byzimom.com/byzikids-magazine-extras>

March 1

- St. Eudokia of Heliopolis, Come to Choir Practice on the ByziKids page and learn the song by Khouria Sylvia!
- All Souls Saturday



March 15

- All Souls Saturday



March 2

- Forgiveness Sunday: Get the Countdown to Pascha Calendar to begin Great Lent



March 16

- Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas



March 3

- Clean Monday: Great Lent Begins
- Learn The Great Fast Song
- Go fly a kite! Check out our Clean Monday Kite Activity



March 22

- All Souls Saturday



March 8

- All Souls; Miracle of Boiled Wheat
- Make Mini-Koliva Breakfast



March 25

- The Annunciation
- Get the Coloring Page, Maze printable, and
- I Spy in My Little Icon: Of the Annunciation



March 26

- Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel



March 9

- Sunday of Orthodoxy
- Gather your icons for a procession! Make a suncatcher icon
- 40 Martyrs of Sebaste
- Decorate with a Paper Bird Garland with the names of the 40 martyrs
- Make 40 Skylark Rolls as they do in the Slavic countries
- Make Mucenici like our friends in Romania
- Learn the 40 Christian Martyrs Song



March 29

- All Souls Saturday



March 30

- Sunday of St. John of the Ladder



CHOIR PRACTICE



By Sylvia Dorham

The Perfect Fast

CHORUS:

Let no one despise you because of your youth
You can show the love of God and talk about his truth
The perfect fast has naught to do with food
But with helping our neighbors along

Stop accusing and saying rude things
Help your family with whatever life brings
Give clothes, food and shelter to the people in need
And pray every day that the slaves will be freed
CHORUS



This is the fast God asks of me
And all of our community
When we fast together we will see
That God will help us to grow – I know
That God will help us to grow

CHORUS

Chorus

Let no one de-spise you be-cause of your youth. You can show the love of God and talk a-bout His truth. The

per - fect fast has naught to do with food but help - ing our neigh - bors a long.

1. Stop a - cus - ing and say - ing rude things. Help your fam - ily with what - ev - er life brings.
2. This is the fast God asks of me and all of our com - mun - i - ty.

Give clothes, food and shel - ter to the peo - ple in need and pray ev - ery day that the slaves will be free.
When we fast to - get - her

we will see that God will help us to grow, I know that God will help us to grow.

Chorus

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Scan the QR Code to listen



KNOW YOUR FAITH

By Lynne Wardach

Fasting



He begins to fast almost against his own will because he has no choice; there IS NO food. He DOES fast, and it DOES change him. His bodily hunger begins to awaken something inside him, and he realizes he desires much more than food.

Fasting has been practiced throughout the ages and challenges us not just physically but spiritually as well. It exercises our resolve and gives us back complete control of our will as it cleans out the excess storehouses that we have accumulated in our stomachs and minds. We become truly aware that we hunger. We hunger simply for food at first, but ultimately, that changes as we recognize that what we truly crave is God! Fasting is how we search for God's presence and seek clarity in knowing His will. We see many examples of this method in scripture.

Exodus 34:28 Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.

Daniel 10:3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no oils at all until the three weeks were over.

As we prepare for the season of the Great Fast and hear the preparatory Gospels, we might put ourselves in the place of the young prodigal son. We resemble him closely before we start our fasting journey as he lives a life of thoughtless excess and willfulness. Only when it finally all falls apart does he change his ways. The famine causes him to experience hunger for perhaps the first time and stops him in his decadent tracks.

One has to wonder, however, if the younger son in the parable would have been so devastated during the famine had he been exposed to some austerity in his younger days and had gained some experience in doing without. He may have better appreciated what he possessed in the first place had he realized its value. Many believe that children should be fasting with the Church as soon as possible to foster this kind of appreciation and also to know that they are a vital part of the corporate works of the Church. There are many examples of corporate fasting in scripture as a means of unifying appeal to God.

Esther 4:16 Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do.

Joel 1:14 Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land Into the house of the Lord your God, And cry out to the Lord.

We must welcome our youngest Christians, who are the next generation of the Church, and encourage them to participate as fully as possible in the life of the Body of Christ in an active and vital way. Of course, adequate nutrition is a significant consideration when involving children's eating habits, and rightfully so. Healthy choices are a MUST. Highly processed foods like cereals, pasta, white bread, and sugar-laden desserts can be completely admissible during a fast but are the poorest of nutritional choices and should be avoided. Foods like whole grains, raw or steamed vegetables, seeds, beans, nuts, sea vegetables, and fruits are fast-friendly and can provide the proper fuel and nutrition. Fasting as a family may take some advanced planning and creativity, but it can be done and done well.

