

Hungry (Falling on my knees)

Hungry, I come to You
For I know You satisfy
I am empty but I know
Your love does not run dry
(So I wait for You)2x

I'm falling on my knees

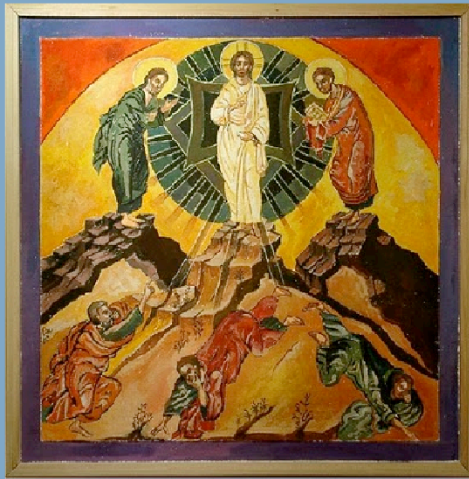
Offering all of me

Jesus, You're all this heart is living for

Broken, I run to You
For Your arms are open wide
I am weary but I know
Your touch restores my life
So I wait for You

*(I'm falling on my knees
Offering all of me
Jesus, You're all this heart
Is living for)2x*

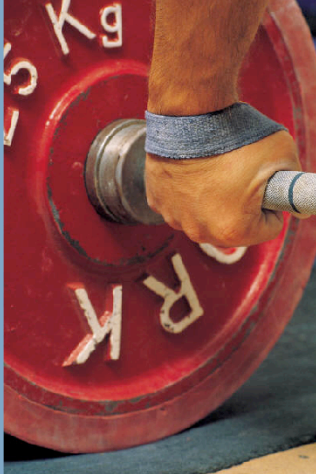
Matthew 17:1-3



by conquering the body through fasting,
the **spirit** becomes manifest and the body is transfigured

On Mount Tabor, three stood radiating glorious light – 3 of them brought fasting to perfection - as if to show us the important significance that by conquering the body through fasting, the spirit becomes manifest and the body is transfigured.

Time to Work Out



- Philippians 2:12
 - work out your own salvation with fear and trembling

St. Paul tells us to work out our own salvation.

What does it mean to “work out” our salvation?

We don’t fast to make us worthy of salvation – there is nothing we do that makes us worthy of salvation – but to “work out” our salvation is like exercising your spiritual life, so you become more Christ-like

A lot of times our focus is on the external and if that’s the purpose of fasting, then we should be miserable because it’s hard and there’d be no fruit – no point.

If we fast because we think that if we don’t want to get God angry then we’re mistaken and also our fasting is pointless

God doesn’t want us to suffer meaninglessly – and that’s not the point of fasting.

God wants us to be victorious and joyful – not miserable people.

So where does fasting first come from and how does it work?

First – know that most religions fast – abstaining from food is not something unique to Christians.

When do we first see fasting in the Holy Bible?

Origins of Fasting

- Genesis 2:16,17
- Fasting is the earliest commandment – God commanded Adam to refrain from eating a certain fruit from a certain tree
- **From the very beginning God set for the body certain limits beyond which it should not go**

St. Isaac of Syria

- “The first commandment given to our nature in the beginning was the fasting from food and *in this* the head of our race (Adam) fell. Those who wish to attain the fear of God, therefore, should begin to build where the building was first fallen. They should begin with the commandment to fast.”

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10)

Fasting makes you HUNGRY!!

He made everything beautiful in its time, and He indeed put eternity in their hearts....

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Fasting makes us HUNGRY!

Hungry for what?

Inside every single person there is a hunger for God

Ecclesiastes says God placed eternity inside our heart (Ecc 3:11)

The issue isn't a LACK OF desire for God (or rather the ability to desire God) – because He built us with this longing for Him.

The issue is that things stand between me and fulfilling that desire

Mark 14:38

- The spirit indeed *is willing, but the flesh is weak.*”

