

“Fasting as Feasting – Bread in the Desert”

Scriptural References on Fasting

Deuteronomy 8.1-10

[1] "All the commandment which I command you this day you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers.

[2] And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or not.

[3] And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

[4] Your clothing did not wear out upon you, and your foot did not swell, these forty years.

[5] Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.

[6] So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

[7] For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills,

[8] a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey,

[9] a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper.

[10] And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

Matthew 4.1-4

[1] Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

[2] And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.

[3] And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

[4] But he answered, "It is written, `Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

John 4.30-34

[30] They went out of the city and were coming to him.

[31] Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

[32] But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

[33] So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?"

[34] Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.

John 6.30-35, 48-58

So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst... I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever."

Wisdom of Solomon 16.20-21

Instead of these things thou didst give thy people food of angels, and without their toil thou didst supply them from heaven with bread ready to eat, providing every pleasure and suited to every taste. For thy sustenance manifested thy sweetness toward thy children; and the bread, ministering to the desire of the one who took it, was changed to suit every one's liking.

Articles on Fasting

“Fasting and Feasting”

Source: Unknown

LENT is a time for **fasting**

LENT is a time for a joyous season of **feasting**.

LENT is a time to **fast** from certain things and to **feast** on others.

During Lent Holy Mother the Church calls on us to:

Fast from judging others feast on the Christ indwelling in them.

Fast from emphasis on differences feast on the unity of life.

Fast from apparent darkness feast on the reality of light.

Fast from thoughts of illness feast on the healing power of God.

Fast from words that pollute feast on phrases that purify.

Fast from discontent feast on gratitude

Fast from anger feast on patience

Fast from pessimism feast on optimism.
 Fast from worry feast on divine order.
 Fast from complaining feast on appreciation

Fast from negatives feast on affirmatives
 Fast from unrelenting pressures feast on unceasing prayer
 Fast from hostility feast on nonresistance
 Fast from bitterness feast on forgiveness
 Fast from self-concern feast on compassion for others.

Fast from personal anxiety feast on eternal truth.
 Fast from discouragement feast on hope.
 Fast from facts that depress feast on truths that uplift.
 Fast from lethargy feast on enthusiasm.
 Fast from suspicion feast on truth.

Fast from thoughts that weaken feast on promises that inspire
 Fast from shadows of sorrow feast on sunlight of serenity
 Fast from idle gossip feast on purposeful silence.
<http://www.catholic.net/RCC/lent/feast.html>

A Meditation on Fasting and Worship

By Charles Handren

Lent 2005

Lent has somewhat of a morose reputation because it is linked, in many people’s minds, with such things as fasting and sacrifice and self-denial. But for others, Lent is one of the most cherished seasons of the year because they know that fasting and sacrifice and self-denial are not ends in themselves, but are pathways designed to lead us to the glory of God. Let me explain what I mean.

Fasting never stands alone in the Bible. It is always linked with other activities like prayer, repentance, mourning, and worship (e.g., 1 Samuel 7:3-6; Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 9:1-5; Isaiah 58:1-14; Luke 2:36-38; Acts 13:1-3). Thus, in fasting we do not deny ourselves for the sake of denying ourselves, rather we abstain from good things so that we can feast on great things.

And it’s important to note that we can only fast from good things. For instance, a person cannot fast from greed or lust or anger or envy—he must repent from these things. All that’s left to fast from, then, are good, God-given things like food and leisure. In fasting, we voluntarily set good things aside so that we can seek the things that are above, “where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (see Colossians 3:1-4). Fasting is a kind of prayer that communicates the depth of our desire to feast on God. And this is why I say that fasting and sacrifice and self-denial are not ends in themselves, but are pathways designed to lead us to the glory of God.

I love Lent because I love to feast on the glory of God, and this year my earnest desire is to feast on His glory through worship. Specifically, I want to know more about what the Bible means when it instructs us to “be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and

hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-21). And again in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

And at the outset of these forty-days, I see four lessons in these texts that will, I’m sure, serves as guideposts for the journey. First, worship is about expressing our hearts to God in song (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). “Psalms” refers, as you might imagine, to the book of Psalms which was for Israel a sort of hymnal. “Hymns” (which comes from the Greek word *humnos*) refers to songs that have religious content, in other words, to formal compositions of words and music. Therefore, both “A Mighty Fortress is our God” and “Shout to the Lord” are hymns as the Bible sees it. “Spiritual songs” refers to melodies and lyrics which spontaneously flow out of the heart to God.

I praise God for this tripartite phrase because we need all of these forms of songs. We need to sing psalms because in doing so we sing the Word of God and the truth thereof plants all the more deeply in our hearts and minds. We need to sing formal songs, or hymns, because in doing so we gain melodies and language with which to express ourselves to God and others. We need to sing spiritual songs because they display a deep and genuine love of God, for we only sing spontaneously about that which we cherish in our hearts.

From time to time I write formal poems for Kim because I love her and want to thoughtfully express myself to her. Some of the phrases from these poems have become cherished expressions of love in our marriage. There are also times when I am overwhelmed with love for her and without more than a thought I pour my heart out to her. The precise phrases of these expressions are most often lost in the moment, but they are nonetheless vital signs of a deep and genuine love between us.

Worshiping God in song is much like this: we need planned and thoughtful expressions of love for God, and we also need unplanned and spontaneous expressions of love for God. Both are incomplete without the other. Both are a glory to God. Both are worship.

Second, worship is about learning to express thanks to God “always and for everything” (Eph. 5:20). Thankful people learn to look not so much at their circumstances as at the God who is sovereign over their circumstances. Thankful people learn to think not so much of the consequences of things for themselves as of the consequences of things for the glory of God. Thankful people learn to look to God in faith when they cannot see His hand or understand His ways. Thankful people learn to trust that God is good and that in the end He will work all things together for their good. Thankful people learn to see suffering as an opportunity to glorify God and become more like Christ. Thankful people learn to see success as an opportunity to glorify God by acknowledging that in “the Lord alone are righteousness and strength” (Isaiah 45:24).

And this way of life is intimately connected to singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. For singing helps us to set our minds on the things that are above so that when we are struck with either suffering or success we know how to respond and we have language with which to respond.

Third, worship is about submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21). The primary words for worship in both Hebrew and Greek (*shahah* and *proskuneo*, respectively) mean “to bow down.” When you look at the occurrences of these words in the Bible, you discover that worship has two closely related but distinguishable meanings. On the one hand, it

means to sing praises and otherwise honor God with our lips. On the other hand, it means to live a humble and obedient life before God, that is, to honor Him with our lives. So we can say that to worship is to honor God with our lips and with our lives. It is to praise Him with singing and submission.

The way we make our submission to Christ concrete is by submitting to one another out of reverence (that is, worship) for Christ. Outward humility toward others is the logical and necessary completion of inward humility toward God. This is why John writes, “We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:19-21). It is the same with worship: whoever reveres Christ must also submit to his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Fourth, worship flows out of a heart that is rich with the word of Christ (Col. 3:16). The one who makes a life of reading and studying and memorizing and meditating on and obeying and teaching the Word of Christ will have a heart that brims with praise for God. And Jesus’ words in John 14:21 help us understand why: “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest [that is, reveal] myself to him.”

I see four stages of worship in this verse. First, by the grace of God we come to learn the commandments of Christ, and this learning is the beginning of love. Second, we complete our love for Christ by doing what He says, that is, by keeping His commandments. Third, the Father and the Son then shower their love upon us mainly by revealing Christ to us, by showing us something of His glory and beauty and power and strength and mercy and wisdom. Fourth, in response to such revelation we worship God with our lips and with our lives, we praise Him with singing and submission. And the cycle begins again.

Thus, to worship Christ is to allow the word of Christ to dwell richly in our hearts. It is to submit to Him by joyfully obeying his word. It is to see His glory and goodness and grandeur, and then to sing to Him in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Oh my Friends, how I long to fast from the good things of life this Lenten season so that I can feast on the greatest thing in life—the Lord Jesus Christ! How I long to explore the depths of Ephesians 5:18-21 and Colossians 3:16 so that I can become a more authentic worshiper of God! How I long to give myself to singing and thankfulness and submission and the word of Christ! And how I long to share in this feast with some of you!

Thus, if the Lord has not already led you in a particular direction this Lenten season, will you pray about joining me in this feast of worship? And if He leads you to join me, will you be so kind as to note what He teaches you along the way and share that with me? In this way we can “teach and admonish one another in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).

Now, may the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and may the Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you as we, through this feast of fasting, ascend toward the glory of Easter (Col. 3:15; Num. 6:24-25).

Christian Fasting

By St. John Chrysostom, From “Concerning the Statues”, Excerpts from “Homily III”

I speak not, indeed, of such a fast as most persons keep, but of real fasting; not merely an abstinence from meats; but from sins too.

For the nature of a fast is such, that it does not suffice to deliver those who practice it, unless it be done according to a suitable law. "For the wrestler," it is said, "is not crowned unless he strive lawfully."

To the end then, that when we have gone through the labor of fasting, we forfeit not the crown of fasting, we should understand how, and after what manner, it is necessary to conduct this business; since that Pharisee also fasted, but afterwards when down empty, and destitute of the fruit of fasting.

The Publican fasted not; and yet he was accepted in preference to him who had fasted; in order that thou mayest learn that fasting is unprofitable, except all other duties follow with it.

The Ninevites fasted, and won the favor of God.

The Jews fasted too, and profited nothing, nay they departed with blame.