We can be confident when we remember that our ancestors have fasted this way four times a year for millennia, so this fast is nothing new! We know that even from the time of creation, God commanded

Adam and Eve to eat every green living plant, not introducing animal sources of nutrition until the flood had destroyed all the vegetation at the time of Noah! This is the diet of Eden, as God intended for us from before the fall. Our ancestors have been keeping these fasting guidelines long before us. Still, the practice has recently been neglected because modern society has deemed it too complicated and not worthwhile. Sadly, we've lost not only the practice but the benefits as well.

Today, when the world is in need of some course correction, we can revive our ancient fasting practice and become more in tune with the will of God by doing so. It's not as difficult as the world makes it seem. It's important to remember that our Church's fasting regulations are not morally binding, but rather provide an ideal to strive towards. We shouldn't expect to master the 40-day Fast right away. The guidelines are there to help us grow gradually, both as individuals and as a family of believers. We can start slowly and progress further with each successive fast. By combining the physical aspects of fasting with the spiritual exercises of prayer and almsgiving, we can see that fasting is a life-altering exercise. Like any exercise, it's something that we can gradually and steadily improve at, especially for those who are new to fasting.

"The holy fasters did not approach strict fasting suddenly, but little by little, they became capable of being satisfied by the most meager food. Despite all this, they did not know weakness but were always hale and ready for action. Among them, sickness was rare, and their life was extraordinarily lengthy."

- Saint Ignatius the God-bearer (1st century)

Once Upon a SAINT

by Rebecca O'Loughlin



St. Zakhari, the Faster

My dear children,

One day you may find yourself in Kyiv. Maybe you don't know the Ukrainian language (but maybe you do!). The street you are walking on is cobblestone. But there is something familiar about where you are. You find yourself going down an alley and in front of you towers a beautiful cathedral with golden domes and icons painted on the front. You know these icons, and such a church is your heritage. The Ukrainian monks of old built it for the

future generations to glorify God. They built it in part for you to worship there. While this could describe a few places, in this case it is the Holy Dormition Cathedral.

The Cathedral guards a landmark that is not immediately visible, but is the oldest part of the monastic heritage in Kyiv: a large network of caves, the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra (the Kyivan Caves Monastery).

Nearly a thousand years ago, a hermit named Anthony settled himself in a cave in modern day Kyiv. It was not long before several other monks joined him there. The caves were a place of peace, fasting and prayer, and the monastery continued to grow. It became almost a village, with shops, workshops, and even a hospital. Monks prayed and monks fasted. It was such a place of holiness that it was said that demons would flee from the presence of many of the monks: a single word would send those demons packing for a more friendly face. By the time a few hundred years after St. Anthony dwelt there had gone by, the Lavra had many monasteries, and was a center for worship and pilgrimage for eastern Christians.

At the Lavra was a miraculous icon of the Theotokos. Three visitors had come to pray before the icon of the Holy Mother of God. Their names were John and Sergius, and John was filled with joy by the way the icon seemed to glow with light and glory. With John was his young son, Zakhari.

John turned to his friend. "Sergius, my brother! We have been through much together, and now I am dying. Promise to take care of my five year old son, Zakhari!"

"You need not ask, John. Of course I will."

"I will give you 1000 hryvnias of silver and 100 hryvnias of gold to give to Zakhari as an inheritance when he is old enough."

John died. Sergius cared for Zakhari. It was not long before he became a young man. At fifteen years old, Zakhari approached his foster father.

“Sir, I am a man now!” The young boy said, “I have come to ask for the inheritance my father left for you to give to me!”

But Sergius had come to love the gold and silver he kept hidden in a box by his bed. He dreamt of what he could do with so much money.

“Inheritance? But your father left you nothing! He gave all of it to the poor.”

Zakhari was surprised. “I may have been little, but I remember that my father left me 1000 silver and 100 gold! Well, how about half? You have cared for me well. You certainly deserve half the money.”

Sergius shook his head. “It was all spent by your father! There isn’t any money left! Feel free to ask your dead father for your money. Ask him to give it to you since he gave it away so freely!”

“A third?”

