



BYZiKIDS

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!

Glory be to Jesus Christ

Dear ByziParents,

We at ByziKids have always been delighted to share our ministry with the entire Eastern Christian Church, both Orthodox and Catholic. We share so much of our traditions and culture that we only notice discrepancies once we consider our differing Paschalia. How blessed we are this season to enjoy this occasional year when we all begin Great Lent together on the same day, March 3rd! God grant that we may all celebrate the joy of Pascha together someday, each and every year!

Our issue this month considers the gift of fasting. Gift? Yes, it is both a gift of our free will to God and a gift that God, through the Church, has given us. Participating fully in the rubrics of the fast does so much for us spiritually, psychologically, and physically. It unites us as a Church. It helps us to understand the suffering of those who lack nourishment of body and soul alike. It clears out the stomach, heart, and mind as well to make room for God! It is indeed a gift that we should receive with joy and determination to use it well.

As parents, we want our children to grow to become the next and most vibrant generation of the Church. It is up to us to be sure that they are allowed to participate in everything and become active members of the Church community while ensuring that they do so in a healthy manner. While we fully understand that each family must fast according to their ability and individual condition, we encourage our young readers to begin to experience the beauty of our traditional fasting practices as they benefit the body and soul of the individual and the Body of Christ, His Church!

We hope our issue encourages your ByziFamily to participate as fully as possible in this year's Lenten fast and that it be fruitful and blessed!

Enjoy the issue!

Lynne



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INSTRUCTIONS

Red

Suitable for ages
0-3/infant & toddler

We like to start early and include everyone in catechesis! Red activities are provided for little brothers and sisters, the tagalongs, who do not require direct instruction but need something to keep them occupied while the rest of the family participates.

Our objective for these littlest members of the Body of Christ is to introduce them to the theme of the day, making positive connections to each other and to Christ through sensory play.

Orange

Suitable for Pre-Readers;
3-6 years

As pre-readers, these children are best served by hands-on experiences, song, and movement as they learn. Although everything from the red level is still applicable, we can adapt the activities to bring them to the orange level by including more hands-on learning and structured play.

Our objective is to present the theme of the day in an engaging way that involves sufficient movement, creativity, and fun to accommodate the activity level of a child of this age.

Yellow

suitable for early readers;
ages 7-9 years

Children of this age are now able to read functionally, so we can begin to teach them foundational theology points with concrete instruction. They can begin to write about topics as well as create paper projects and use other creative mediums. With a more outward orientation and a new awareness of time, history, and community, at the yellow level, they are more capable of collaborating on projects, although any of the above material may also be of interest to them.

Our objective for this age level is to involve the children in group projects and collaborations so that they can begin to understand and interact as part of a bigger faith community,

Green

suitable for Pre-teens,
ages 10-12 years

This age group is now able to read for comprehension and can apply the teaching they have received to their lives and the lives of those around them. Building on the previous stages, the children in the Green level can delve deeper into the story of salvation and begin to focus on how each is called to participate in this plan and see that Christ is the source of our strength.

Our objective is to use reference tools to explain the topic of the month and encourage the student to feel confident in searching for these tools on his own.

Blue

suitable for young teens,
ages 13-15 years

The young teenage student looks outside his family to the broader community and the world, wanting to understand it and participate in it. We begin to introduce community service ideas and encourage parish participation in various ways so that they can serve both their parish community and the Church at large.

Our objective is to provide ideas that encourage students of this age to remain engaged in developing their own spiritual identity and find support within the Church community.

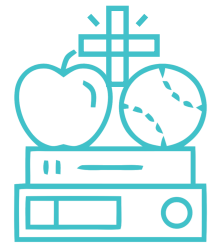
Purple

suitable for teens and adults;
Ages 16+

Learning about the faith isn't just something for childhood, but it is rather a life-long journey that takes us ever closer to God. This group can tackle apologetics, moral life questions, and more challenging concepts and ideas of adult catechesis.

