



Orthodoxy and the "Holiday Season"

Source: www.pravmir.com

From "101 ORTHODOX NOTEBOOK: Answers to Practical Questions About The Orthodox Way of Life."

The "Holiday Season"

In place of the Christian Feast before the Ministry of Christ, secular society has developed a game: "holiday season" lasting roughly from Thanksgiving until the secular New Year Parties, leading to overly inflated prices, watching Christmas "specials" on TV which escape from the constraints of time in the overnight Marketplace or worse, and a frenzy of shopping in order to buy a long list of presents nearly every one. "Carnal" shows music in the stores, "secularizing" famous literary stories (or vulgar comedies depicting how godless people "celebrate" Christmas) parties, and alcohol, are supposed to cheer everyone up and make them feel better. And of course, everyone knows about the dark side of the "season": increased robberies, more accidents, depression, family strife, and suicide.





Celebrating Before the Feast Makes No Sense

The sacred Feast of Our Lord's Nativity is preceded by a 40-day period of fasting and prayerful preparation. The world, however, is in its usual disregard of sacred things and holidays, but for immediate gratification, career work, much less, progress, or celebrate Christmas. Everyone must have fun of "cheer" for weeks BEFORE the actual feast, and by the time Christmas itself arrives (on the new calendar, much less the old calendar), everyone is nervous and exhausted from shopping and social obligations. The very meaning of Christmas (even if there are no such as the old calendar, and everyone is saying, "Oh, when, thank goodness THAT'S over with." That Christmas is over as soon as it begins. This makes absolutely no sense.

The Divine Rhythm of the Church Year,

In place of this shallow and meaningless custom of glibly cheer and unnecessary stress, the Holy Church offers us the sacred custom of the Nativity Fast. In the divinely inspired logic of the Church calendar, we go to enjoy a season of quiet, of fasting, of prayer, of inner preparation, in order to prepare our souls to receive the great grace of Christ's Nativity, whose sacred events (and the Feast of His Birth). This sensible and natural rhythm of preparation preceding celebration, and celebration lasting throughout a period (not a season, to obviously God's plan for how we are to spend our December and early January. And we willing to contribute to His plan!

How Are We to Deal with the "Holiday Season"?

As much as possible, simply ignore it. If you do not have to plan parties in your own homes, drink more than usual, read the fine to see a silly newly released movie, or spend all your time in shopping malls. These things are within our control. Also within our control is to fast, go to more church services, pray regularly at home, and quietly plan for our real celebration of the Lord's Nativity according to the Church calendar. Go only to the office parties or other social obligations that are absolutely necessary, eat only fasting food at these events, stay only as long as socially required, and keep drinking to a minimum. When the real Feast of the Lord's Nativity on the real December 25 (the "Old Calendar" December 25) arrives, you will receive a gift of spiritual joy which the world can never give.

What About Shopping for Presents?

Make a list of close relatives and friends. Do not overwhelm children with presents, both in our society have too much junk as it is. Consider making some ready gifts, bake cookies, keep things simple. Christmas has a serious moral obligation not to waste the sacred Feast of Christ's Nativity as an orgy of consumption.

Our Particular Feast Day

Here in our parish of St. Apollonia, we also have the opportunity to celebrate our parish feast-day during the period before Christmas, especially by fasting, confessions, and receiving Holy Communion. St. Apollonia is, one might say, the "Patron Saint of the Old Calendar," because the holy feast falls on the day when the new Orthodox celebrate the same Orthodox Christmas. Avoiding "Santa Day" activities on this day and concentrating on our dear saint's feast brings the calm and invites the grace of God to help our parish and us.

The Orthodox Way is a Gift Not a Burden



It is right and a burden to follow the Orthodox way of observing Christmas, and it is a burden not to do so, to follow the world's way. Let us receive this gift willingly, ungrudgingly, and cheerfully. Year by year, little by little, we will detach more and more from the thinking "holiday versus" and attach our hearts more and more to Christ, Who was born for our salvation and eternal joy.