“No!”

“A tenth then?”

Each time Sergius denied that there was any money left.

“Very well.” Zakhari replied. “But see where we are? It was in this very Church, in front of the icon of the Mother of God that you made the promise to my father to care for me and give me inheritance when I became of age. Let us go in, and if you promise that the money is gone with our Blessed Mother as witness, I will not bother you about the matter again.”

“Of course!” The wily Sergius believed he had nothing to fear.

The two walked to the Church, and Sergius stood before the icon.

“I swear! I have taken no money from this boy’s inheritance! It is long been gone and given to the poor.” Sergius leaned forward to kiss the icon but found he could not get any closer. It was as though a wall stood before himself and the image of the Theotokos. He turned away as if to leave.

But at the doors of the Church, Sergius suddenly came to himself and called out: “St. Anthony and Theodosius! I am besieged by demons! Do not allow them to destroy me, but pray to the Mother of God to drive them away from me! I have the gold and silver

that John had me keep for his son, and I do not want it any longer!”

The people in the Church who heard were afraid. Some of them went to get the gold and silver from where Sergius said he had hidden it.

Sergius handed the inheritance to Zakhari. He repented and the demons left Sergius, who wept with relief and joy that he had been freed from their torments.

As for Zakhari, he called the Staretz over to him and handed him the money. “Please take my inheritance! It is everything that belongs to me. All that I am belongs to the Lord.”

Zakhari stayed at the Lavra for the remainder of his life. He fasted all day, eating only uncooked greens after sundown. Zakhari was one of those hermits for whom there is not much written. We do know that he saw Angels, and cast out many demons. His body is kept in the far caves of the Lavra, where his body, and those of 41 other monks, lie incorrupt and oil and heavenly fragrances comes from their bones. There are likely the bodies of many other saints buried there.

We celebrate the feast of St Zakhari on March 24, and the feast of all the Kyiv Lavra saints on the second Sunday of Lent. One thing you may take from this story is that God uses fasting as a powerful weapon against the devil. Offer up whatever you can, whether it be giving up candy, doing homework without being asked, or getting to bed on time, and God may use the sacrifice you give him to save souls.

Troparion of Venerable Zakhari the Faster

For the sake of your life of fasting, blessed Zakhari, you received great power to fight against demons, pray for us to be freed from temptation, and to receive forgiveness of sins and great mercy.

Kontakion

In fasting, you shone brightly and appeared terrible to demons, venerable Zakhari,

strengthen us with your prayers so that we might also have a life of fasting, and be delivered from evil like those who honor you.

*The troparion and kontakion above were written in Ukrainian. Any fault in poor translation is my own.

I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



By Kim Fritzges



St. John the Short

Our icon of St John the Short is an 11th century mosaic icon from Hosios Loukas, an ancient monastery in Distomo, Greece. We see him holding a cross in his right hand and his left hand open and raised to us. This is called the “palm of the righteous”, which means the saint shown has lived a holy and righteous life with a pure heart. The inscription reads St. John the Short.

St John the Short, also known as St John Kolobos, (Greek for short or stunted), was born in Thebes, Egypt around the year 339 and was an Egyptian Desert Father. His family was poor but very devout. When he was eighteen years old St John left the family to follow a monastic life.

He went to the remote desert wilderness called Skete where Abba Bemwa/Pambo lived. He became his disciple and learned great obedience. In his first lesson he was instructed to place a dry stick into the ground and water it daily. John followed this obedience and watered this dry stick every day walking for miles through the parched desert to the river to get the water. He never complained or questioned Abba Bemwa/Pambo, but followed his direction with a joyful heart even though it seemed worthless to water a dry stick daily. After three years, one day the stick started to sprout leaves and then fruit, it grew into a tree! It is called the Tree of Obedience.