Our Objective: To explore the complex depth of the theme by exploring the writings of the Church Fathers, Scripture, and historical documents. We hope to introduce tools of apologetics, so participants can learn how to defend a position used as a common argument against the theme.

Building the ByziClassroom



Use this outline to turn this issue of Byzikids into a Sunday School, Small Group or Homeschool Lesson!



1

PRAY

Use your voices to pray- open your meeting with a prayer.

Use your ears to hear the Word of God- read the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday together & complete the corresponding puzzle from page 12 or 13 to review the reading.

Present the icon lesson from page 7 which introduces the children to St. John the Short & the Tree of Obedience.

2

LEARN

Get to know our faith- Review the catechetical lesson on page 18 discussing the merits of fasting and how it can change us and help us to grow in virtue.

Then turn to page 15 to learn about the link between fasting and martyrdom.

On page 9, you can learn a new song to remind us that true fasting is not just about food, but about the things that we say and do as well.

3

PLAY

Prayer and fasting often brought the saints to secluded locations where they lived in harsh conditions. This month, why not make your very own cave or tent to dwell in for a bit?

There are many ways to do this: Drape a sheet between two chairs or a blanket over the back of a couch; climb under the long tablecloth on your dining room table, or even build a tent in the backyard! Be as creative as you like!

SNACK TIME!

This month's snack suggestion is to follow the example of the Desert Fathers. We suggest almonds or cashews, herbs like basil or parsley, and maybe even chocolate "bugs" or gummy "worms!"



SENSORY ACTIVITY!

Sensory play is an engaging activity for a wide age range, not only our youngest members. Try out our latest sensory activity from page 5 that let's our youngest learners explore the desert.



Sense-Ability

When God created us, He made us both body and soul, meaning we are both physical and spiritual beings. We are not like angels that are just spirits. For this reason, when we use our bodies to help us learn, our spirits are changed as well! Have you played with a sensory bin before?

A sensory bin is a small tub or table filled with items that you can touch, smell, taste or make noise with. They typically include items that are all about a particular theme. When we use our senses to help us learn something, it helps our brain to recall the information better.

FASTING - DESERT FATHERS

The Desert Fathers are wonderful examples for us of prayer and fasting. These early Christian hermits lived in the Egyptian desert in the 3rd century and ate a diet that was very restricted. Typically, they only ate one small meal per day. This meal consisted of very bland and simple foods. Common things they ate were dried bread, nuts and green herbs that they foraged for in the wild, though we have all heard of St. John of the Desert eating bugs and honey as well. These saints lived an entire life of prayer and fasting so that they could grow closer to Christ and glorify God by their actions. We can remember their example through a fun sensory experience this month as well!

Supplies:

- White rice
- Desert Printables (Provided at QR code)
- Plastic desert bugs
- Green herbs (ie: parsley, basil, or chives)
- Nuts or croutons
- Chocolate bugs or gummy worms

