

# ST. PHILIP'S FAST FOR FAMILIES

## Week 1: Feast of St. Philip

1. Read the Bible passage below, slowly and meditatively, and reflect on it.
2. Reflect your own Faith. Take some time in prayer to do this (15 - 30 minutes) and consider the following questions:
  - How you came to your Faith?
  - What made you continue to believe?
  - Did you have any important faith experiences?
  - How have you experienced God?
  - Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? If so, what is it like?
3. Pray/Sing the Tropar and Kondak of the Week with your family (see below).
4. Read the Bible passage below, again, this time aloud slowly and meditatively with your family.
5. Tell your family member(s) how you were called to Faith.
6. Ask them the following questions:
  - If you were to share your Faith with someone, such as a friend, how would you do so?
  - What would you say to your friend about how you experience Jesus?
  - How would you explain why you go to Church?
  - How could you tell your friends about Jesus?
7. Brainstorm about St. Philip's Fast projects and activities (e.g. charitable acts) that you can accomplish individually and as a family.
8. Conclude by saying the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

### Tropar - Tone 3

O Philip, proclaimer of God's word,  
The world is adorned and Ethiopia dances for joy  
For it is arrayed in beauty as with a crown.  
Enlightened by you it feasts your memory.  
For you taught all to believe in Christ,  
Finishing the course of the gospel as is right.  
And so, Ethiopia boldly lifts its hands to God.  
Pray to Him to grant great mercy to us.

### Kondak - Tone 8

The God inspired Philip,  
your friend, disciple and imitator of the Passion,  
proclaimed You as God to the whole world,  
O Christ, all merciful.  
By his intercessions and those of the Mother of God  
guard your Church and every city from the lawless enemies  
*(Anthology for Worship, p.723, 724)*

## **Bible Passage**

### **Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael John 1:43-50**

The next day, Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

### **Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast**

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant, from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.

## **Week 2: Presentation of the Theotokos**

1. Read the story of this Week's Feast (see below) slowly and meditatively to yourself.
2. Reflect on the reading and on how you "entered the Temple." i.e. on your encounter with God in the Church. Consider the following questions:
  - How have you "encountered God in the Temple" in your participation in the worshipping Services of the Church?
  - How have you "encountered God in the Temple" in your participation in the life of the Church?

Then, reflect on your experiences of love for/from God in Church.

3. Pray/Sing the Tropar and Kondak of the Week with your family.
4. Read the story of this Week's Feast aloud slowly and meditatively with your family.
5. Discuss your encounter with Jesus with your family.
6. Ask your family members(s) the following questions:
  - What are some of the things they enjoy about praying in Church?
  - Can they sing a song from Church?
  - Other than the Divine Services, what do they like about Church?
  - Would they invite their friends to Church? Why?
  - What would they say to express to their friends that attending Church is a worthwhile experience?
7. Discuss what kind of "Penance" you chose for St. Philip's Fast and how this Penance will help bring you "back closer to God." Remember, a Penance is not a self-punishment. It is an expression of Repentance, of coming back closer to God.

## 8. Conclude with a reading of the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

### Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant, from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.

### Tropar - Tone 4

Today is the prelude of the good pleasure of God,  
and the proclamation of salvation for the human race.  
in the temple of God the Virgin is clearly revealed  
and beforehand announces Christ to all.  
To her, then, let us cry out with a mighty voice:  
Rejoice, fulfillment of the Creator's plan.

### Kondak - Tone 4

The Savior's pure Temple,  
the precious bridalchamber and Virgin,  
the sacred treasury of the glory of God,  
is brought today into the house of the Lord;  
and with her she brings the grace of the divine Spirit.  
God's angels sing in praise of her:  
She is indeed the heavenly dwelling place.

*(For music see: Anthology for Worship, p.727)*

### Presentation of the Theotokos

According to tradition, the parents of the Virgin Mary, Righteous Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

After their prayers were answered, and when the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the Holy parents gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the all-pure Mary in Her finest clothes. With the singing of sacred songs and lighted candles, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45:14-15).

There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, 15 high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called "Psalms of Ascent.") The child Mary could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood.