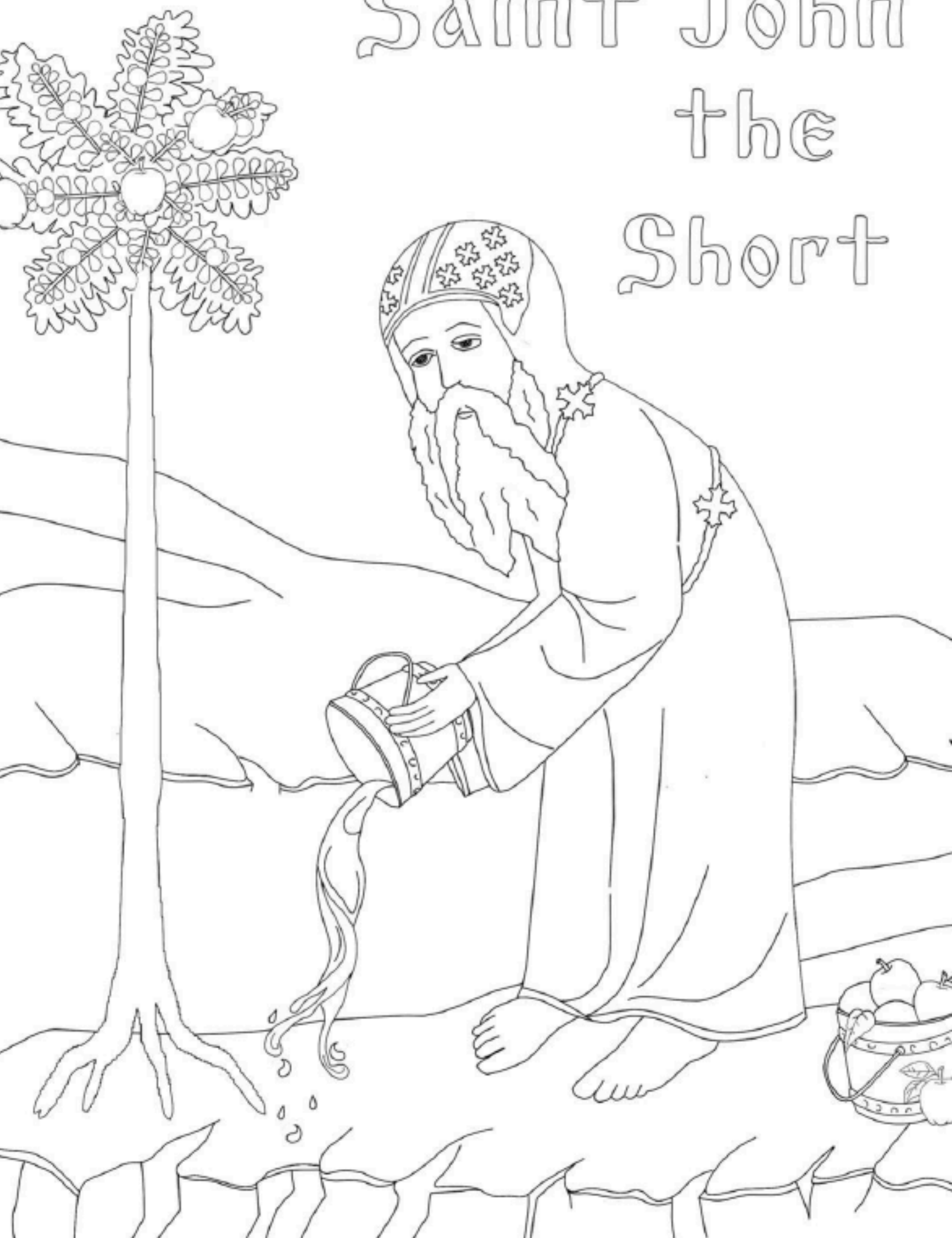
Our coloring page shows John watering the Tree of Obedience in the dry desert, and it is growing with green leaves and fruit that he has gathered in a basket.

John lived in a cave near the Tree and spent his days fasting and in prayer. He would eat only one meal a day consisting of vegetables and bread. Around 395 the Skete was invaded by Berbers and John fled across the Nile River. He was a great teacher, bringing many souls to Christ. St John was a very kind and loving teacher often giving away his own food that he bought with money he made from weaving baskets.

St. John lived to be seventy years old, when he died his servant had a vision of him being taken to Heaven by a group of angels and saints. His relics are at the Monastery of St Macarius the Great located in the Wadi El Natrun Desert in Egypt.

St John is remembered in the Divine Liturgy of St Basil during the Commemoration of the Saints. His feast day in the Eastern Orthodox Church is November 9 and in the Coptic Orthodox Church is October 17.

Saint John the Short



MEANWHILE, BACK IN BYZANTIUM

by Kathryn Reetzke

One of the Great Feasts of the church happens on March 25th. Do you know it? We celebrate the Annunciation! Nine months before December 25th, the Birth of Christ, the Angel Gabriel told Mary she would become the bearer of God, the Theotokos.