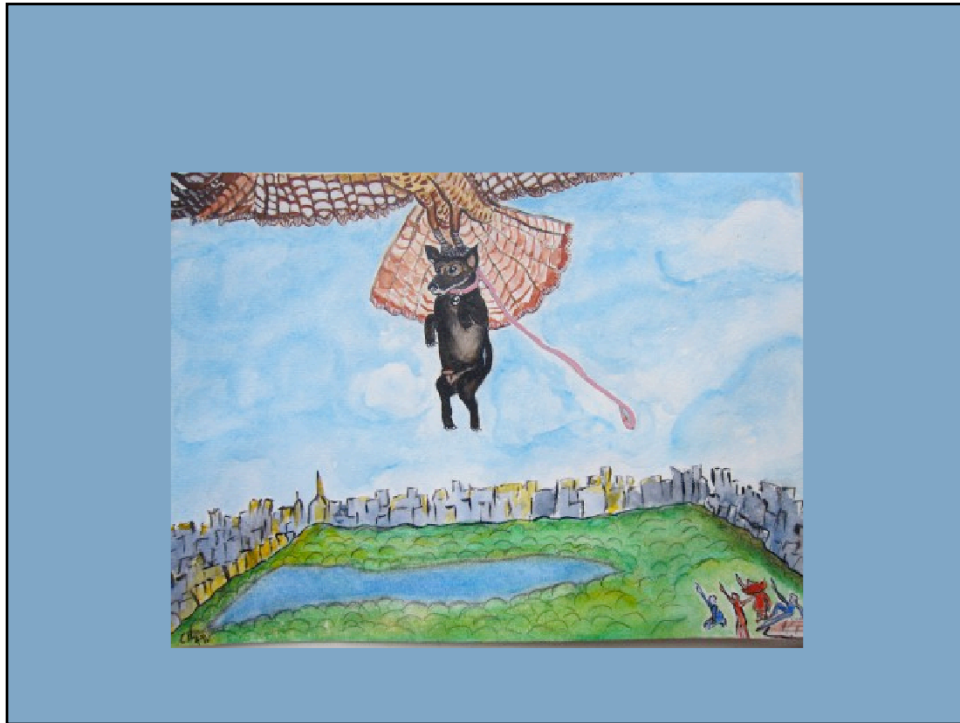
Mark 14:38 – the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak
We all struggle with prayer, bible reading , focusing in Divine Liturgy – because the **spirit is willing** but the flesh is weak

The obstacle is that we're not hungry enough. The spirit is willing.
But I may have silenced my spirit. HOW?

Simple principle of life: No matter how good a food tastes – ex cheesecake – if you're full...you just can't have more

As long as our head is full with TV, friends, worrying about the future...there's no room for God

As long as our heart is filled with bitterness, grudges...there's no room for God



The spirit is willing – God built us this way – but I don't feed the spirit because I'm so busy feeding my soul – ie my ego, my passions, etc etc – then my soul/flesh is heavier than my spirit and weighs it down

Fasting is a way to feed the spirit – to feed the bird – not the dog

Fasting is to simplify our life so we can make room for God – so we can shift our focus from satisfying the earthly to satisfying the heavenly

Put away distractions

- Be still and know that I am God

Psalm 46:10

Put away distractions that keep us from drawing near to Him.

Our church, in her wisdom, whose laws are applicable from the first century to the end of time, gave us fasting

Here's the trick – we don't realize how distracted we are until we give it up for God (music, sports, friends)

Be still and know that I am God – Psalm 46:10

Can we practice being still? For just 10 mins? 5 mins? 1 min?

Turn off your mind.

When you are still then you can **know** that He is God

Liberation!

- Through fasting we gain mastery over ourselves and conquer the passions of the flesh.
- It is to liberate oneself from dependence on the things of this world in order to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom of God.
- It is to give power to the soul so that it would not yield to temptation and sin.
- For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Romans 7:15

Romans 7:15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

St. Paul – the spiritual giant – is saying this! So if he is saying this – we can all admit we go through this – we need a spiritual discipline and that’s through fasting and prayer

Facts about Fasting (1/2)

- The word “**Fast**” means to abstain from any and all food and drink.
- Fasting was a vow taken by an individual, a family, or group.
- The Apostolic Fathers established Fasting as a Church-wide tradition.
- The first instituted Church fast was what we now call the Great Fast (Lent).
- Throughout time, other fasts were added to the annual tradition of the Church: Advent Fast, Apostle’s Fast, St. Mary’s Fast, and a 3-day Muqattam Mountain Memorial Fast (added to the Advent Fast).
- Church Fasts generally meant no eating or drinking from sunrise to sunset.
- The Church at one point deepened the practice of fasting by excluding the consumption of animals or any animal byproducts when people broke fast at sunset.

In the first centuries of Christianity, praying and fasting (the direct love of God) were integrated with alms giving (our love to God interpreted by our love to our neighbors).

This is explained in the book "The Shepherd" of Hermes, urging believers to offer their savings resulting from fasting to widows and orphans, Origen blesses those who fast and feed the poor

Lent communion hymn: blessed are those who have mercy, who give to the poor and fast and pray

St. Augustine has written a whole book on fasting, as he feels that a person, who fasts without offering his savings to the poor, has in fact practiced "greed" rather than fasting.

