

Q&A

Q: “Father Alex, people have different ways for preparing for Communion. Which is the right one?”

A: This is a very good question, and people oftentimes do have different understandings about how we should get ready to receive the Lord. While our parents and grandparents may have been taught slightly different traditions—depending on where they were raised—the Church does offer us clear and universal direction. Fasting is definitely an important part of this equation. Whether or not we plan on receiving Communion on Sunday, we should fast on Wednesdays (the day of the betrayal by Judas) and Friday (the day of Christ’s death); also, on Sunday morning, we shouldn’t eat or drink anything before Holy Communion. Why fast? It’s not about a steak or hotdog; the food is a means to an end. The point is that fasting makes us feel a little empty, a little uncomfortable, and gives us a very, very small taste of the Lord’s sacrifice for us—how He “emptied” Himself out to become human for us. In the end, the most important fast is from sin. During the week, we should fast from anger, jealousy, laziness, gossip, and everything that keeps us from God. A personal prayer life is necessary as well. We need to talk to God about everything and often; we should also receive the Sacrament of Confession at least twice per year. This helps us approach the Chalice with a clean heart and a beautiful humility. This way, when we are called to Communion (“With the fear of God, with faith and with love, draw near”), we can come to receive the Lord believing in Him, in awe of Him, without anger in our hearts and filled with love for everyone we know.

*** Please note that people who are very young, are pregnant, or have health conditions do not need to observe the food fast. There is “ekonomia” in our Orthodox Faith: a sense of flexibility according to individual circumstance. Finally, these are only very brief and basic guidelines, and Fr. Alex can be consulted for guidance and more details.**