

HOW TO READ THE BOOK OF PSALMS AS A CHURCH COMMUNITY DURING THE NATIVITY & GREAT FASTS

The Psalms are one of the most beautiful parts of the Bible. They teach us how to praise God and to be in awe of Him, He who made the heavens and the earth. In monasteries, the entire Book of Psalms is read each week and reflects that we should “pray without ceasing.”

Throughout the New Testament, we repeatedly hear Jesus say that we must “pray and fast.” During the Nativity and the Great Fasts, this is an ideal time for your church to pray the Book of Psalms (or the “Psalter”) on a daily basis. Don’t worry – you won’t be reading the ENTIRE Book of Psalms EACH day!!

There are 150 Psalms, and the “sections” (or “groups”) in the Book of Psalms are called “kathismas.” “Kathismas” can include anywhere from one to fourteen psalms. There are twenty “kathismas” in the Book of Psalms.

The reading of the Book of Psalms should work in the following manner:

One of the Antiochian Women in your church should organize a group – 20 is a good number (since there are 20 kathismas), but any amount will do. Either collect names in person OR have each individual email you at least **two weeks** before the Fast starts. Place each name next to a kathisma and provide each person with the list on the back of this page to keep track of their readings. They do **NOT** need to purchase a Psalter; the Book of Psalms as found in the Orthodox Study Bible can be used.

Each member of the group is assigned a number which corresponds to a “kathisma.” On the first day of the Nativity Fast, Person #1 reads Kathisma 1 (Psalms 1-8), Person #2 reads Kathisma 2 (Psalms 9-16), Person #3 reads Kathisma 3 (Psalms 17-23), and so on.

On the next day of the Nativity Fast, Person #1 reads Kathisma 2 (Psalms 9-16), Person #2 reads Kathisma 3 (Psalms 17-23), Person #3 reads Kathisma 4 (Psalms 24-31), etc.

When each person reaches the last set of Psalms on their respective day, they then should start back at the beginning of the Book of Psalms, at Kathisma 1 (Psalms 1-8). By doing this, the Book of Psalms will be read twice during the Fasts.

NOW we realize that you MIGHT be overwhelmed by doing this – you’re already thinking, “Oh, I just KNOW I’ll miss a day here or there.” It’s OKAY (take deep breaths!). Set aside a time of day (either early morning or late evening) and **keep to it**. Prayer is a STRUGGLE, and this is no exception. But we can struggle TOGETHER! If you miss one or two of your readings, DON’T DESPAIR! Pick up either where you left off – or skip ahead to the Psalms you are to read for that particular date.

BEFORE beginning each kathisma, recite the Trisagion Prayers (which can be found in any Orthodox prayer book). The "Little Red Prayer Book" can also be accessed via the Antiochian Archdiocese website (<http://www.antiochian.org/beloved-little-red-prayer-book-content-now-online>).

At the end of each kathisma, recite the following:

"Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

"Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to thee, oh God! (3 times)

"Our God and our hope, glory to Thee."

For the Nativity Fast (that begins on November 15), locate your name on the list that has been prepared by one of the ladies in your church. Begin reading the kathisma that corresponds with your name. For example: Let's say my name is listed next to Person #10. I will begin on Sunday, November 15 with the readings next to #10 – Psalms 71-77. The next day, Monday, November 16, I will read the next set of Psalms on the list: 78-85, and so on, and then continue on through Christmas Eve.

For the Great Lenten Fast, you will begin reading your assigned Psalms on Monday, March 14. You will continue each day throughout the Great Fast, and end your readings on Palm Sunday.

The breakdown of the Psalms/Kathismas are as follows:

Person #1	Day 1 – Psalms 1-8 (Kathisma 1)
Person #2	Day 1 – Psalms 9-16 (Kathisma 2)
Person #3	Day 1 – Psalms 17-23 (Kathisma 3)
Person #4	Day 1 – Psalms 24-31 (Kathisma 4)
Person #5	Day 1 – Psalms 32-36 (Kathisma 5)
Person #6	Day 1 – Psalms 37-45 (Kathisma 6)
Person #7	Day 1 – Psalms 46-54 (Kathisma 7)
Person #8	Day 1 – Psalms 55-63 (Kathisma 8)
Person #9	Day 1 – Psalms 64-69 (Kathisma 9)
Person #10	Day 1 – Psalms 70-76 (Kathisma 10)
Person #11	Day 1 – Psalms 77-84 (Kathisma 11)
Person #12	Day 1 – Psalms 85-90 (Kathisma 12)
Person #13	Day 1 – Psalms 91-100 (Kathisma 13)
Person #14	Day 1 – Psalms 101-104 (Kathisma 14)
Person #15	Day 1 – Psalms 105-108 (Kathisma 15)
Person #16	Day 1 – Psalms 109-117 (Kathisma 16)
Person #17	Day 1 – Psalm 118 (Kathisma 17)
Person #18	Day 1 – Psalms 119-133 (Kathisma 18)
Person #19	Day 1 – Psalms 134-142 (Kathisma 19)
Person #20	Day 1 – Psalms 143-150 (Kathisma 20)

Updated as of August 15, 2015