Facts about Fasting (2/2)

- The Church allowed fish in all fasts *except* the Great Fast and the fasting days associated with the Great Fast.
- Fasts that were added as satellites to the Great Fast, sharing in its theme of “repentance” are the following: 3-day Jonah/Nineveh Fast, 7-day Compensatory/Preparation Fast, 8-day Holy Week Fast, and fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays
- Exceptions to the duration of each fast and abstaining time each day were made on a case-by-case basis for those who were ill, aged, very young, and new-comers to Christianity.
- Fasting is a Law in the Church – as it was in Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-9) – and is to be practiced by all who are baptized into the One Holy Catholic (Universal) and Apostolic Orthodox Church, per command given in Baptism and accepted by the baptized.
- Exceptions and absolution are made by the person’s Confessor Father to relieve a person from their vow to God.

FASTING IS A LAW – so you may have thought “oh this fasting thing sounds like a great idea, maybe I’ll give it a try”

But actually it’s a law – not really optional. Somehow we’ve managed to water down the importance of fasting

Elements of Fasting

- Physical: abstain from all food till a certain hour then abstain from rich food (dairy products, eggs, all kinds of meat)
- Spiritual: (-) abstinence from evil thoughts, desires and deeds; love (+)

By abstaining from food, man rises above the level of the body and also above matter, and this is the wisdom behind fasting.

Fasting that's pleasing to God

We know God said in different places that He abhorred the fasts of the Israelites and that He rebuked the Pharisees for their fasting.

So it's not about the food and the outward – it's really the inner man.

But it is about the food. Why did God use food? **By abstaining from food, man rises above the level of the body and also above matter, and this is the wisdom behind fasting.**

And if I can control my food – which is like the basics of life – then I can really start to rely on God and not let flesh control my actions.

What Fasting is NOT

- Fasting is not at all an act of mortification for mortification's sake.
- It is not a “little suffering” which is somehow pleasing to God.
- It is not a punishment, which is to be sorrowfully endured in payment for sins.

Rather, fasting is:

- A time of repentance and contrition
- The days of fasting for a Christian should be a joyful experience, because fasting is self-discipline, which we voluntarily impose upon ourselves in order to become closer to Christ.

The days of fasting are days of repentance and contrition.

At the same time, they **are periods of joy and cheer as believers experience victory and power in their innermost self.**

Fasting does not imply fatigue, restraint, or irritation, **but rather it inspires joy and inward gladness with the Lord reigning within the heart...**

Thinking about holy week: time of increased asceticism (so more fasting) and you can experience or witness others experiencing signs of real spiritual joy and consolation filling the heart

Benefits of Fasting

- Fasting lightens our load and makes it easier to pray
- “As long as man’s mouth is sealed by fasting his mind will meditate on the repentance of his soul.” St. Isaac of Syria
- Fasting encourages obedience to God’s moral commands by making us center our lives around His. When I fast I’m making a decision – daily – 3 times a day – that my focus will be Him and not myself.
- Fasting returns us to a “Paradise-like” way of life

Fasting “lightens our load” and makes it easier to pray
St. Isaac of Syria says: “As long as man’s mouth is sealed by fasting his mind will meditate on the repentance of his soul.”

For the Servant

- Christ started His ministry by fasting
- Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”
- Transfiguration
- 1 Corinthians 9:27 But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Christ started His ministry with fasting

The Lord, Himself, the Word Incarnate, fasted before undergoing trial and undertaking His ministry on our behalf We therefore fast with Him to attain victory and blessings at work, and to be able to proceed in the spirit and not according to the flesh (Rom. 8: 1).

Transfiguration: The Lord fasted for forty days (Matt. 4:2) to transfigure in the midst of Moses and Elijah who each also fasted for forty days (Exod. 40:28; 1 Kings 19:8). In this way He declared that fasting is not deprivation, **neither is it a restraint upon the body; but it is rather a sublimation with our Lord on Mount Tabor which enables us to enjoy His Glory made manifest in us.**

As a servant the most important thing is your spiritual life – because to be an ambassador of Christ, we have to be like Him.

St. Paul – the spiritual giant said

“But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Cor 9:27)

With Christ, we will win

- The essential point we ought always to have in mind at the onset of this struggle is that, with Christ, we will win.
- *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).*

“When we fast, we voluntarily return to Paradise. We do this not because it is sinful to eat meat, but because we recognize our true homeland, the Kingdom of God, and we want to reinforce this truth in our lives.” Our fasting and self-discipline, then, “signifies a rejection of the world, only in so far as it is corrupted by the fall; of the body, only in so far as it is dominated by sinful passions.

Lust excludes love; so long as we lust after other persons or other things, we cannot truly love them. By delivering us from lust, the fast renders us capable of genuine love.

No longer ruled by the selfish desire to grasp and to exploit, we begin to see the world with the eyes of Adam in Paradise.

Our self-denial is the path that leads to our self-affirmation; it is our means of entry into the cosmic liturgy whereby all things visible and invisible ascribe glory to their Creator.”