All those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence. The Most Blessed Mary remained in the quarters for virgins, near the Temple. Round about the Temple, through the testimony of Holy Scripture (Exodus 38; 1 Kings 1: 28; Lk. 2: 37), and also the historian Josephus, there were many living quarters, in which dwelt those dedicated to the service of God. The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. "If anyone were to ask me," said Blessed Jerome, "how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer, 'that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian.'" But there are accounts in Church tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin's stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God.

## Week 3: St. Andrew the First-Called

1. Read the material on this Week's Feast (see below) slowly and meditatively to yourself.
2. Reflect on the reading and on how you and your world relate to the Messiah. Consider the following questions:
  - How do you need and have needed the Saviour in your personal life?
  - What healing do you need from the Saviour?
  - Which areas of our Canadian society do not reflect God's Will?
  - Which areas of our World today do not reflect God's Will, e.g. In what ways is our society and world not loving?
  - When Jesus returns as Messiah (King), how would our society and world be changed? (Provide examples)
  - What "concern" has God placed in your heart re: the lack of love in our world/society?
3. Pray/sing the Tropar and Kondak of the Week (see below) with your family.
4. Read the material on this Week's Feast aloud slowly and meditatively with your family.
5. Discuss with your family how you relate to the Messiah and your hopes in him.
6. Ask your children or family member(s) the following questions:
  - Do they know that Messiah means, "Anointed" or the one God chose to be King?
  - Do they know that the Greek version of the word is "Christos" or Christ?
  - Do they know that Messiah refers to Jesus' job title? (He is Jesus the Messiah (the Christ) and when he returns he will bring and establish the Kingdom of God?)
8. Conclude with the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast.

#### Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant, from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.

#### Tropar - Tone 4

As the first-called of the Apostles  
and full brother of their leader  
implore the Master of all to grant peace to the world  
and - to our souls - great mercy.

#### Kondak - Tone 2

Let us praise God's herald, whose name is "courage",  
Peter's kinsman who leads those in the Church who follow the chief apostle,  
for as then to Peter so now to us he cries aloud:  
"We have found the One so longed for."

*(Anthology for Worship, p.732)*

#### St. Andrew the First-Called

Jesus' First Disciples (John 1:35f)

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

### St. Andrew in Tradition

After the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, St. Andrew went to the Eastern lands preaching the Word of God. He went through Asia Minor, Thrace, Macedonia, and Ukraine. He stopped overnight on the hills of Kyiv. Rising in the morning, he said to those disciples that were with him: "See these hills? Upon these hills shall shine forth the beneficence of God, and there will be a great city here, and God shall raise up many churches." The apostle went up around the hills, blessed them and set up a cross. He also went to Thrace, where in the small village of Byzantium, the future Constantinople, he founded the Church of Christ. On his journeys the First-Called Apostle endured many sufferings and torments from pagans, but through the prayers of the Apostle, the Lord worked many miracles.

## Week 4: St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

1. Read the material on this Week's Feast slowly and meditatively to yourself. Recall that St. Nicholas was a miracle-working saint who had a special love for children and the poor.
2. Reflect on this Week's reading and on what it is like to be poor in our society/world and read what Jesus says about the poor (Luke 6:20-26; Luke 12:22-34; Matthew 25:31-46). Ask yourself the following questions:
  - What are some new ways we can help the poor as a parish and as a country?
  - What can you do to help the poor?
3. Pray/sing the Tropar and Kondak of the Week with your family.
4. Read the material on this Week's Feast aloud, slowly and meditatively with your family.
5. Share with your family member(s) your thoughts about the life and lot of the poor.
6. Discuss with family member(s) their experience of meeting/seeing the poor. Consider the following questions:
  - What might it be like to be poor?
  - Does Jesus love the poor with a special love?
  - How Jesus wants us to help the poor?
  - What are ways in which we can help the poor?
8. Conclude with the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast.

### Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant, from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.

### Tropar - Tone 4

The truth of your deeds made you for your flock a rule of faith  
And an image of meekness, a teacher of continence.  
And so you gained the heights through humility,  
riches through poverty, father and bishop Nicholas.  
Intercede with Christ our God  
for the salvation of our souls.

### Kondak - Tone 3

In Myra, O holy one, you proved yourself a priest.  
You fulfilled the Gospel of Christ, O venerable father.  
You laid down your soul for your people  
and saved the innocent from death.  
And so you were sanctified as a great initiator of God's grace.