On March 25th we also commemorate the Martyrs Pelagia, Theodosia, and Dula, of Nicomedia. These virgin women gained their crowns in heaven in the 4th century after enduring torture for their strength of faith. Each woman came from a different social class, but found unity in Christ. Not much is known about their lives before the record of their martyrdom under the declining Roman Empire, but I believe we can apply what we know about the three important parts of being a Christian: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These women, as martyrs, gave their very lives. I'm sure they prayed together much like the early Christian communities, perhaps even St. Pelagia hosted others in her home or chapel as someone from the wealthy class. St. Theodosia was from the middle class and St. Dula was an enslaved person. We see lots of evidence for prayer services in private homes in the New Testament when we read about the household of Chloe in Corinthians and Sts. Mary and Martha of Bethany. What we do know is that through their strength of faith they were granted crowns of martyrdom for their faith. We don't have any icons of these virgin martyrs, however when we don't have an image of a saint, we can reference the icon of "All Saints," a pattern written around the 9th century that remains used for purposes when an icon cannot be found of a saint or saints.

Fasting brings unity in Christ. Early Christians were from all walks of life, those of the Apostles and early Disciples being most well known for coming from mainly humble beginnings: fishermen, mothers, carpenters, and some more profitable professions like doctors and tax collectors. Perhaps fasting doesn't feel like a small martyrdom for some, but for others it might feel like the biggest challenge you've experienced, especially in the rich and prosperous country we live in. Eating lentils, beans, and vegetables might be the hardest thing you do during Lent. I hope that you approach it with all joy as these virgin martyrs did. I also hope that you use what is left over of your time and supplies during your time of fasting to feed the poor and to welcome guests from all walks of life into your parish and home. We are told that there is neither "Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, all are One in Christ" (Gal. 3:28). When we pray, fast, and give alms we join All Saints in worshipping God.



St. Chloe illustration, Christina Herron, owner of OrthodoxIconFriends.com.*



Icon, "All Saints" from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch

*At *Orthodox Icon Friends*, we specialize in illustrated and handmade pretend play items, designed to inspire and nurture friendships between children and the saints of the Church. Each item in our shop is carefully crafted and designed with love and attention to detail. From intricately painted peg dolls depicting saints and biblical figures to miniature Orthodox church items, our products aim to engage children in meaningful play while educating them about the depth of our faith.

GREAT LENT

GROCERY GAMES

“Besides fasting with your mouth, you must fast by not saying anything that could harm anyone else. After all, what good is it for you to abstain from meat if you devour your brother?” ~St John Chrysostom

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.
Romans 14:3

Prepping Your Pantry List

It's time to get ready for the Great Fast! Fill your grocery list with fast-friendly ingredients! What should you choose? Circle the fast-friendly options and cross out those you must leave until Pascha.

Broccoli Rice Shrimp Sunflower Seeds
Lentils Apple Yogurt Orange Potatoes Eggplant Almond milk Tofu
Quinoa Cheese Oats Carrots
Lettuce Tea Ice Cream Juice
Candy Veggie Burgers Grapes Milk
Bacon Whole Wheat Bread Salmon Eggs
Peanut Butter Hot Dogs Macaroni Edamame
Pretzels Butter Sunflower Seeds Black Beans

Answer Key
Left on the shelf: Yogurt Cheese Ice cream Candy Milk Bacon Salmon Hot dogs Eggs

