

Eve of Great Lent or Great Barekendan

The Armenian Church has defined the period of Great Lent as a time of abstinence and repentance for the faithful. Each Sunday during this period is named after an event in the Holy Bible that contains the message of the day. According to the calendar, the days prior to weekly fasts, as well as Great Lent, (with the exception of the fast preceding Holy Nativity) are called Barekendan. The word Barekendan means “good living” or “good life”, as we are called to live cheerfully, joyfully, and to be happy on these days preceding fasting periods.

On these days of Barekendan, the angel’s words addressed to the prophet Elijah are fulfilled: “Arise and eat, otherwise the journey will be too great for you” (1 Kings 19:7). The Armenian Church thus allows her faithful to organize games, festivals, carnivals and large, plentiful meals to observe the feast, as it is followed by a period of fasting and abstinence.

The Eve of Great Lent, as Great Barekendan is also called, commemorates the human bliss, which Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden. It also symbolizes the heavenly right, according to which, mankind could eat all types of fruit, except the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Barekendan is the manifestation of the virtues of the soul, through which people can transform mourning to joy, and torment to peace. It is with this comprehension, with bowing of our souls, penitence, fasting and hope for mercy, that each Christian individual should take his first step on the long, 40 day journey of Great Lent, culminating with the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The period starting from the day following the Great Barekendan and lasting till the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is called Great Lent. In the period of the Great Lent, people, refraining from bodily pleasures and sins, get prepared for the Feast of the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ by means of abstinence and repentance. Both spiritual and moral and bodily abstinence are considered to be important. Our church fathers have called the period of the Great Lent as “Karasnordats”, as the period of fasting lasts 40 days. This period of the Great Lent is also called “Salt and bread”, as in the past during the period of the Great Lent people have eaten only salt and bread.

In the New and old Testaments there are many testimonies concerning the period of Great Lent. Moses fasted for forty days and only then received the Lord's rules and canons. However, this period is related to 40-day period of temptation of Christ in the desert, following which our Church fathers established this period of fasting.

Fasting may be of three kinds: usual fasting, rigorous abstinence and absolute fasting. In case of usual fasting people can eat only food of vegetable origin. In case of rigorous fasting people refuse to eat any food even of vegetable origin. And in case of absolute fasting people refuse to eat any kind of food, including even bread and water.

During the period of the Great Lent curtains in the churches are closed in commemoration of the fact that after sinning Adam was exiled from Eden and the doors were closed before him.

When is celebrated

03.02.2008
22.02.2009
14.02.2010
06.03.2011
19.02.2012
10.02.2013
02.03.2014
15.02.2015
07.02.2016
26.02.2017
11.02.2018
03.03.2019
23.02.2020
14.02.2021
27.02.2022
19.02.2023
11.02.2024
02.03.2025
15.02.2026
07.02.2027
27.02.2028
11.02.2029
03.03.2030