Since then the danger in fasting is so great to those who do not know how they ought to fast, we should learn the laws of this exercise, in order that we may not "run uncertainly," nor "beat the air," nor while we are fighting contend with a shadow.

Fasting is a medicine; but a medicine, though it be never so profitable, becomes frequently useless owing to the unskillfulness of him who employs it. For it is necessary to know, moreover, the time when it should be applied, and the requisite quantity of it; and the temperament of body that admits it; and the nature of the country, and the season of the year; and the corresponding diet; as well as various other particulars; any of which, if one overlooks, he will mar all the rest that have been named.

Now if, when the body needs healing, such exactness is required on our part, much more ought we, when our care is about the soul, and we seek to heal the distempers of the mind, to look, and to search into every particular with the utmost accuracy.

11. I have said these things, not that we may disparage fasting, but that we may honor fasting; for the honor of fasting consists not in abstinence from food, but in withdrawing from sinful practices; since he who limits his fasting only to an abstinence from meats, is one who especially disparages it.

Dost thou fast? Give me proof of it by thy works!

Is it said by what kind of works?

If thou seest a poor man, take pity on him!

If thou seest an enemy, be reconciled to him!

If thou seest a friend gaining honor, envy him not!

If thou seest a handsome woman, pass her by!

For let not the mouth only fast, but also the eye, and ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all the members of our bodies.

Let the hands fast, by being pure from rapine and avarice.

Let the feet fast, but ceasing from running to the unlawful spectacles.

Let the eyes fast, being taught never to fix themselves rudely upon handsome countenances, or to busy themselves with strange beauties.

For looking is the food of the eyes, but if this be such as is unlawful or forbidden, it mars the fast; and upsets the whole safety of the soul; but if it be lawful and safe, it adorns fasting.

For it would be among things the most absurd to abstain from lawful food because of the fast, but with the eyes to touch even what is forbidden. Dost thou not eat flesh? Feed not upon lasciviousness by means of the eyes.

Let the ear fast also. The fasting of the ear consists in refusing to receive evil speakings and calumnies. "Thou shalt not receive a false report," it says.

From "The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church," Volume 9.

<http://www.orthodox.net/articles/orthodox-christian-fasting-john-chrysostom.html>

“On Fasting”

By A Monk of the Orthodox Church

The Holy Apostle commands us saying "Let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." From the time of the Apostles, Prophets and Fathers till our own day, it is evident from the life of the Church that fasting is part of our "armor of light"; it is a mighty weapon against the enemy given into our hands by the Saviour Himself, Who is a type and example for us in all things and Who fasted in the flesh in order to teach us to fast. To those weak and ill, it is a medicine and antidote -- a bath in which to be washed and cleansed.

Armored with holy fasting, St. Elias the Tishbite withstood Ahab and his army singlehandedly and called down fire from the heavens. By fasting St. Moses, the seer of God and the elder of Israel, prepared to ascend the mountain in the desert and behold the Glory of God. By fasting the Three Children were shown forth to be fairer than the other children in Babylon in the house of the king, and Daniel was shown forth to be a shepherd of lions.

Fasting, therefore, should always be understood as a thing most necessary in our battle with the evil one. Only a man who has lost his mind would put down his weapons, strip himself naked of his armor and then jump into the line of fire to do battle with the enemy. Such a one would be committing suicide. A man who calls himself a Christian and does not fast, is such a man.

In the final analysis he who does not fast does not believe in God, for he does not really believe in the existence of the enemy and the great victory gifted to us over him by our Saviour. He who does not fast does not believe in Him Who said to the enemy, "Man shall not live by bread alone." This is why Apostolic and Patristic canons proclaim that all who do not keep the fasts have fallen away from the Faith (i.e., have become excommunicated), and our Holy Father St. Seraphim of Sarov instructs us not even to speak with such persons.

Those who fell away from our Holy Faith through schism and heresy, by distorting the dogmas and truth of Holy Orthodoxy, in consequence distorted the life of the Church also, and especially the teaching concerning fasting. Thus, to the Latins, fasting became primarily a means of atonement, satisfaction, retribution, payment for sins committed or for earning merits, wages, favor, etc., when all sins had been paid for. The Protestants correctly abhorred the use of fasting as "works" which won merits which, in turn, were banked as surplus in the treasury of the the Popes to be dispensed to "poor souls" in purgatory; the few that continued to fast, however, were not able to free themselves from the error of Anselm concerning atonement and punishment. Thus, after some centuries of keeping fasts as 'a pious and ancient custom,' yet having lost the correct understanding and position of fasting in the life of the Church, both Latins and Protestants have totally abandoned fasting!

Now we see that even those that were nearer to Holy Orthodoxy in Liturgy and practice --the Copts, Armenians, Jacobites, etc. -- in their last gathering in Addis Ababa have "reformed" their rules concerning fasting. This was to be expected, since they have fallen into heresies and are separated from the Holy Church. But now we hear even from those who bear the name Orthodox similar trends and aspirations. For us sinful folk, who nevertheless are still Orthodox in our Faith, this is one more indication that these people are despisers of and apostates from Orthodoxy. They are only proclaiming to all that have ears to hear that they no longer wish to walk in the way and tradition of our Saviour, the Apostles, Prophets, and Fathers, but rather wish to make "provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Of them the Psalms say, "They mingled with the nations (heathen) and learned their works"; and the Holy Apostle says, "They have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof."

St. Abba Isaac the Syrian says, "The Saviour began the work of our salvation with fasting. In the same way, all those who follow in the footsteps of the Saviour build on this foundation the beginning of their endeavor, since fasting is a weapon established by God. Who will escape blame if he neglects this? If the Lawgiver Himself fasts, how can any of those who have to obey the law be exempt from fasting? This is why the human race knew no victory before fasting, and the devil was never defeated by our nature as it is: but this weapon has indeed deprived the devil of strength from the outset. Our Lord was the Leader and the first example of this victory, in order to place the first crown of victory on the head of our nature. As soon as the devil sees someone possessed of this weapon, fear straightway falls on this adversary and tormentor of ours, who remembers and thinks of his defeat by the Saviour in the wilderness; his strength is at

once destroyed and the sight of the weapon given us by our Supreme Leader burns him up. A man armed with the weapon of fasting is always afire with zeal. He who remains therein, keeps his mind steadfast and ready to meet and repel all violent passions."

Those who do not fast --especially those of the clergy-- teach that fasting consists in not thinking and doing evil and quote from our Saviour, the Apostles and Fathers to support their views. They usually forget that our Saviour, the Apostles and Fathers all fasted the physical fast as well as the spiritual fast.

When man partakes of the glory of God, he does not partake of it in the spirit only, but physically also -- in a complete sense. When one praises God, he does not praise Him only in the Spirit, but with physical voice also in chant and prayer. When one worships God, he does not worship him noetically only but physically also --the body participating by standing in prayer, by making prostrations and using the fingers and hand to seal itself with the sign of the Cross. When one communicates God, he does not communicate in spirit only but eats the very Body and drinks the very Blood of the Lord unto healing of soul and body.

Thus one praises God and is united with God not in part, but completely as one whole -- soul and body. When one labors in virtue, one labors not only noetically but physically also, even unto blood, in order not to deny our Saviour. Our Holy Martyrs did not witness just by words and thought, resisting evil in their hearts and minds, but gave their bodies up to torments and their heads to be cut off, that they might remain with our Saviour.

Thus, since we are not just spirits, but "wear flesh and live in the world," we cannot possibly fast spiritually only and not fast physically also. There is a unity and interaction between the body and the soul. They cannot be separated while we are still in the body. In the Ladder of Divine Ascent, St. John writes "Satiety of food is the father of fornication; an empty stomach is the mother of purity." He who always keeps his stomach full and he who fasts know the strength of this saying.

<http://www.orthodox.net/articles/on-fasting.html>

Selected Sayings of the Desert Fathers On Fasting. The following sayings of the Holy Fathers of the desert put the discipline of fasting in the proper perspective. As the true masters of fasting, they, more than any other Christians, are the ones who can best teach us its true nature.

1. A leader of a community asked Abba Poemen: "How can I gain the fear of God?" Abba Poemen replied: "How indeed can we gain the fear of God when we have bellies full of cheese and jars of salted fish?" Abba Poemen thus teaches us that the ultimate goal of fasting is to help lead us, or to open us, to the fear of God.
2. Another old man came to see one of the Fathers, who cooked a few lentils and said to him: "Let us say a few prayers," and the first completed the whole Psalter, and the brother recited the two great prophets by heart. When morning came, the visitor went away, and they forgot the food. Fasting here witnesses that the true nourishment of Christians is prayer and meditation on the word of God, not the eating of food.