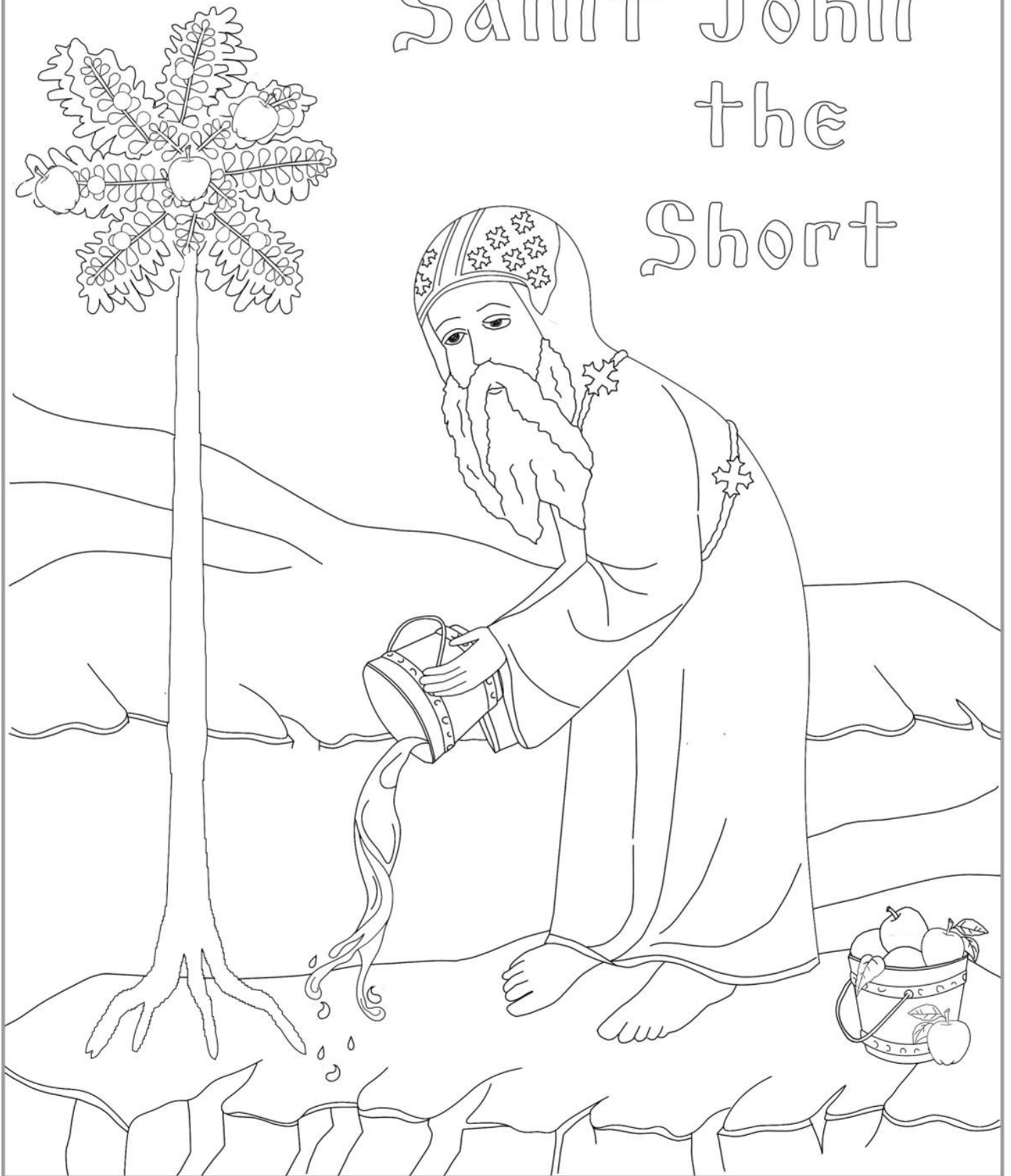
For our sensory bin this month, we suggest simple white rice to represent the desert sand. Add plastic bugs like scorpions or beetles, printable cacti and butterflies or moths for the children to play with. To enhance the experience, try out some fasting foods from the Desert Fathers as well! Put together a sampling of herbs, nuts, chocolate bugs and gummy worms for our Desert-Fathers-and-Mothers-in-Training to try out! The selection of items that you provide can be easily adjusted to accommodate food allergies. We hope you enjoy this Desert experience!



Scan to download the printable cards here



Saint John the Short



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[Printer-friendly coloring page can be downloaded here->](#)



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.

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

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.

