

# The Fast in the Coptic Church



There are 2 different degrees in the fast.

**1st degree** : Where the church does not permit eating fish, e.g.


- ❖ The Lent
- ❖ Nineveh fast
- ❖ Wednesdays & Fridays

**2nd degree** : Where the church permits eating fish, e.g.

- ❖ Nativity fast
- ❖ Apostle fast
- ❖ Virgin Mary fast

The church permits eating fish in these fasts to **help** the believer because the whole days fast per year are about 250 days.

Why does the church permit the fish?

1. Fish are a symbol of chastity because they lay eggs and the male fertilizes them, so their reproduction is non sexual, so they are a symbol of self-control which is taught in the time of fast.
2. It was mentioned in the Bible that Jesus Himself ate fish after His resurrection (John 21:9-13). Of course, He used to eat other things, but they are not mentioned in the Bible.
3. In the 2 miracles of feeding the multitudes, Jesus blessed and gave them fish to eat. (Mat 14:15-21) (Mat 15:32-38).
4. When the tax gatherers asked Jesus to pay the 2 drachma tax; he asked Simon Peter to go to the sea and throw in a hook, and the first fish that comes up he will find in it a stater (equivalent to 4 drachma) to pay for himself and Jesus (Mat 17 :24-27).
5. After the resurrection of Jesus  when He appeared to the disciples at the sea of Tiberia (John 21:1-11) He ordered them to cast the net on the right hand side of the boat and they caught 153 fish!!! Why the Evangelist mention this number? Although similar miracle was done before in (Luke 5:1-11) and these was no mention to any number??

After the resurrection, had to be formed and he this number 153 is the sum of addition of the numerical figures from 1 to 17 and as the early church fathers explained that is number 17 is the summation of 10 + 7 which 2

perfect numbers which consequently means or symbolizes that the heavenly kingdom will be perfectly spread and preached by to all people and nations and people from different parts of the world will be gathered to the kingdom of heavens.

6. by the same concept; Jesus mentioned the parable of the dragnet (Mark 13:47:50) when he compared the kingdom of heaven to a dragnet cast into the sea and gathering fish of every kind and when it was filled they drew it to the beach and then gathered the good fish into containers and the bad were thrown away.
7. in Jesus calling to Simon Peter and Andrew He told them that He will make them fishers of men (Math 4:18-19) (Mark 1:16:18) which means that their being fishermen was a preparatory stage to be fishers of men from the materialistic change to spiritual Holy change. So by the fast we change to members suitable for the heavenly spiritual kingdom.
8. In the early Christian ages and with time of persecution the fish was taken as a symbol in Christianity and to identify the Christians and introduce them to each other secretly among the gentiles and the persecutors.
9. In the Latin language the word fish means **IXΘ• Σ (Echthos)** and these are the 1<sup>st</sup> letters of **(Isos Echristos Theos Sotir)** or **“Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour”**



*Learn to write your hurts in the sand and to carve your blessings in stone.*

Two friends were walking through the desert. During some point of the journey, they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other one in the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, he wrote in the sand:

***"TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE"***

They kept on walking, until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning, but his friend saved him. After he recovered from the near drowning, he carved on a stone:

***"TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SAVED MY LIFE"***

The friend, who had slapped and saved his best friend, asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand, and now, you carve on a stone, why?" The other friend replied: "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in sand, where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away, but when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone, where no wind can ever erase it."