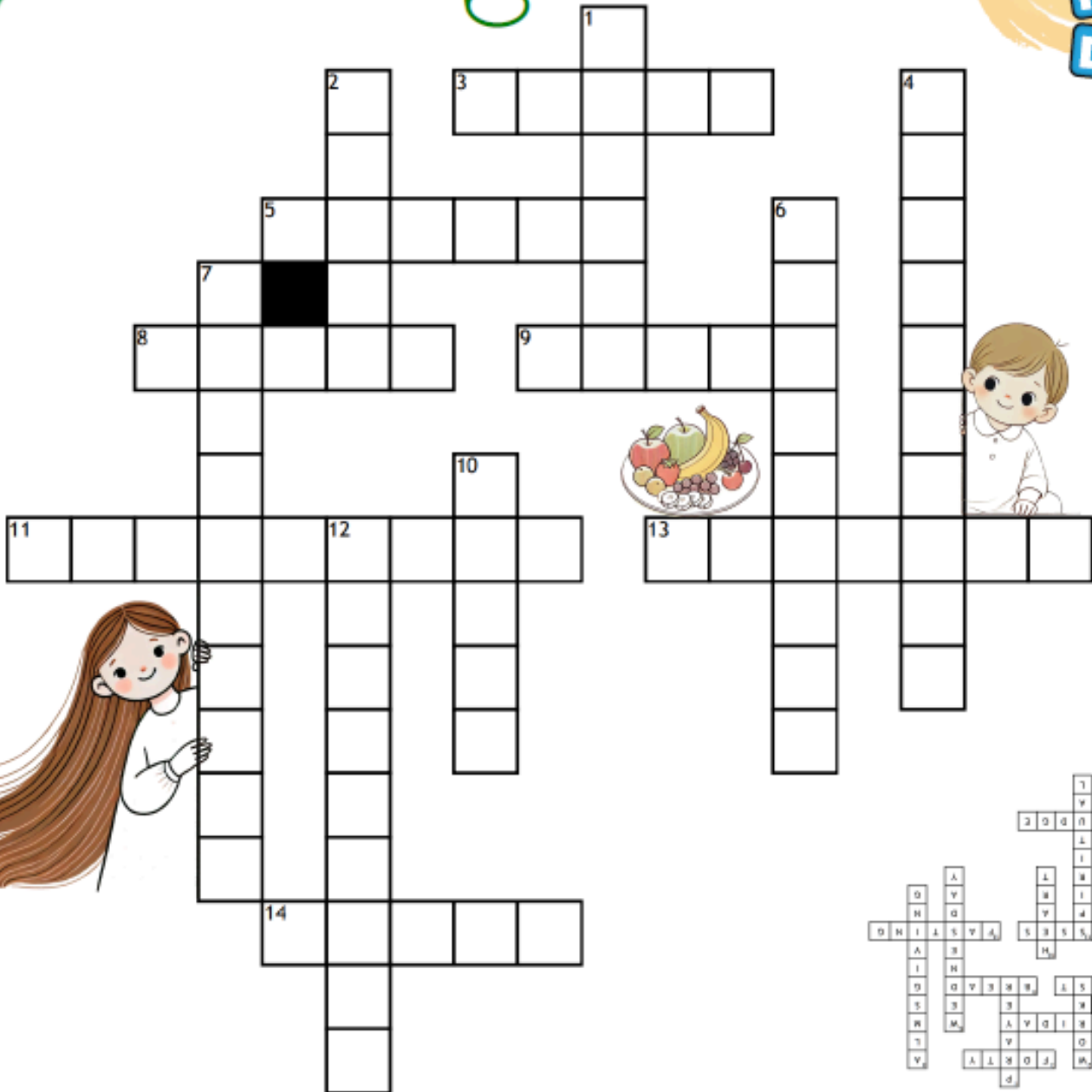
Instead of...

Draw a line from the everyday food on the left to the lenten substitution on the right!

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hamburger | <input type="checkbox"/> frozen banana smoothie |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken nuggets | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian ice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Milk | <input type="checkbox"/> tomato soup |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buttered toast | <input type="checkbox"/> avocado toast |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ranch dressing | <input type="checkbox"/> broccoli bites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mac and cheese | <input type="checkbox"/> macaroni marinara |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken noodle soup | <input type="checkbox"/> PB & J! It's always ok!! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Milkshake | <input type="checkbox"/> veggie burger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cream | <input type="checkbox"/> hummus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PB & J | <input type="checkbox"/> almond milk |



Fasting



Across

3. Jesus fasted for ____ days in the desert
5. a fasting day in memory of Jesus on the Cross
8. We ____ on the Fridays after Christ's Nativity and Pascha!
9. Man shall not live by ____ alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Mt 4:4)
11. See what fasting does: it heals ____ & makes the heart pure (St Athanasius)
13. we eat reduced amounts of food and no animal products if we are able
14. Do not ____ other Christians if they fast differently than you do!

Down

1. this is joined with fasting & almsgiving for the Christian life especially during Great Lent
2. Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your _____. (St John Chry.)
4. giving to the needy is part of the Christian life
6. a fasting day
7. We fell into disease through sin; let us receive healing through _____, which is not fruitful without fasting. (St Basil)
10. "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your _____, with fasting" (Joel 2:12)
12. Talk with your parents and _____ father about fasting