3. A brother was hungry early in the morning, and he fought his desire so as not to eat before the third hour. When the third hour came, he forced himself to wait until the sixth hour. At that time he broke his loaves and sat down to eat, then stood up again, saying to himself: "Now wait until the ninth hour." At the ninth hour he said the prayer and saw the power of the devil like smoke rising from his manual work, and his hunger vanished.
4. It was said of an old man that one day he wanted a small fig. Taking one, he held it up in front of his eyes, and not being overcome by his desire, he repented, reproaching himself for even having had this wish. Fasting in both of these cases is the spiritual effort which establishes the spirit over the flesh.
5. Abba Joseph asked Abba Poemen: "How should we fast?" And Abba Poemen said: "I myself think it's good to eat every day a little at a time so as not to get full." Abba Joseph said: "Well, when you were young, didn't you used to fast for two days at a time?" And the old man said: "Believe me, indeed I did, for three days, and even a week. But the great elders tried all of this, and found that it is good to eat every day a little less each time. In this way, they showed us the royal highway, for it is light and easy." Abba Poemen teaches us that we should be careful not to undertake efforts too great for us. This gives the proper perspective in relation to the efforts praised in selections 3 and 4 above. It is better to make slow and steady progress with moderate efforts than to become discouraged or to miss the goal altogether with efforts too great for us.
6. Once two brothers went to visit an old man. It was not the old man's habit, however, to eat every day. When he saw the brothers, he welcomed them with joy, and said: "Fasting has its own reward, but if you eat for the sake of love, you satisfy two commandments, for you give up your own will and also fulfill the commandment to refresh others."
7. A brother said to an old man: "There are two brothers. One of them stays in his cell quietly, fasting for six days at a time, and imposing on himself a good deal of discipline, and the other serves the sick. Which one of them is more acceptable to God?" The old man replied: "Even if the brother who fasts six days were to hang himself up by the nose, he could not equal the one who serves the sick." Here we learn that love is above fasting, that we must not presume to put our fasting above "the more excellent way," the "new commandment" to love one another.
8. There was a man who was leading an ascetic life and not eating bread. He went to visit an old man. It happened that pilgrims also dropped by, and the old man fixed a modest meal for them. When they sat together to eat, the brother who was fasting picked up a single soaked pea and chewed it. When they arose from the table, the old man took the brother aside and said: "Brother, when you go to visit somewhere, do not display your way of life, but if you want to keep to it, stay in your cell and never come out." He accepted what the old man said, and after that behaved like the others whenever he met with them. We are reminded here that fasting must be done in secret, not before others, as the Lord has said: "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." --St. Matthew 6:17-18
9. It was said about an old man that he endured seventy weeks of fasting, eating only once a week. He asked God about certain words in the Holy Scripture, but God did not answer him. Then he said to himself: "Look, I have put in this much effort, but I haven't made any progress. So now I will go to see my brother and ask him." And when he had gone out, closed the door and started off, an angel of the Lord was sent to him, and said:

"Seventy weeks of fasting have not brought you near to God. But now that you are humbled enough to go to your brother, I have been sent to you to reveal the meaning of the words." Then the angel explained the meaning which the old man was seeking, and went away. Along with fasting there must be humility! Fasting opens the way; it is a means to an end; it is not the end itself.

10. I myself once harshly judged a monk whom I saw drinking milk during the Great Fast. He did it so routinely that I thought, "Why, he must think nothing of the ascetic life." It was I who had forgotten the rule of the inner life -- that one judges himself and excuses others. I later learned that the monk was ill and had to have milk to ingest his medication. I learned something about hasty judgments. Here we learn that we must never judge another person.
11. Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said: "Abba, as much as I am able I practice a small rule, a little fasting, some prayer and meditation, and remain quiet, and as much as possible I keep my thought clean. What else should I do?" Then the old man stood up and stretched out his hands toward heaven, and his fingers became like ten torches of flame. And he said: "If you wish, you can become all flame." We must never be shortsighted about the goal of our Christian life with all its efforts. It is nothing less than theosis, union with the Living God, becoming "all flame."

Selected Sayings of St. Seraphim of Sarov on Fasting

- **On Fasting.**
 - "Prayer, fasting, vigils, and all other Christian practices, however good they are in themselves, do not constitute the goal of our Christian life, although they serve as a necessary means to its attainment. The true goal of our Christian life consists in the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. Fasting, vigils, prayers, alms-giving and all good deeds done for the sake of Christ are but means for the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. But note, my son, that only a good deed done for the sake of Christ brings us the fruits of the Holy Spirit. All that is done, if it is not for Christ's sake, although it may be good, brings us no reward in the life to come, nor does it give us God's grace in the present life."¹
 - "It is not suited to everyone to follow a severe rule of abstinence from everything, or to deprive himself of everything which can serve for the easing of weakness."
 - "One should make use of food daily to the extent that the body, fortified, may be the friend and assistant of the soul in the practice of virtue. Otherwise, the soul may weaken because it is exhausted."
 - "On Wednesdays and Fridays, especially during the four fasts, eat once a day, and the angel of the Lord will remain with you."²
- **On the Active Life**
 - "The way of the active life consists in fasting, abstinence, vigils, prostrations, and other bodily practices, which constitute the narrow and painful way that leads, according to the saying of God, to life eternal" (Matt. 7:14).³

St. John Chrysostom on Fasting (from his Homilies on the Statues)

- When the fast makes its appearance, like a kind of spiritual summer, let us as soldiers burnish our weapons, and as harvesters sharpen our sickles, and as sailors order our thoughts against the waves of extravagant desires, and as travelers set out on the journey towards heaven. Lay hold of the pathway which leads towards heaven, rugged and narrow as it is. Lay hold of it, and journey on.
- I speak not of such a fast as most persons keep, but of real fasting; not merely abstinence from meats, but from sins as well. For the nature of a fast is such that it does not suffice to deliver those who practice it unless it is done according to a suitable law. So that when we have gone through the labor of fasting we do not lose the crown of fasting, we must understand how and in what manner it is necessary to conduct the business since the Pharisee also fasted, but afterward went away empty and destitute of the fruit of fasting. The Publican did not fast, and yet he was accepted in preference to him who had fasted in order that you may learn that fasting is unprofitable unless all other duties accompany it.
- Fasting is a medicine. But like all medicines, though it be very profitable to the person who knows how to use it, it frequently becomes useless (and even harmful) in the hands of him who is unskillful in its use.
- For the honor of fasting consists not in abstinence from food, but in withdrawing from sinful practices, since he who limits his fasting only to abstinence from meats is one who especially disparages fasting.
- Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works. If you see a poor man, take pity on him. If you see an enemy, be reconciled with him. If you see a friend gaining honor, do not be jealous of him. And let not only the mouth fast, but also the eye and the ear and the feet and the hands and all members of your bodies.
- Let the hands fast by being pure from plundering and avarice. Let the feet fast by ceasing from running to unlawful spectacles. Let the eyes fast, being taught never to fix themselves rudely on handsome faces, or to busy themselves with strange beauties. For looking is the food of the eyes, but if it be such as is unlawful or forbidden, it mars the fast and upsets the whole safety of the soul. But if it be lawful and safe, it adorns fasting. For it would be among things most absurd to abstain from lawful food because of the fast, but with the eyes to touch even what is forbidden! Do you not eat meat? Feed not upon lasciviousness by means of your eyes! Let the ear fast also. The fasting of the ear consists in refusing to receive evil speakings and calumnies. It is written, "You shall not receive a false report" (Exodus 23:1).
- Let the mouth also fast from disgraceful speech. For what does it profit if we abstain from fish and fowl and yet bite and devour the brothers and sisters. The evil speaker eats the flesh of his brother and bites the body of his neighbor. Because of this Paul utters the fearful saying, "If you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another" (Gal.5:15). You have not fixed your teeth in his flesh, but you have fixed your slander in his soul and inflicted the wound of evil suspicion, and you have harmed in a thousand ways yourself, him and many others, for in slandering your neighbor you have made him who listens to the slander worse, for should he be a wicked person, he becomes more careless when he finds a partner in his wickedness. And should he be a just person, he is tempted to arrogance and gets puffed up, being led on by the sin of

others to imagining great things concerning himself. Besides this, you have struck at the common welfare of the Church herself, for all those who hear you will not only accuse the supposed sinner, but the entire Christian community....

- And so I desire to fix three precepts in your mind so that you may accomplish them during the fast: to speak ill of no one, to hold no one for an enemy, and to expel from your mouth altogether the evil habit of swearing.
- For as the harvester in the fields comes to the end of his labors little by little, so we too if we make this rule for ourselves and in any manner come to the correct practice of these three precepts during the present Fast and commit them to the safe custody of good habit, we shall proceed with greater ease to the summit of spiritual wisdom. And we shall reap the harvest of a favorable hope in this life, and in the life to come we shall stand before Christ with great confidence and enjoy those unspeakable blessings of which, God grant, we may all be found worthy through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom be glory to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit unto ages of ages. Amen!

http://www.stmaryofegypt.org/devotion/on_fasting.htm

From "Way of the Ascetics," by Tito Colliander

Fasting, neither above nor below your ability, will help you in your vigil. One should not ponder divine matters on a full stomach, say the ascetics. For the well-fed, even the most superficial secrets of the Trinity lie hidden. Christ Himself set the example with His long fast; when He drove out the devil, He had fasted for forty days. Are we better than He? "Behold, angels came and ministered unto him (Matthew 4:11)." They are waiting to minister to you, too.

Fasting tempers loquacity, says St. John Climacus. it is an outlet for compassion and a guard upon obedience; it destroys evil thoughts and roots out the insensibility of the heart. Fasting is a gate to paradise; when the stomach is constricted, the heart is humbled. He who fasts prays with a sober mind, but the mind of the intemperate person is filled with impure fancies and thoughts.

Fasting is an expression of love and devotion, in which one sacrifices earthly satisfaction to attain the heavenly. Altogether too much of one's thoughts are taken up with care for sustenance and the enticements of the palate; one wishes to be free from them. Thus fasting is a step on the road of emancipation and an indispensable support in the struggle against selfish desires. Together with prayer, fasting is one of humanity's greatest gifts, carefully cherished by those who once have participated in it.

During fasting, thankfulness grows toward him who has given humanity the possibility of fasting. Fasting opens the entrance to a territory that you have scarcely glimpsed; the expressions of life and all the events around you and within you get a new illumination, the hastening hours a new, wide-eyed and rich purpose. The vigil of groping thought is replaced by a vigil of clarity; troublesome searching is changed to quiet acceptance in gratitude and humility. Seemingly large, perplexing problems open their centers like the ripe calyces of flowers; with prayer, fasting and vigil in union, we may knock on the door we wish to see opened.

