

## Joy in fasting

We have begun the nativity fasting with the grace of God. This fasting is arranged by the Church in preparation for receiving the birth of the incarnated word of God, as Moses the prophet fasted before receiving the word of God on the two tablets of the covenant on the mountain. In fact, and contrary to what some may expect, the time of fasting is a season of joy and a season to fill the heart with gladness.



Joy in fasting is a true joy that springs in the hearts of those who fast spiritually and sincerely. I believe that there are seven sources for this joy:

1. **Joy through discipline...** The period of fasting is a magnificent exercise for discipline. Self-discipline leads to freedom from one's passions and defeating them, and thus brings about the fruit of inner-freedom, and freedom brings joy to the heart.

2. **Joy through richness:** The period of fasting is an opportunity for spiritual nourishment to fill one's spirit with readings, prayers, hymns, and acts of mercy... All of which bring joy!

3. **Joy through giving:** When we fast we spare some of what we eat to give to those who are in need or less fortunate than us. The words of Jesus encourage us, saying: "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Act 20:35)

4. **Joy through enlightenment:** When the burden of the flesh becomes lighter and the spirit is well nourished through readings, prayer and communion, the word of the book is fulfilled in us:

"Your light shall break forth like the morning...Your light shall dawn in the darkness and your darkness shall be as the noonday" (Isa 58:8-10) For the divine light dawns in the heart and the mind as a fruit of fasting...And light, naturally, brings joy to the heart.



5. **Joy through drawing near to God:** Fasting draws our attention from worldly things to dedicate more time to live with Christ. When we give our time and our hearts to God to work within us, we have a strong feeling of his presence which brings joy to the soul and his faithful promises are fulfilled: "The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail." (Isa 58:11)... In the presence of the Lord Jesus, there is guidance, satisfaction, and strength... All of which bring joy to the heart..!

6. **Joy in solving problems and defeating the devil that mislead, impair, and spoil...** But "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting" (Mk 9:29)

7. **Joy in praising the Lord...** And being delighted in soaring high with him above all kinds of sorrow... According to the lovely promise: "... Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Isa. 14:58)

The church lives this joy and exaltation of our loving God through the period of fasting and the month of Kiahk, during which we leap sharing with the heavenly their praises. Thus, joy pours abundantly in our hearts...!

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