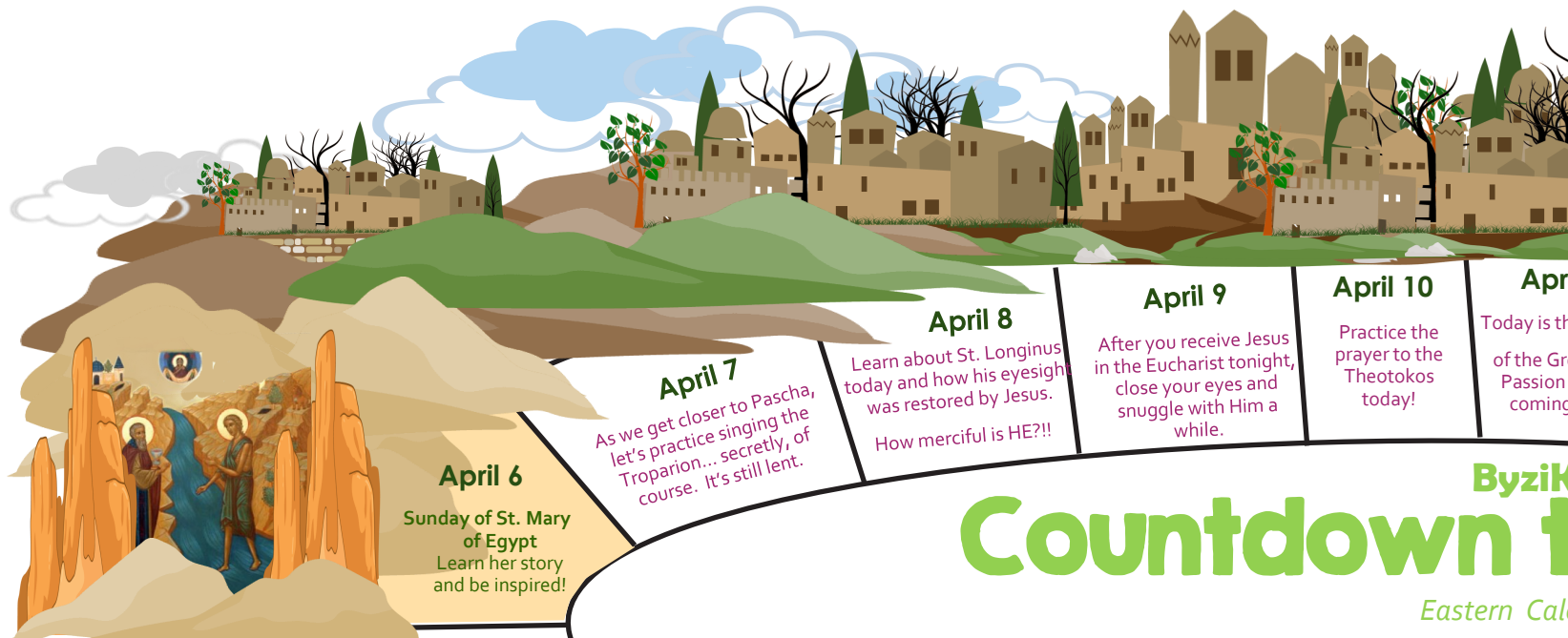
Give clothes, food and shel-ter to the peo-ple in need and pray ev-ery day that the slaves will be free.
When we fast to - get - her