Here we find the reason that fasting is often used as a measuring-stick by the Holy Fathers; he who fasts much is he who loves much, and he who has loved much is forgiven much (Luke 7:47). He who fasts much also receives much.

The Holy Fathers recommend "moderate" fasting; one ought not to allow the body to be weakened too much, for then the soul, too, is harmed. Nor ought one to undertake fasting too suddenly; everything demands practice, and each one should look to his own nature and occupation. To choose among different kinds of food is to be condemned; all food is God-given, but it is advisable to avoid such kinds as add to the body's weight and appetite; strong spices, meat, spirituous drinks and such foods as are solely for the palate's enjoyment. For the rest, one may eat what is cheap and most easily available, they say. But by "moderate" they mean one meal a day, and that one light enough not to fill the stomach to satiety. END

from *"Way of the Ascetics,"* by Tito Colliander (New York: Harper & Row, 1982, pp. 75-77)

<http://www.innerlightproductions.com/thoughts/mar0898.htm>

From *"The Desert Christian,"* by Sr. Benedicta Ward

The old man was asked, "What is the good of the fasts and watchings which a man imposes on himself?" and he replied, "They make the soul humble. For it is written, "Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins" (Psalm 25:18). So if the soul gives itself all this hardship, God will have mercy on it."

The old man was (also) asked, "What should a man do in all the temptations and evil thoughts that come upon him?" The old man said to him, "He should weep and implore the goodness of God to come to his aid, and he will obtain peace if he prays with discernment. For it is written, "With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6). END

from *"The Desert Christian,"* by Sr. Benedicta Ward, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1975), p. 142

<http://www.innerlightproductions.com/thoughts/may1098.htm>

From E. A. Wallis Budge, *"The Paradise of the Holy Fathers,"*

A Holy Conversation -- Fasting and Prayer (Part II)

BROTHER: What are fasting and prayer?

OLD MAN: Fasting is the subjugation of the body, prayer is converse with God, vigil is a war against Satan, abstinence is being weaned from meats, humility is the state of the first man,

kneeling is the inclining of the body before the Judge, tears are the remembrance of sins, nakedness is our captivity which is caused by the transgression of the command, and service is constant supplication to and praise of God.

BROTHER: Are these able to redeem the soul?

OLD MAN: When internal things agree with external, and manifest humility appears in the hidden works which are from within, verily, a man shall be redeemed from the weight of the body.

BROTHER: And what is internal humility?

OLD MAN: The humility of love, peace, friendship, purity, restfulness, tranquility, subjection, faith, remoteness from envy, and a soul which is free from the heat of anger, and is far from the grade of arrogance, and is redeemed from the love of vainglory, and is full of patient endurance like the great deep, and whose motion is drawn after the knowledge of the spirit, and before whose eyes are depicted the fall of the body, and the greatness of the marvel of the Resurrection, and the demand for judgement which shall come after the revivification, and its standing before the awful throne of God. If the soul has these things, redemption shall be unto it.

BROTHER: Is there any man who fasteth that shall not be redeemed?

OLD MAN: There is one kind of fasting which is from habit, and another from desire, and another from compulsion, and another from sight, and another from the love of vainglory, and another from affliction, and another from repentance, and another from spiritual affection; for although each of these seems to be the same as the other in the mind externally, yet in the word of knowledge they are distinct. Now the way in which each is performed by the body is the same, and the way in which each is to be undertaken is wholly the same by him who travelleth straightly on the path of love, and who beareth his burden with patient endurance spiritually, and who doth not rejoice in his honor.

from E. A. Wallis Budge, *"The Paradise of the Holy Fathers,"* Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1984, pp. 263-264

<http://www.innerlightproductions.com/thoughts/june0798.htm>

"How to Partake of Food" by St. Gregory of Sinai

It is a good thing to take a look once again at the whole issue of fasting, eating, and self-control and what the Desert Fathers teach about controlling the stomach. As a young man captured by the Turks in the late 1200, Gregory was eventually ransomed to Cyprus where he was tonsured a monk and then went to Mount Sinai shortly after where he became a full monk. He then went to Crete where he learned the art of prayer in obedience to the monk Arsenios. After some time, Gregory went to Mount Athos where he spent the next twenty-five years.

The "Philokalia" includes five works by St. Gregory of Sinai. This text is but a fraction of St. Gregory's entire text on prayer, but it is very useful depending on the degree to which we are able as individuals to follow his teaching.

HOW TO PARTAKE OF FOOD

-- What shall I say about the belly, the queen of the passions? If you can deaden or half-deaden it, do not relent. It has mastered me, beloved, and I worship it as a slave and vassal, this abettor of the demons and dwelling-place of the passions. Through it we fall and through it -- when it is well-disciplined -- we rise again. Through it we have lost both our original divine status and also our second divine status, that which was bestowed on us when after our initial corruption we are renewed in Christ through baptism, and from which we have lapsed once more, separating ourselves from God through out neglect of the commandments, even though in our ignorance we exalt ourselves. We think that we are with God, but it is only by keeping the commandments that we advance, guarding and increasing the grace bestowed upon us.-- As the fathers have pointed out, bodies vary greatly in their need for food. One person needs little, another much to sustain his physical strength, each according to his capacity and habit. A hesychast, however, should always eat too little, never too much. For when the stomach is heavy the intellect is clouded, and you cannot pray resolutely and with purity. On the contrary, made drowsy by the effects of too much food you are soon induced to sleep; and as you sleep the food produces countless fantasies in your mind. Thus in my opinion if you want to attain salvation and strive for the Lord's sake to lead a life of stillness, you should be satisfied with a pound of bread and three or four cups of water or wine daily, taking at appropriate times a little from whatever victuals happen to be at hand, but never eating to satiety. In this way you will avoid growing conceited, and by thanking God for everything you will show no disdain for the excellent things He has made. This is the counsel of those who are wise in such matters. For those weak in faith and soul, abstinence from specific types of food is most beneficial; St. Paul exhorts them to eat herbs (Romans 14:2), for they do not believe that God will preserve them.

-- What shall I say? You are old, yet have asked for a rule, and an extremely severe one at that. Younger people cannot keep to a strict rule by weight and measure, so how will you keep to it? Because you are ill, you should be entirely free in partaking of food. If you eat too much, repent and try again. Always act like this -- lapsing and recovering again, and always blaming yourself and no one else -- and you will be at peace, wisely converting such lapses into victories, as Scripture says. But do not exceed the limit I set down above, and this will be enough, for no other food strengthens the body as much as bread and water. That is why the prophet disregarded everything else and simply said, "Son of man, by weight you will eat your bread and by measure you will drink water" (Ezekiel 4:16).

-- There are three degrees of eating: self-control, sufficiency and satiety. Self-control is to be hungry after having eaten. Sufficiency is to be neither hungry nor weighed down. Satiety is to be slightly weighed down. To eat again after reaching the point of satiety is to open the door of gluttony, through which unchastity comes in. Attentive to these distinctions, choose what is best for you according to your powers, not overstepping the limits. For according to St. Paul only the perfect can be both hungry and full, and at the same time be strong in all things (Philippians 4:12). -- [St. Gregory of Sinai](#)

from *"The Philokalia: Volume IV,"* edited and translated by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Bishop Kallistos Ware, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 280 - 281.

Says of the Church Fathers and Desert Fathers on Fasting and Its Relation to Maturity in Discipleship

People have to answer greatly for not keeping the rules of the Church with respect to the fasts. People justify themselves by saying that they never considered it a sin to eat dairy products during the fasts. They repent and consider themselves sinners in every other respect, but they do not think to repent about not keeping the fasts. Meanwhile, they are transgressing the commandment of our holy Mother, the Church, and according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, they are as the heathen and publicans because of their disobedience. REF:St. Ambrose of Optina (+1891)

Fasting is an exceptional virtue; it represses bodily impulses and gives strength to the soul to fight against the poisoning of the heart through the senses, and provides it with a remedy against any past poisoning. Fasting causes the mind to be cleansed constantly. It withers up every evil thought and brings healthy, godly thoughts -- -holy thoughts that enlighten the mind and kindle it with more zeal and spiritual fervor. REF:Elder Ephraim of Philotheou Mount Athos, "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"

'This fasting,' saith he, 'if the commandments of the Lord are kept, is very good. This, then, is the way that thou shalt keep the fast. First of all, keep thyself from every evil word and every evil device, and purify thy heart from all the vanities of this world. If thou keep these things, thy fast shall be perfect for thee. And thus shalt thou do. Having fulfilled what is written, on that day on which thou fastest, thou shalt taste nothing but bread and water; and from my meals which thou wouldest have eaten, thou shalt reckon up the amount of that day's expenditure, which thou wouldest have incurred, and shalt give it to a widow, or an orphan, or to one in want, and so shalt thou humble thy soul, that he that received from thy humiliation may satisfy his own soul, and may pray for thee to the Lord. If then thou shalt so accomplish this fast, as I have commanded thee, thy sacrifice shall be acceptable in the sight of God, and this fasting shall be recorded; and the service ! so performed is beautiful and joyous, and acceptable to the Lord.' The Shepherd of Hermas

A Constitution Concerning the Great Passover Week

Do you therefore fast on the days of the passover, beginning from the second day of the week until the preparation, and the Sabbath, six days, making use of only bread, and salt, and herbs, and water for your drink. But do you abstain on these days from wine and flesh, for they are days of lamentation and not of feasting. Do you who are able fast the day of the preparation and the Sabbath day entirely, tasting nothing till the cock-crowing of the night. But if any one is not able

to join them both together, at least let him observe the Sabbath day. For the Lord says somewhere, speaking of Himself: "When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, in those days shall they fast." In these days, therefore, He was taken from us by the Jews, falsely so named, and fastened to the cross, and "was numbered among the transgressors." Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book 5, Section 3, Article 18

A life of fasting, properly understood as general self-limitation and abstinence, to the annual practice of which the Church always calls us with the Great Lent, is really that bearing of the cross and self-crucifixion which is required of us by our calling as Christians. And anyone who stubbornly resists this, wanting to live a carefree, happy, and free life, is concerned for sensual pleasures and avoids sorrow and suffering that person is not a Christian. Bearing one's cross is the natural way of every true Christian, without which there is no Christianity. Archbishop Averky of Syracuse (of Blessed Memory)

A worker takes the trouble to get hold of the instruments that he requires. He does so not simply to have them and not use them. Nor is there any profit for him in merely possessing the instruments. What he wants is, with their help, to produce the crafted objective for which these are the efficient means.

