



## FEBRUARY 2024 ECF NEWSLETTER

Hi ECF Family,

This month we enter Great Lent, in preparation for Pasha later this spring. Great Lent begins with Forgiveness Vespers when we begin a period of fasting.

In early January, Father Taras asked that we all make a New Year's resolution to attend vespers and matins services more often. **He asked each family to attend three vespers services this year. Forgiveness vespers would be a great start.**

### Forgiveness Vespers

It is hard to teach forgiveness to children and adults alike. Stories from scripture are good examples – like the prodigal son. The son must admit he has sinned, that he is sorry, and that he needs his father. The father shows compassion – and does not wait for his son to come up to his house, he runs out of his home to meet his son on the road.

### ECF Upcoming Dates:

Feb. 3 | Slavic Soul Food  
sale 11 AM – 3 PM

Feb. 4 | Class at 9:20,  
Meatfare

Feb. 11 | ECF at 9 AM,  
Cheesefare, one liturgy  
at 10 AM followed by  
Forgiveness Vespers

Feb. 16 – 18 | High  
School Retreat

Feb. 18 | ECF at 9:20

Feb. 25 | Class at 9:20

“Lord Jesus Christ,  
Son of God, have  
mercy on me, a  
sinner”

At the same time, the son shows humility. The son offers to return to his father's home as a servant, rather than as his son.

Parents can use this story and others to talk about what asking for forgiveness requires – and what makes saying “sorry” so hard sometimes. Families can also talk about what makes forgiving someone else hard. The first-born son in the prodigal son parable is a good example here (as a firstborn myself, I tend to empathize with him the most!). What keeps the firstborn son from being happy for his brother? How does this pattern play out in our own families?

Younger children (...and older children, and adults!) might find the icon for this parable helpful – the prodigal son is hugging Christ. At Forgiveness Vespers, we often hug one another after we ask for each other's forgiveness. Again, it may be helpful to talk about the importance of *receiving* a hug (receiving an apology and forgiving!) in addition to giving one.

### What does the fast look like?

Different families take different approaches to fasting. The Byzantine calendar provided by the eparchy shows fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays during Great Lent. Others opt to fast for the duration of Great Lent. Fasting typically involves abstaining from animal products, as well as wine and oil on weekdays. Of course, people have health and dietary needs that should still be addressed!

### So, how can you observe the Great Fast as a family?

- ByziMom has listed some great fasting meals on her website [here](#). I personally love green curry and baked polenta, so those are good Lenten staples.
  - ByziMom also has a cookbook available: “The ByziMom's Guide to Great Fast Meals” which is on Amazon and costs about \$25.
- Depending on how you meal prep in your household, you can invite your kids into the kitchen to assist with fast-friendly meals.
- Ask older kids to find and cook a vegan recipe.
- *Remember that you can still enjoy food during this time!*

In Christ,

Stephanie Black