

# Fasting

## A Season for Repentance

**Repentance is indeed a companion to the Christian** in his life. It accompanies him throughout the course of the journey of his sojourn in this world, from the moment of his burial in the baptismal font and his resurrection into a new life till he becomes free from the prison of the body to the joy of heaven. In essence, repentance is a life of wakefulness, attentiveness, and vigilance. It is wakefulness in strife, attentiveness to the dangers of the journey, and vigilance for the goal, the wedding garments, and purity of heart.

Sometimes, the spirit of repentance weakens in the lives of the children of God due to many reasons, but mainly, because of the soul is being busy with worldly matters rather than its salvation.

Because of this, the Church takes heed in instituting fixed, and closely spaced, seasons for fasting during which one become wakeful and attentive to one's true benefit and eternal future. Fasting prepares us to confront ourselves and when we do so, we discover the degree of ruin which has befallen unto us as a result of negligence, complacency, and laziness. We will also discover the extent of deviation from the goal in our lives so we start paying attention to the path of repentance and sanctification.

The Great lent is the season for returning to the place of true repose. **"Return to your rest, O my soul"** (Psalm 116:7). During Great lent, the Church keeps on calling, with its tunes and prayers for forty days, to wake up the sleepy and those who are lost in the paths of sin and misguidance so that they may wake up and come back. This is the time of repentance; it is the time of salvation and acceptance. It is a time of light, not of darkness

. Fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and purity of the body all combined, without repentance, cannot lift the face of man before God, for sin completely prevents man from lifting up his head.

The repentance, acknowledgement of sin, and the broken heart of the publican caused his prayers, charity, and fasting to be accepted by God. To the contrary, God did not attach much value to the fasting of the Pharisee because it was void of repentance and acknowledgement of sin. On the other hand, repentance justified the publican in the eyes of God and caused his prayer and fasting to be heard and accepted.

**"But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word"** (Isaiah 66:2).

Individual repentance may depend on the work, desire, attitude and readiness of the individual and his perseverance; however, communal repentance is the duty of the church as a whole. The Church at large has a direct responsibility for the home land and world. She was established in this world to make it holy and to intercede on its behalf through repentance and prayer.

## Temptation

+ With the beginning of fasting, the enemy of God becomes more enraged and intensifies his warfare against the believers.

+ Fasting is the weapon which the Lord offers to His believers so that they could become more fortified with it, together with prayers, during spiritual warfare.

+ The Lord did not need to fast, for in Him there was no sin. Nonetheless, He fasted to sanctify our fasting and to strengthen it through His own, encouraging us to carry it out. Like a mother when she tastes the medicine in front of her sick child to encourage him to drink it.

+ "By the incontinence of the belly, Adam was cast out of paradise, the flood [came] in Noah's time, and brought down the thunders on Sodom."

**St. John Chrysostom (Homily 13 on Matthew)**

+ "When there is an increasing struggle from the tempter, it becomes necessary for us to fast so that the body performs the Christian duty in its fight against the worldly lusts through repentance, urging oneself to victory in humility."

**St Augustine of Hippo**

+ As children of God, we believe that **"for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"** (Romans 14:17). We believe that all worldly kingdoms and their desires will vanish; therefore, we refuse to be lead behind them and bow down before the devil.

+ The three trials that the devil sets against us are those which St. John the beloved mentions in his first epistle **"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ...the world is passing away, and the lust of it..."** (1John 2:16-17). The lust of the flesh is manifested in the temptation of turning stone into bread. The lust of the eyes is manifested in the temptation of flying off the pinnacle of the Temple such that we are glorified in the eyes of others. The lust of pride of life is manifested in the temptation of the worldly kingdoms and its glories which are always presented to us in return for submitting and bowing down to Satan. In all three cases, the Lord Jesus has revealed to us the path to victory through the word of God.

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