In the same way, fasting, vigils, scriptural meditation, nakedness and total deprivation do not constitute perfection but are the means to perfection. They are not in themselves the end point of a discipline, but an end is attained to through them. St. John Cassian, Conference One

Abba Isidore said, "If you fast regularly, do not be inflated with pride; if you think highly of yourself because of it, then you had better eat meat. It is better for a man to eat meat than to be inflated with pride and glorify himself." The Desert Fathers

Abba John the Dwarf said, "If a king wanted to take possession of his enemy's city, he would begin by cutting off the water and the food and so his enemies, dying of hunger, would submit to him. It is the same with the passions of the flesh; if a man goes about fasting and hungry the enemies of his soul grow weak." Sr. Benedicta Ward, "The Sayings of the Desert Fathers," (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1975), pp. 85-89

Abba John the Dwarf said, 'If a king wanted to take possession of his enemy's city, he would begin by cutting off the water and the food and so his enemies, dying of hunger, would submit to him. It is the same with the passions of the flesh: if a man goes about fasting and hungry the enemies of his soul grow weak.' The Desert Christian, Benedicta Ward

According to St. Gregory the Sinaite there are three degrees in eating: temperance, sufficiency, and satiety. Temperance is when someone wants to eat some more food but abstains, rising from the table still somewhat hungry. Sufficiency is when someone eats what is needed and sufficient for normal nourishment. Satiety is when someone eats more than enough and is more than satisfied. Now if you cannot keep the first two degrees and you proceed to the third, then, at least, do not become a glutton, remembering the words of the Lord: "Woe unto you that are full now, for you shall hunger" (Lk. 6:25). Remember also that rich man who ate in this present life sumptuously every day, but who was deprived of the desired bosom of Abraham in the next life, simply because of this sumptuous eating. St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel

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Almsgiving heals the soul's incensive power; fasting withers sensual desire; prayer purifies the intellect and prepares it for contemplation of created beings. For the Lord has given us commandments which correspond to the powers of the soul. St. Maximos the Confessor (First Century on Love no. 79)

An old man was asked, 'How can I find God?' He said, 'In fasting, in watching, in labors, in devotion, and, above all, in discernment. I tell you, many have injured their bodies without discernment and have gone away from us having achieved nothing. Our mouths smell bad through fasting, we know the Scriptures by heart, we recite all the Psalms of David, but we have not that which God seeks: charity and humility.' The Desert Fathers

And just as a ship, after having run through innumerable surges, and having escaped many storms, then in the very mouth of the harbor having been dashed against some rock, loses the whole treasure which is stowed away in her — so truly did this Pharisee, after having undergone the labors of the fasting, and of all the rest of his virtue, since he did not master his tongue, in the very harbor underwent shipwreck of his cargo. For the going home from prayer, whence he ought to have derived gain, having rather been so greatly damaged, is nothing else than undergoing shipwreck in harbor. Chrysostom, Homily concerning lowliness of mind, commentary on Philippians (a reference to the Publican & Pharisee)

Beware of limiting the good of fasting to mere abstinence from meats. Real fasting is alienation from evil. 'Loose the bands of wickedness.' For give your neighbor the mischief he has done you. Forgive him his trespasses against you. Do not 'fast for strife and debate.' You do not devour flesh, but you devour your brother. You abstain from wine, but you indulge in outrages. You wait for evening before you take food, but you spend the day in the law courts. Woe to those who are 'drunken, but not with wine.' Anger is the intoxication of the soul, and makes it out of its wits like wine. St. Basil, in his homilies on the Holy Spirit

Bodily purity is primarily attained through fasting, and through bodily purity comes spiritual purity. Abstinence from food, according to the words of that son of grace, St. Ephraim the Syrian, means: 'Not to desire or demand much food, either sweet or costly; to eat nothing outside the stated times; not to give oneself over to gratification of the appetite; not to stir up hunger in oneself by looking at good food; and not to desire one or another sort of food. The Prologue from Ochrid - by St. Nikolai Velimirovich (Volume 4, p 338)

Chapter 8- Concerning Fasting and Prayer (The Lord's Prayer)

But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week (meaning Monday and Thursday); but do you fast on the fourth day and the day of Preparation (meaning Wednesday and Friday). Neither pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us today our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or evil); for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Thrice in the day thus pray. Didache - The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

Concerning the watching all the night of the Great Sabbath, and Concerning the Day of the Resurrection, Article 19

Wherefore we exhort you to fast on those days, as we also fasted till the evening, when He was taken away from us; but on the rest of the days, before the day of the preparation, let every one eat at the ninth hour (3 PM) or the evening, or as every one is able. But from the evening of the fifth day till cock-crowing break your fast when it is daybreak of the first day of the week, which is the Lord's day (Sunday). From the evening till cock-crowing keep awake, and assemble together in the church. Watch and pray, and entreat God; reading, when you sit up all night, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, until cock-crowing, and baptizing your catechumens, and reading the Gospel with fear and trembling, and speaking to the people such things as tend to their salvation. Put an end to your sorrow, and beseech God that Israel may be converted, and that He will allow them place of repentance, and the remission of their impiety... For this reason do you also, now the Lord is risen, offer your sacrifice, concerning which He made a constitution

by us, saying, "Do this for a remembrance of me;" and henceforth leave off your fasting, and rejoice, and keep a festival, because Jesus Christ, the pledge of our resurrection, is risen from the dead.

And let this be an everlasting ordinance till the consummation of the world, until the Lord come. For to Jews the Lord is still dead, but to Christians He is risen: to the former, by their unbelief; to the latter, by their full assurance of faith. For the hope in Him is immortal and eternal life.

After eight days let there be another feast observed with honor, the eighth day itself, on which He gave me Thomas, who was hard of belief, full assurance, by showing me the print of the nails, and the wound made in His side by the spear.

And again, from the first Lord's day count forty days, from the Lord's day till the fifth day of the week, and celebrate the feast of the ascension of the Lord, whereon He finished all His dispensation and constitution, and returned to that God and Father that sent Him, and sat down at the right hand of power, and remains there until His enemies are put under His feet; who also will come at the consummation of the world with power and great glory, to judge the quick and the dead, and to recompense to every one according to his works. And then shall they see the beloved Son of God whom they pierced; and when they know Him, they shall mourn for themselves, tribe by tribe, and their wives apart. Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book 5, Section 3

Consider well my soul: Dost thou fast? Then despise not thy neighbor. Dost thou abstain from food? Condemn not thy brother. Sunday of Orthodoxy, Matins. - "The Lenten Triodion"

Eat simply, and stop before satiety. What do I mean by this? First eating simply means that one's food preparation should not be of the normal, non-fasting type: sumptuous, fattened, and designed to entice the palate. This only reinforces one's love for food. This does not mean that one's preparation should result in food that is repugnant. Rather it means that it should not inflame one's desire for more, nor incite one (e.g. overly spicy or rich tasting recipes). It should be such that it is simple, meager, and life-sustaining. It is still permissible for the food to be interesting and pleasant to eat (after all it is not a sin to enjoy food in moderation)." Anonymous letter to a new convert.

Fasting appears gloomy until one steps into its arena. But begin and you will see what light it brings after darkness, what freedom from bonds, what release after a burdensome life... Bishop Theophan the Recluse

Fasting is absolutely indispensable for man. From the external aspect, it is a struggle of filial

obedience to God, Who has given us the rules of fasting through His Holy Spirit. From the inner aspect, fasting is a struggle of restraint and self-limitation. In this lies the great value and sense of fasting, since a strict observance of fasts tempers one's will and perfects the character of one who is firm in his religious convictions and actions. Let us not forget that Christ Himself fasted, and foretold that His apostles would also fast. Metropolitan Philaret - On God's Law - Missionary Leaflet # E37b - Holy Protection Russian Orthodox Church

Fasting is acceptable to God when abstinence from food is accompanied by refraining from sins, from envy, from hatred, from calumny, from vainglory, from wordiness, from other evils. He who is fasting the true fast 'that is agreeable' to God ought to shun all these things with all his strength and zeal, and remain impregnable and unshakeable against all the attacks of the Evil one that are planned from that quarter. On the other hand, he who practices abstinence from food, but does not keep self-control in the face of the aforesaid passions, is like unto one who lays down splendid foundations for a house, yet takes serpents and scorpions and vipers as fellow-dwellers therein. St. Photios the Great, Sermon on Wed. of Cheese Fare Week

Fasting is an ordinance of the Church, obliging the Christian to observe it on specific days. Concerning fasting, our Savior teaches: "When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father Who is in secret: and thy Father, Who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." From what the Savior teaches we learn (a) that fasting is pleasing to God, and (b) that he who fasts for the uplifting of his mind and heart towards God shall be rewarded by God, Who is a most liberal bestower of Divine gifts, for his devotion.