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





Byzantine Countdown to Pascha

Eastern Calendar

April 10 Practice the prayer to the Theotokos today!	April 9 After you receive Jesus in the Eucharist tonight, close your eyes and snuggle with Him a while.	April 8 Learn about St. Longinus today and how his eyesight was restored by Jesus. How merciful is HE?!!	April 7 As we get closer to Pascha, let's practice singing the Troparion... secretly, of course. It's still lent.	April 6 Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt Learn her story and be inspired!	April 5 Practice the prayer to the Theotokos today	April 4 Tonight, listen for the entrance hymn & pray with the angels when Jesus enters!	April 3 Help someone whom you are tempted NOT to love today	April 2 Set aside a special time to sit before your icon corner and rest with Jesus a while	April 1 Be a helper like Simon of Cyrene. Help someone with a difficult task today
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March 25 The Annunciation Do a secret good deed for someone who is in need.	March 26 Watch for another opportunity to be a helper today!	March 27 Review and discuss the guidelines for proper behavior at Liturgy with your family	March 28 Think about the angels today and how your own angel helps you keep the fast	March 29 Defend your faith... and review the commandments in the Creed	March 30 Make a chotki bracelet with 10 beads to pray with every day and night!	March 31 Learn and practice the Jesus Prayer with your new beads	March 1 The Family is made in God's image...3 in 1! Review Psalm 127	March 2 Learn or review the Prayer before Communion	March 3 Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross How to Your Cross!	March 4 Review the litany said at Divine Liturgy and think of someone you know for each petition
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March 2 Cheese-fare/ Forgiveness Sunday: Ask forgiveness of all in your household	March 3 Clean Monday The Great Fast Begins! Here we go!!	March 4 Clean Tuesday It's a great day to clean your room!	March 5 Clean Wednesday Practice your prostrations	March 6 Clean Thursday Learn the Prayer of St. Ephrem	March 7 Clean Friday Make Kutjia (Koliva) in honor of St. Theodore's miracle	March 8 Saturday Read the story of...
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ne last day
eat Fast.
week is
g soon.

April 12
Lazarus Saturday
Listen to the gospel story & think about what you would do if you saw that!

April 13
Palm/Flowery Sunday
Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

April 14
Great and Holy Monday
Mt 21:18-20
Talk with your family about ways you can be a fruitful branch.

April 15
Great and Holy Tuesday
Mt 24:36-28:20
Keep the light burning for Jesus in your soul!

April 16
Great and Holy Wednesday
Mt 26:6-16 Tonight YOU can receive HOLY UNCTION

April 17
Great and Holy Thursday
1 Cor 11:23-32
Spend some extra time with Jesus in prayer tonight.

April 18
Great and Holy Friday
Be especially quiet and solemn today in honor of Jesus suffering and death.

April 19
Great and Holy Saturday
Help your family prepare for the celebration to come.... Tomorrow is PASCHA!

March 30
Sunday of St. John of the Ladder
Step by step, We're getting close

March 29
Clean your closets today and consider donating things you've outgrown

8
gels
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March 17
Dust your room and think about cleaning the dust from your soul too!

March 16
Sunday of the Paralyzed Man
Practice prayer today!

March 15
Remember to practice obedience, as Jesus was obedient to his parents too!

March 14
Take time to look outside notice the wonderful things God has made.

March 13
Learn about your patron saint

March 12
O Joyful Light
Make beeswax candles for your icon corner

March 11
Plant some basil seeds in pots today for Pascha

March 10
Visit someone who is sick or lonely, or maybe send them a card

March 9
Sunday of Orthodoxy
Gather your icons and have a procession!

March 8
Sunday of Theodore the Recruit
this really cool t ByziMom.com



Mirna Farahat for Byzikids

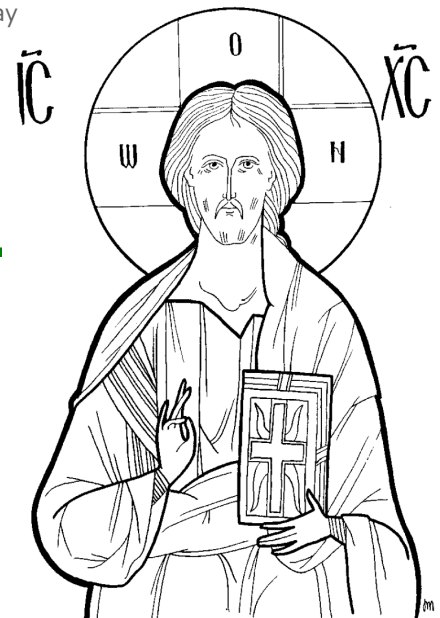
Caught You Listening

MARCH 2, 2025

○ **Gospel: Matthew 6: 14-21**

In today's Gospel, Jesus warns us to forgive people's wrongdoing. What does he say will happen if we don't forgive people's trespasses? Unscramble the words to find out.

Niteehr ilwl oyur Ftehar fvgiore ruoy tpseesras.