*(For music see: Anthology for Worship, p.735)*

### St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

St. Nicholas' parents could not have children for many years, but when they prayed to God, God gave them a child, St. Nicholas. His mother, Nonna, after giving birth, was immediately healed from illness. The newborn infant, while in the baptismal font, stood on his feet to pray, praising the All Holy Trinity.

St. Nicholas was chosen Archeparch thus: a bishop had a vision of Jesus telling him that the next Archeparch of Myra would be the first person to arrive in church. The bishop went to church at night to see who it would be. The first person in church was the child Nicholas (he was always the first to arrive). "What is your name, child?" the bishop asked. The boy-saint replied, "My name is Nicholas, Master, and I am your servant."

When he grew up, St. Nicholas participated in the First Ecumenical Council. This Council proclaimed the Nicene Symbol of Faith, which we pray in every Liturgy.

One time, a poor man, with three daughters had no food. In desperation the man planned to sell his daughters so they would have money for food. When the saint learned of the man's poverty and his wicked intention, he secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. With the money, the man arranged an honorable marriage for his daughter. St. Nicholas also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, St. Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and to conceal his good deeds.

Another time, a family went on a pilgrimage to Vyshorod, Ukraine — a special place because its Church contained relics of Sts. Borys and Hlib (2 brothers who, witnessing to Christ, were killed by an evil prince). Returning home, their only child, not being careful, fell into the Dnipro-Slavutych River and was lost. The distraught parents asked St. Nicholas to pray to God for the life of their only child. St. Nicholas, hearing the grief-filled prayers of the parents, took the infant from the waters, revived him and placed him in the choir-loft of the church of Holy Wisdom before his wonder-working icon. In the morning, the infant was found safe — though all wet— by his thrilled parents, who praised St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. The icon depicting this event is called St. Nicholas the Soaked.

## Week 5: Ancestors of the Messiah

1. Read the material on this Week's Feast slowly and meditatively to yourself. Recall that Jesus' Holy Ancestors include all of his biological and spiritual ancestors from the Old Testament. They cooperated in, prepared for, and helped enable his Nativity because they answered the Call of God. Be mindful of the fact that God calls us too to go and witness to His Love.
2. Reflect on the following readings: on the Birth of Moses (Exodus 1: 8-22 and 2:1-10) and the Call of Moses (Exodus 3:1-10). Then, think about the following points:
  - God chooses us even before we are born.
  - God gives each of us a Mission to help Him save and love people.Finally, consider ways in which God might be calling you to His do His work.
3. Pray/Sing the Tropar and Kondak of the Week (see below) with your family.
4. Read the material on the Feast aloud slowly and meditatively with your family
5. Share with your family your thoughts about God's Call and Mission.

6. Ask your children or family member(s) to consider the following questions:

- What would they like to do for God? (Ask them to name 3-5)
  - How would they like to help God in the future?
  - How can they help God now?
- When is your Name Day and what was your Saint like?

8. Conclude with the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast.

### Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant, from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.

### Tropar - Tone 2

By faith you justified Your ancestors,  
and through them you betrothed the Church taken from the nations.  
These saints exult in glory,  
from their seed comes the blessed fruit,  
the one who bore You without seed.  
By their prayers, O Christ our God, have mercy on us!

### Kondak - Tone 6

Armed by the Being that defies description,  
You defied the man-made idol, O thrice blesses youth.  
In the midst of the unbearable flames  
you stood and cried out to God:  
"In Your mercy o gracious One, hasten and come to our aid,"  
for You can do whatever You will.

*(Anthology for Worship, p.741,742)*

### The Story of Moses (Exodus 1:8 ff.)

A new king, who did not know what Joseph had done for Egypt, told the Egyptians: "There are too many of those Israelites in our country, and they are becoming more powerful than we are. If we don't outsmart them, their families will keep growing larger. And if our country goes to war, they could easily fight on the side of our enemies and escape from Egypt."

The Egyptians put slave bosses in charge of the people of Israel and tried to wear them down with hard work. Those bosses forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses, where the king could store his supplies. But even though the Israelites were mistreated, their families grew larger, and they took over more land. Because of this, the Egyptians hated them more than before and made them work even harder, so that their lives were miserable.