In the New Testament fasting is recommended as a means of preparing the mind and the heart for divine worship, for long prayer, for rising from the earthly, and for spiritualization. "Modern Orthodox Saints, St. Nectarios of Aegina", Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Belmont, Massachusetts., 1981., pp. 154-187

Fasting is the champion of every virtue, the beginning of the struggle, the crown of the abstinent, the beauty of virginity and sanctity, the resplendence of chastity, the commencement of the path of Christianity, the mother of prayer, the well-spring of sobriety and prudence, the teacher of stillness, and the precursor of all good works. Just as the enjoyment of light is coupled with healthy eyes, so desire for prayer accompanies fasting that is practiced with discernment. The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian

Fasting is wonderful, because it tramples our sins like a dirty weed, while it cultivates and raises truth like a flower. St. John Chrysostom

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Fasting was ordained in Paradise. The first injunction was delivered to Adam, 'Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.' 'You shall not eat' is a law of fasting and abstinence." The general argument is rather against excess than in support of ceremonial abstinence. In Paradise there was no wine, no butchery of beasts, no eating of flesh. Wine came in after the flood. Noah became drunk because wine was new to him. So fasting is older than drunkenness. Esau was defiled, and made his brother's slave, for the sake of a single meal. It was fasting and prayer which gave Samuel to Hannah. Fasting brought forth Samson. Fasting begets prophets, strengthens strong men. Fasting makes lawgivers wise, is the soul's safeguard, the body's trusty comrade, the armor of the champion, the training of the athlete. St. Basil, in his homilies on the Holy Spirit

Fasting, neither above nor below your ability, will help you in your vigil. One should not ponder divine matters on a full stomach, say the ascetics. For the well-fed, even the most superficial secrets of the Trinity lie hidden. Christ Himself set the example with His long fast; when He drove out the devil, He had fasted for forty days. Are we better than He? "Behold, angels came and ministered unto him (Matthew 4:11)." They are waiting to minister to you, too.

Fasting tempers loquacity, says St. John Climacus. it is an outlet for compassion and a guard upon obedience; it destroys evil thoughts and roots out the insensibility of the heart. Fasting is a gate to paradise; when the stomach is constricted, the heart is humbled. He who fasts prays with a sober mind, but the mind of the intemperate person is filled with impure fancies and thoughts.

Fasting is an expression of love and devotion, in which one sacrifices earthly satisfaction to attain the heavenly. Altogether too much of one's thoughts are taken up with care for sustenance and the enticements of the palate; one wishes to be free from them. Thus fasting is a step on the road of emancipation and an indispensable support in the struggle against selfish desires. Together with prayer, fasting is one of humanity's greatest gifts, carefully cherished by those who once have participated in it.

During fasting, thankfulness grows toward him who has given humanity the possibility of fasting. Fasting opens the entrance to a territory that you have scarcely glimpsed; the expressions of life and all the events around you and within you get a new illumination, the hastening hours a new, wide-eyed and rich purpose. The vigil of groping thought is replaced by a vigil of clarity; troublesome searching is changed to quiet acceptance in gratitude and humility. Seemingly large, perplexing problems open their centers like the ripe calyces of flowers; with prayer, fasting and vigil in union, we may knock on the door we wish to see opened.

Here we find the reason that fasting is often used as a measuring-stick by the Holy Fathers; he who fasts much is he who loves much, and he who has loved much is forgiven much (Luke 7:47). He who fasts much also receives much.

The Holy Fathers recommend "moderate" fasting; one ought not to allow the body to be weakened too much, for then the soul, too, is harmed. Nor ought one to undertake fasting too suddenly; everything demands practice, and each one should look to his own nature and occupation. To choose among different kinds of food is to be condemned; all food is God-given, but it is advisable to avoid such kinds as add to the body's weight and appetite; strong spices, meat, spirituous drinks and such foods as are solely for the palate's enjoyment. For the rest, one may eat what is cheap and most easily available, they say. But by "moderate" they mean one meal a day, and that one light enough not to fill the stomach to satiety. "Way of the Ascetics," by Tito Colliander (New York: Harper & Row, 1982, pp. 75-77)

Fasts and vigils, the study of Scripture, renouncing possessions and everything worldly are not in themselves perfection, as we have said; they are its tools. For perfection is not to be found in them; it is acquired through them. It is useless, therefore, to boast of our fasting, vigils, poverty, and reading of Scripture when we have not achieved the love of God and our fellow men. Whoever has achieved love has God within himself and his intellect is always with God. St John Cassian

Great infirmity constrains us, dearest brother, from which if we were free, we should seem justly blamable. But since, while we are in this fragile body, we cannot subsist but by subservience to its weaknesses, we ought not to blush for what necessity imposes on us. And so, since physicians all say that to those who suffer from eruption of blood fasts are injurious, we exhort your Fraternity by this present address that, recalling to mind what you have been accustomed to endure from sickness, you by no means impose on yourself the labor of fasting. If, however, by the mercy of God, you know yourself to be so far improved in health as to have sufficient strength, we permit you to fast once or twice in the week. But of this it befits you before all things to take care, that you in no wise subject yourself to any feeling of irritation, so that the sickness, which is believed to be now lighter and as it were suspended, should be experienced afterwards more heavily through exasperation. Gregory the Great, Epistle 40: To Marinianus, Bishop of Ravenna

I know a man who kept no long strict fasts, no vigils, did not sleep on bare earth, imposed on himself no other specially arduous tasks; but, recollecting in memory his sins, understood his worthlessness and, having judged himself, became humble - and for this alone the most compassionate Lord saved him; as the divine David says: 'The Lord is near to them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit' (Ps. 34:18). In short, he trusted the words of the Lord and for his faith the Lord received him." St. Simeon the New Theologian (On Faith, Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart; Faber and Faber pg. 143)

I shall speak first about control of the stomach, the opposite to gluttony, and about how to fast and what and how much to eat. I shall say nothing on my own account, but only what I have received from the Holy Fathers. They have not given us only a single rule for fasting or a single

standard and measure for eating, because not everyone has the same strength; age, illness or delicacy of body create differences. But they have given us all a single goal: to avoid over-eating and the filling of our bellies... A clear rule for self-control handed down by the Fathers is this: stop eating while still hungry and do not continue until you are satisfied. St. John Cassian

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If a man only theorises about God, then he is helpless, utterly helpless, when confronted by an evil spirit. An evil spirit laughs at feeble worldly theorising. But as soon as a man begins to fast and to pray to God, the evil spirit becomes filled with inexpressible fear. Blessed Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic - sermon on Mk. 9: 29

If you can begrudge the stomach, your mouth will stay closed, because the tongue flourishes where food is abundant. St. John Climacus (The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 14:On Gluttony)

In the man who only theorises about faith, there is a great deal of room for the demon. But in the man who gives himself to sincere prayer and fasting, there is only the narrowest space for the demon, and he must flee from such a man. Blessed Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic - sermon on Mk. 9: 29

Inasmuch then as our Master knew that if He carved out only one road for us, many must shrink from it, He carved out divers roads. You can not enter the kingdom it may be by the way of virginity. Enter it then by the way of single marriage. Can you not enter it by one marriage? By chance you may by means of a second marriage. You can not enter by the way of continence: enter then by the way of almsgiving: or you can not enter by the way of almsgiving? Then try the way of fasting. If you can not use this way, take that — or if not that, then take this. Chrysostom- Two Homilies on Eutropios, Article 15

Just as the most bitter medicine drives out poisonous things, so prayer joined to fasting drives evil thoughts away. Amma Syncletica

Keep the body properly slim so that you reduce the burden of the heart's warfare, with full benefit to yourself. Elder Ieronymos of Aegina

Keep the ordained fasts The Holy Fast of Forty Days (tessarakoste - "Great Lent") is the greatest fast, one which every Christian must observe without grumbling. A person who possesses bodily health must not protest about the fast; and he is inexcusable if he does not keep it.

During the forty day period of the fast, a Christian ought to attend church services regularly.

A person must also keep the fast of Wednesday and Friday.