Icon courtesy of Iconographics

MARCH 9, 2025

○ **Gospel: John 1: 43-51**

In today's gospel, several Israeli towns and regions are mentioned. Match the first column to the second (you may need to get out your Bible and re-read the Gospel).

Jesus decided to go here	Nazareth
Philip's hometown	Galilee
Where Jesus met Philip	Bethsaida
The city of Andrew and Peter	Galilee
Jesus' hometown	Bethsaida

MARCH 16, 2025

○ **Gospel: Mark 2: 1-12**

In today's Gospel, Jesus demonstrates many abilities that prove he is God. Fill in the blank with the name of the ability Jesus displays.

- Delivering the word of God _____
- Recognizing the faith of the pallet-bearers _____
- Erasing sins _____
- Knowing the scribes' thoughts _____
- Refuting arguments _____
- Giving commands _____
- Making the paralyzed man healthy _____

Word Bank:

Authority Teaching Healing Wisdom Reading Thoughts Reading Hearts Forgiving



Icon courtesy of Iconographics

Icon courtesy of Iconographics

MARCH 23, 2025

○ **Gospel: Mark 8: 34-9:1**

True or False?

If any man would come after Jesus, he must be named Jesus. ____

Denying yourself and carrying your cross is a part of following Jesus. ____

If you give up your life for Jesus and the gospel, you will save money. ____

It is profitable to gain the whole world, even if you lose your soul. ____

A man can give \$100 in exchange for his life. ____

If you're ashamed of Jesus and his word, Jesus will be ashamed of you. ____

Jesus will come in the glory of his Father, along with holy angels. ____



Icon courtesy of Iconographics

MARCH 30, 2025

○ **Gospel: Mark 9: 17-31**

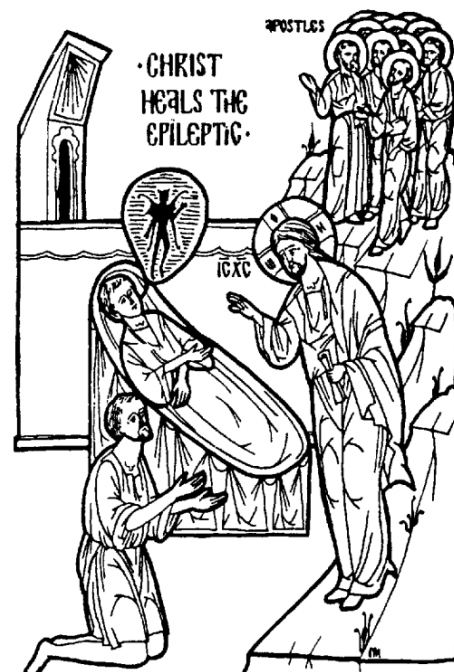
Crack the code to find out what Jesus said boy's father, and what the boy's father said to Jesus.