The Egyptians were cruel to the people of Israel and forced them to make bricks and to mix mortar and to work in the fields. Finally, the king called in Shiphrah and Puah, two women who helped the Hebrew mothers when they gave birth. He told them: "If a Hebrew woman gives birth to a girl, let the child live. If the baby is a boy, kill him!"

But the two women were faithful to God and did not kill the boys. The king called them in again and asked, "Why are you letting those baby boys live?" They answered: "Hebrew women have their babies much quicker than Egyptian women. By the time we arrive, their babies are already born." God was good to the two women because they truly respected him, and He blessed them with children of their own. The Hebrews kept multiplying until finally, the king gave a command to everyone in the nation, "As soon as a Hebrew boy is born, throw him into the Nile River! But you can let the girls live." A man from the Levi tribe married a woman from the same tribe, and she later had a baby boy. He was a beautiful child, and she kept him inside for three months... (read the rest of the story by your family Bible!)

## Week 6: Sunday of the Holy Fathers

1. Read the material on this Week's Feast (see below) slowly and meditatively to yourself. Recall that we remember the Holy Prophets and Prophetesses as they spoke God's Word in the world and prophesied the coming of the Messiah.
2. Read and reflect on the following Bible passages Story of the Call of David: I Samuel 16:1-13, noting what kind of person does God chose, and 3 of the Prophecies of the Messiah's Birth (from Royal Hours for Nativity: Micah 5:2-4; Isaiah 7:10-14; Isaiah 9:6-7. ) (see below)
3. Pray/sing the Tropar and Kondak of the Week (see below) with your family.
4. Read the material on the Feast aloud, slowly and meditatively with your family.
5. Discuss with your family who God chooses and the Prophecies about Christ.
6. Ask your family the following questions:
  - Does God like better those who are biggest, strongest?
  - How did Samuel show David was chosen King?
  - In Greek and Hebrew, what is that word for "chosen King?"
  - What happens at Baptisms?
  - In the Micah reading: Was a big city chosen? How will people live?
  - In Isaiah 7: What is the Sign? What does Immanuel mean?
  - In Isaiah 9: What will save the World? How will He rule and over what?
8. Conclude with the antiphon of St. Philip's Fast.

### Antiphon of St. Philip's Fast

O Bethlehem, be prepared; Eden is opened to all; O Ephratha, be made ready; for in the cave the tree of life has blossomed forth from the Virgin; for her womb has been shown to be a spiritual paradise, in which is the divine plant, from which having eaten, we will live and not die as Adam did. Christ is born to raise the image that had fallen.

### Tropar - Tone 2

Great are the achievements of faith!  
In the fountain of flames, the Three Holy Youths rejoiced as by the water of rest,  
and the prophet Daniel was revealed shepherding lions like sheep.  
Through their intercession, O Christ God, save our souls!

### Kondak – Tone 6

Armed by the Being that defies description,  
You defied the man-made idol, O thrice blesses youth.  
In the midst of the unbearable flames  
you stood and cried out to God:  
"In Your mercy o gracious One, hasten and come to our aid,"  
for You can do whatever You will.

*(For music see: Anthology for Worship, p.744)*

## Sunday of the Holy Fathers

The Sunday before the Nativity of the Lord is known as the Sunday of the Holy Fathers. On this day, the Church commemorates all those who were well pleasing to God from all ages — from Adam to St. Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos. The holy prophets and prophetesses are also remembered today, especially the Prophet Daniel and the three holy youths.

**Micah 5:2-4**

Bethlehem Ephrath, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah.

But the LORD will choose one of your people to rule the nation - someone whose family goes back to ancient times. The LORD will abandon Israel only until this ruler is born, and the rest of his family returns to Israel. Like a shepherd taking care of his sheep, this ruler will lead and care for his people by the power and glorious name of the LORD his God. His people will live securely, and the whole earth will know his true greatness,

#### **Isaiah 7:10-14**

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

#### **Isaiah 9:6-7**

A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be Wonderful Advisor and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace. His power will never end; peace will last forever. He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong. He will always rule with honesty and justice. The LORD All-Powerful will make certain that all of this is done.