During the great fast of the first fifteen days of August, some persons wore black clothes, in order to honor the Theotokos. But if this is not accompanied by fasting and by prayer it is in vain. Modern Orthodox Saints Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene of Lesbos., by Constantine Cavarnos., INSTITUTE FOR BYZANTINE AND MODERN STUDIES., Belmont, Massachusetts., 1990., pp. 145-155

Let those of us who have wisely finished the course of fasting And who celebrate with love the beginning of the suffering of the Passion of the Lord, Let us all, my brothers, zealously imitate the purity of self-controlled Joseph; Let us fear the sterility of the fig tree; Let us dry up through almsgiving the sweetness of passion. In order that we may joyously anticipate the Resurrection, Let us procure like myrrh pardon from on high Because the eye that never sleeps observes all things. St Romanos the Melodist - On Joseph II, Prooimion II

Let us love that fasting of the soul which, by the cooperation of the Spirit, doth wither the grievous passions and doth strengthen us to do godly deeds, and doth uplift our mind towards Heaven, and doth obtain our sins' forgiveness, grant unto us by the compassionate God.
Triodion, Monday Vespers of the Third Week

Let us present a good fast, well-pleasing to the Lord! A true fast is alienation from the evil one; The holding of one's tongue, the laying aside of all anger, The removal of all sensuality, Of accusation, falsehood and sins of swearing.// The weakening of these will make the fast true and well-pleasing. First week of Lent Tuesday Matins

Many abstain from meat, milk and other food which God has not forbidden and which was even given as a blessing of people who have learned the truth and know how to partake of these things with thanksgiving (I Tim. 4:34). But the same abstemious, devout-living people, give scandal by their action, and spread scandal with their tongue like an incendiary fire. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

O brethren, as ye take up the spiritual fast, speak no deceit with your tongue, neither put a stumbling block in the way of your brother as an occasion for him to fall: but by repentance let us trim the lamp of our soul, that with tears we may cry unto Christ Forgive us our transgressions, since Thou art the Friend of man. Vespers of Wednesday of the Second Week of Great Lent

O ye faithful, let us take upon ourselves great labors in this season of abstinence, that we may obtain great glory, delivered from the flames of Hades through the mercy of our great God and King.

Now that we have passed beyond the middle point in the time of the Fast, let us manifest in ourselves a beginning of divine glory, and let us hasten eagerly towards our journey's end, the life of holiness, that we may receive the joy that grows not old. Stichera from Vespers, Sunday Evening of the Fourth Week of Lent

Of the Great Week, and on what account they enjoin us to fast on Wednesday and Friday

He therefore charged us Himself to fast these six days on account of the impiety and transgression of the Jews, commanding us to bewail over them, and lament for their perdition. For even He Himself "wept over them, because they knew not the time of their visitation." But He commanded us to fast on the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday); the former on account of His being betrayed, and the latter on account of His passion. But He appointed us to break our fast on the seventh day at the cock-crowing, but to fast on the Sabbath day. Not that the Sabbath day is a day of fasting, being the rest from the creation, but because we ought to fast on this one Sabbath only (Holy Saturday), while on this day the Creator was under the earth. For on their very feast-day (Jewish Passover) they apprehended the Lord, that that oracle might be fulfilled which says: "They placed their signs in the middle of their feast, and knew them not." You ought therefore to bewail over them, because when the Lord came they did not believe on Him, but rejected His doctrine, judging themselves unworthy of salvation. Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book 5, Section 3, Article 15

On Feast Days and Fast Days a Catalogue of the Feasts of the Lord which are to be kept, and when each of them ought to be observed

Brethren, observe the festival days. First of all the birthday (of our Lord) which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth of the ninth month (December); after which let the Epiphany be to you the most honored, in which the Lord made to you a display of His own Godhead, and let it take place on the sixth of the tenth month (January); after which the fast of Lent is to be observed by you as containing a memorial of our Lord's mode of life and legislation. (As we learned last weekend, at first Great Lent was in emulation of our Lord's fast of 40 days after His baptism,

and took place directly after Epiphany, rather than just before Pascha & Holy Week.) But let this solemnity be observed before the fast of the passover, beginning from the second day of the week (Monday), and ending at the day of the preparation (Friday). After which solemnities, breaking off your fast, begin the holy week of the passover, fasting in the same all of you with fear and trembling, praying in them for those that are about to perish. (Passover here is the Greek word Pascha, and refers to the resurrection and not the Jewish passover.) Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book 5, Section 3, Article 13

Our virtue, therefore, must not be contaminated with fault, but must be single minded and blameless, and free from all that can bring reproach. For what profit is there in fasting twice in the week, if thy so doing serve only as a pretext for ignorance and vanity, and make thee supercilious and haughty, and selfish? St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke (Reading for Sunday of Publican and Pharisee)

Remember, my dear ones, that as a bird is held up and flies through the air using two wings, so we can spiritually live and strive towards our eternal salvation with fasting and prayer. Prayer leads to fasting, while fasting purifies prayer, makes it more sincere, more heartfelt and genuine. These two virtues are inseparable: one strengthens the other. We are all people, and as human beings we consist of the body, in which, as in its house, lives the soul. Fasting together with prayer address the needs of the whole man -- his soul and, of course, his body. Metropolitan Vitaly, Paschal Encyclical, 2001 (<http://www.orthodox.net/pascha/2001-pascha-vitaly.html>)

Sear your loins by abstaining from food, and prove your heart by controlling your speech, and you will succeed in bringing the desiring and incensive powers of your soul into the service of what is noble and good. Ilias the Presbyter(Gnomic Anthology I no. 55)

Sleep is a particular state of nature, an image of death, inactivity of the senses. Sleep is one, but, like desire, its sources and occasions are many; that is to say, it comes from nature, from food, from demons, or perhaps, sometimes, from extreme and prolonged fasting, through which the flesh is weakened and at last longs for the consolation of sleep. St. John Climacus, "The Ladder of Divine Ascent," (Boston; Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1978), Step19: On Sleep, Prayer, and Psalmody With the Brotherhood

Some are convinced that we should eat all foods, at all times, without discretion. They say that we should cast off all the restrictions of the fast and make wide the road to the belly. However, we have a teaching from the Savior Christ that the demons are not cast out except by prayer and fasting. His holy disciples and Apostles ministered to the Lord with fasting, as it is written: 'As they ministered to the Lord and fasted ...' (Acts 13:1). The Truth of our Faith, by Elder Cleopa of Romania

The Three Degrees of Eating

According to St. Gregory the Sinaite there are three degrees in eating: temperance, sufficiency, and satiety. Temperance is when someone wants to eat some more food but abstains, rising from the table still somewhat hungry. Sufficiency is when someone eats what is needed and sufficient for normal nourishment. Satiety is when someone eats more than enough and is more than satisfied.

Now if you cannot keep the first two degrees and you proceed to the third, then, at least, do not become a glutton, remembering the words of the Lord: "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger" (Lk 6:25). Remember also that rich man who ate in this present life sumptuously every day, but who was deprived of the desired bosom of Abraham in the next life, simply because of this sumptuous eating. Remember how he longed to refresh his tongue with a drop of water.

St. Basil not only did not forgive the young people who ate to satiety but also those who ate until satisfied; he preferred that all eat temperately. He said, "Nothing subdues and controls the body as does the practice of temperance. It is this temperance that serves as a control to those youthful passions and desires."

St. Gregory the Theologian has also noted in his poetry: "No satiety has brought forth prudent behavior; for it is in the nature of fire to consume matter. And a filled stomach expels refined thoughts; it is the tendency of opposites to oppose each other."

Job, too, assuming that one could fall into sin through eating, offered sacrifice to God for his sons who were feasting among themselves. "And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said: 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts'" (Jb 1:5-8). In interpreting this passage Olympiodoros wrote: "We learn from this that we ought to avoid such feasts which can bring on sinfulness. We must also purify ourselves after they have been concluded, even if these are conducted for the sake of concord and brotherly love as in the case of the sons of Job."

Surely then, if the sons of Job were not at a feast but in prayer or some other spiritual activity, the devil would not have dared to destroy the house and them, as Origen interpreted the passage: "The devil was looking for an opportunity to destroy them. Had he found them reading, he would not have touched the house, having no reason to put them to death. Had he found them in prayer, he would not have had any power to do anything against them. But when he found an opportune time, he was powerful. What was the opportune time? It was the time of feasting and drinking." Do you see then, dear reader, how many evils are brought forth by luxurious foods and feasting in general? A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel, by St. Nicodemos (Chapter 6)

The old man (Abba Moses) was asked, "What is the good of the fasts and watchings which a man imposes on himself?" and he replied, "They make the soul humble. For it is written,

"Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins" (Psalm 25:18). So if the soul gives itself all this hardship, God will have mercy on it." "The Desert Christian," by Sr. Benedicta Ward, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1975), p. 142

The partaking of food has three degrees: abstinence, adequacy and satiety. To abstain, means to remain a little hungry after eating; to eat adequately, means neither to be hungry, nor weighed down. But eating beyond satiety is the door to belly-madness, through which lust comes in. But you, firm in knowledge, choose what is best for you, according to your powers, without overstepping the limits... St. Gregory of Sinai (Instructions to Hesychasts no. 6)

The reason that fasting has an effect on the spirits of evil rests in its powerful effect on our own spirit. A body subdued by fasting brings the human spirit freedom, strength, sobriety, purity, and keen discernment. St. Ignaty Brianchaninov

The right practice of abstinence is needful not only to the mortification of the flesh but also to the purification of the mind. For the mind then only keeps holy and spiritual fast when it rejects the food of error and the poison of falsehood. St. Leo the Great

The undefiled beauty of fasting is the pure mother of character. It causes philosophy to gush forth, and offers a crown. It negotiates Paradise for us And grants a paternal family for those who fast. Of this Adam was deprived, and he attracted death When he dishonored the worth of feasting. For at the time when it was treated scornfully, The God of all, the Creator and the Master was at once displeased. To those who honor it He grants eternal life. Kontakia of Romanos. On Fasting

There was a certain old man who lived a life of such strict self-denial that he never drank wine. And when I arrived at his cell we sat down to eat. Dates were brought and he ate, and he took water and drank. And I said unto him laughingly, "So you are angry with absinthe, Father? Since you have eaten dates and have drunk water, why do you not drink wine?"

And he answered and said unto me, "If you take a handful of dust and throw it on a man, will it hurt him?" And I said unto him, "No." And he said unto me, "If you take a handful of water and throw it over a man, will he feel pain?" And I said unto him, "No." And he said unto me, "And again, if you take a handful of chopped straw and throw it over a man, will it cause him pain?" And I said unto him, "No."