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- Jesus

" (@ % + (% 2 % ; * % + : { 5 1 } @ % + (% ^ . " - Boy's Father

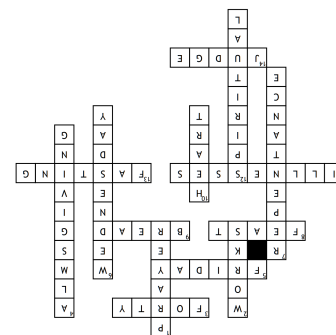
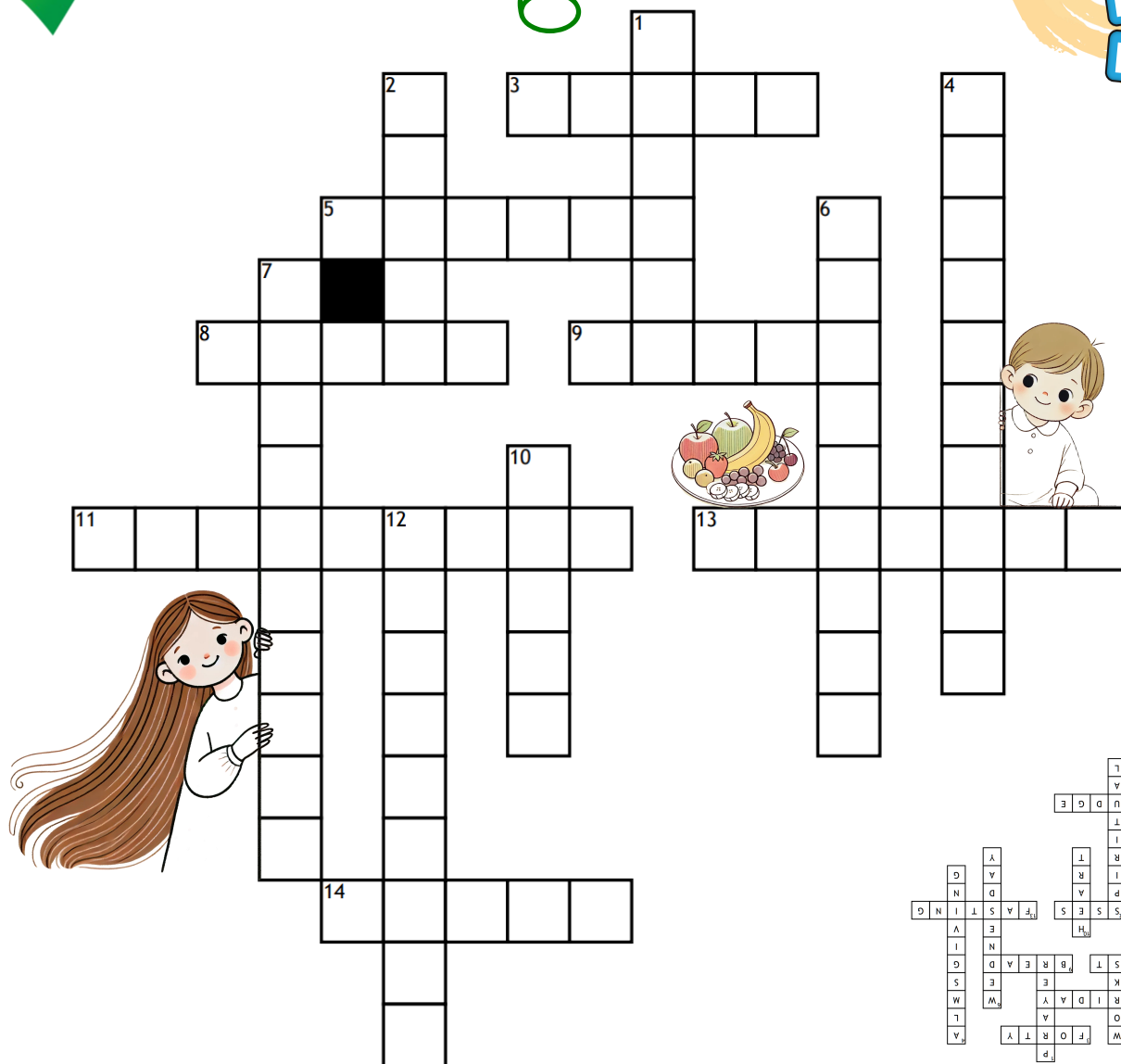
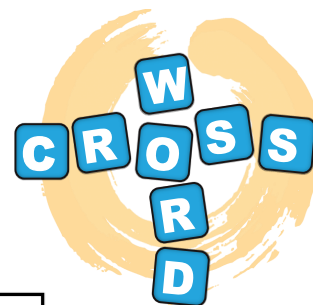
Hints:

! = A % = E (= I | = O 1 = U 5 = Y



Icon courtesy of Iconographics

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

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.

**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.*



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



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

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.

KNOW YOUR FAITH

By Lynne Wardach

Fasting



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.

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.

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)



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