Then he said unto me, "But if you bring them all together and mix them, and knead them well, and dry them, you may throw the mass on the skull of a man and you will not break it." And I said unto him, "Yes, father, that is true." And he said unto me, "The monks do not abstain from certain things without good reason, and you must not listen to the men who are in the world who say, 'Why do they not eat this and why do they not drink that?' Is there not sin in them? Such

people know not. Now we abstain from certain things not because the things themselves are bad, but because the passions are mighty, and when they have waxed strong they kill us." S. A. Wallis Budge, "The Paradise of the Holy Fathers," (Seattle, St. Nectarios Press, 1984), pp. 151-152

There was a man who ate a lot and was still hungry, and another who ate little and was satisfied. The one who ate a lot and was still hungry received a greater reward than he who ate little and was satisfied. St. John of Kronstadt

Those pursuing the spiritual way should train themselves to hate all uncontrolled desires until this hatred becomes habitual. With regard to self-control in eating, we must never feel loathing for any kind of food, for to do so is abominable and utterly demonic. It is emphatically not because any kind of food is bad in itself that we refrain from it. But by not eating too much or too richly we can to some extent keep in check the excitable parts of our body. In addition we can give to the poor what remains over, for this is the mark of sincere love. St. Diadochos of Photiki(On Spiritual Knowledge no. 43)

Those who struggle, regain their original state by keeping two commandments - obedience and fasting; for all evil entered into the generation of mortals through practices opposed to them. Moreover, those who keep the commandments through obedience ascend to God more quickly, and those who keep them through fasting - more slowly. Besides, obedience is more suitable for beginners, and fasting for those on the way, who possess courage and vision of mind. But in fulfilling the commandments it is given to very few always to obey God undeceived, and even for the most valiant this achievement is very difficult. St. Gregory of Sinai (Texts on Commandments and Dogmas no. 18)

To fast in the soul means keeping silent more and praying more frequently by oneself saying, "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." At first this prayer will be only in our minds, then, because of the mind's prayerful effort, suddenly, we know not how, this prayer passes into our hearts. It is possible that at this moment we may even weep and in this way we are baptized anew in the unseen font of our tears. There are all kinds of tears: tears of exaltation, tears of joy, tears of sadness, but the most precious are tears of compunction and repentance. Metropolitan Vitaly, Paschal Encyclical, 2001 (<http://www.orthodox.net/pascha/2001-pascha-vitaly.html>)

True fasting lies is rejecting evil, holding one's tongue, suppressing one's hatred, and banishing one's lust, evil words, lying, and betrayal of vows. St. Basil the Great

We are told: It is no big deal to eat non-Lenten food during Lent. It is no big deal if you wear expensive beautiful outfits, go to the theater, to parties, to masquerade balls, use beautiful

expensive china, furniture, expensive carriages and dashing steeds, amass and hoard things, etc. Yet what is it that turns our heart away from God, away from the Fountain of Life? Because of what do we lose eternal life? Is it not because of gluttony, of expensive clothing like that of the rich man of the Gospel story, is it not because of theaters and masquerades? What turns us hard-hearted toward the poor and even toward our relatives? Is it not our passion for sweets, for satisfying the belly in general, for clothing, for expensive dishes, furniture, carriages, for money and other things? Is it possible to serve God and mammon, to be a friend to the world and a friend to God, to serve Christ and Belial? That is impossible. Why did Adam and Eve lose paradise, why did they fall into sin and death? Was it not because of one evil? Let us attentively consider why we do not care about the salvation of our soul, which cost the Son of God so dearly. Why do we compound sin upon sin, fall endlessly into opposing to God, into a life of vanity? Is it not because of a passion for earthly things and especially for earthly pleasures? What makes our hearts become crude? Why do we become flesh and not spirit, perverting our moral nature? Is it not because of a passion for food, drink, and other earthly comforts? How after this can one say that it does not matter whether you eat non-Lenten food during Lent? The fact that we talk this way is in fact pride, idle thought, disobedience, refusal to submit to God, and separation from Him. Holy Righteous St. John of Kronstadt

We who are pious Christians must fast always, but especially on Wednesday, because the Lord was sold on that day, and on Friday, because He was crucified on that day. Similarly, it is our duty to fast during the Lent seasons, as the Holy Spirit illumined the holy Fathers of the Church to decree, in order to mortify the passions and humble the body. Moreover, if we limit the food we eat, life becomes easier for us. Fast according to your ability, pray according to your ability, give alms according to your ability, and always hold death before the eyes of your mind. Modern Orthodox Saints I, St. Cosmas Aitolos).Dr. Constantine Cavarinos., INSTITUTE FOR BYZANTINE AND MODERN GREEK STUDIES., Belmont, Massachusetts., pp.81-94

What does spoil repentance is being again entangled in the same evils. "For there is one" we read, "who builds, and one who pulls down, what have they gained more than toil? He who is dipped in water because of contact with a dead body, and then touches it again, what has he gained by his washing?" Even so if a man fasts because of his sins, and goes his way again, and does the same things, who will hear his prayer? And again we read "if a man goes back from righteousness to sin the Lord will prepare him for the sword," and, "as a dog when he has returned to his vomit, and become odious, so is a fool who by his wickedness has returned to his sin." Chrysostom: Exhortation to Theodore after his fall, letter 1

When you fast and are nourished with abstinence, do not store the leftovers for tomorrow, but, as the Lord became poor and enriched us, feed someone who does not want to be hungry, you who hungers willingly. Then your fast will be like the dove who brings and joyfully proclaims salvation to your soul from the flood. St. Gregory Palamas quoted in The Festive Fast

Which days of the week we are to fast, and which not, and for what reasons

But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth days of the week. But do you either fast the entire five days, or on the fourth day of the week (Wednesday), and on the day of the Preparation (Friday), because on the fourth day the condemnation went out against the Lord, Judas then promising to betray Him for money; and you must fast on the day of the Preparation, because on that day the Lord suffered the death of the cross under Pontius Pilate. But keep the Sabbath, and the Lord's day festival (non-fasting, that is feasting); because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection. But there is one only Sabbath to be observed by you in the whole year, which is that of our Lord's burial, on which men ought to keep a fast, but not a festival. For inasmuch as the Creator was then under the earth, the sorrow for Him is more forcible than the joy for the creation; for the Creator is more honorable by nature and dignity than His own creatures. Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book 7, Section 2, Article 23

While fasting and sitting on a certain mountain, and giving thanks to the Lord for all His dealings with me, I see the Shepherd sitting down beside me, and saying, "Why have you come hither [so] early in the morning?" "Because, sir," I answered, "I have a station." "What is a station?" he asked. "I am fasting, sir," I replied. "What is this fasting," he continued, "which you are observing?" "As I have been accustomed, sir," I reply, "so I fast." "You do not know," he says, "how to fast unto the Lord: this useless fasting which you observe to Him is of no value." "Why, sir," I answered, "do you say this?" "I say to you," he continued, "that the fasting which you think you observe is not a fasting. But I will teach you what is a full and acceptable fasting to the Lord. Listen," he continued: "God does not desire such an empty fasting. For fasting to God in this way you will do nothing for a righteous life; but offer to God a fasting of the following kind: Do no evil in your life, and serve the Lord with a pure heart: keep His commandments, walking in His precepts, and let no evil desire arise in your heart; and believe in God. If you do these things, and fear Him, and abstain from every evil thing, you will live unto God; and if you do these things, you will keep a great fast, and one acceptable before God. Shepherd of Hermas, Of True Fasting and its Reward: Also of Purity of Body, Chapter 1

While fasting physically, brethren, Let us also fast spiritually. Let us loose every knot of iniquity. Let us tear up every unrighteous bond. Let us distribute bread to the hungry. And welcome into our homes Those who have no roof over their head, So that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God. the Stichera for Wednesday evening for the first week of Great Lent, at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

While fasting physically, brethren, Let us also fast spiritually. Let us loose every knot of iniquity; Let us tear up every unrighteous bond; Let us distribute bread to the hungry, And welcome into our homes those who have no roof over their heads// So that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God! First week of Lent Wednesday Vespers

[to a sick monk] Concerning fasting, do not grieve, as I have said to you before: God does not

demand of anyone labors beyond his strength. And indeed, what is fasting if not a punishment of the body in order to humble a healthy body and make it infirm for passions, according to the word of the Apostle: "When I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:10). "Saints Barsanuphius and John: Guidance Toward Spiritual Life," trans. by Fr. Seraphim Rose, (Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1990)

It is necessary most of all for one who is fasting to curb anger, to accustom himself to meekness and condescension, to have a contrite heart, to repulse impure thoughts and desires, to examine his conscience, to put his mind to the test and to verify what good has been done by us in this or any other week, and which deficiency we have corrected in ourselves in the present week. This is true fasting. St. John Chrysostom.

"And finally, did not the Lord Jesus Himself begin His divine ministry of the salvation of mankind with a long, forty day fast? And did not He, in this way, clearly show that we must make a serious beginning to our life as Christians with fasting? First, the fast, and then all the rest comes together with, and through, the fast.

By His own example, the Lord showed us how great a weapon fasting is. With this weapon, He vanquished Satan in the wilderness, and with it was victorious over the three chief satanic passions with which Satan tempted Him: love of ease love of praise and love of money. These are three destructive greeds, the three greatest traps into which the evil enemy of the human race lures Christ's soldiers." St. Nikolai Velimirovic

<http://www.orthodox.net/gleanings/fasting.html>