

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

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“ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (John 3: 14-21)

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The committee welcomes your participation in the form of articles, reviews, news or comments. Please mail your articles, comments...etc. to the church or e-mail them to

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FASTING AND REPENTANCE

BY: Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Those who fast and receive no benefit from it must have fasted in a wrong way; in this case, what is to blame is not fasting itself, but the method followed.

Fasting is a period of concentrated spiritual activity, a period of loving God and adhering to Him. As a result of this love, one who fasts is lifted above the level of the body and its concerns.

He soars above worldly matters, to get a taste of the heavenly. It is a period of sacred feelings towards God, and ultimately, it harbours the feeling that one is close to, and familiar with, Him. It is a period of being spiritually content with the self and with God, and of standing against the Devil. Days of fasting are specifically for spiritual energy, and are a period of storage.

From the depths of spirituality acquired, through fasting, one who fasts receives spiritual energy which supports him during his non-fasting days. Thus, he who is honest in his spiritual activity during Lent, for instance, receives a spiritual stock that strengthens him throughout the following fifty sacred days, during which there is neither fasting nor metanoias. If one wants to fast in a spiritual fashion, one must bear in mind the following remarks:

- 1. Fasting must be spiritual in its target and motives. It should not be performed as an obligation, for praise, or out of custom. In fasting, one must place the love of God above materialistic and bodily things, in order to allow the soul its chance.*
- 2. Fasting should be a period of penitence and purity of heart. In fasting, the person must lead a holy life, acceptable in the sight of God, in which he confesses his sins and repents, then partakes of the holy sacraments.*
- 3. Fasting should be a period of spiritual nourishment, and it should follow a strong spiritual schedule.*

While fasting, all the spiritual media should be taken care of, and spiritual, rather than bodily, matters should be concentrated upon. One should always place before oneself, not merely the kind of food for fasting, but the sanctity of fasting days and what is proper for them, so that one's spirit may become strengthened in them.

Fasting leads to the strength of the spirit, and the strength of the spirit leads to fasting. In fasting there are virtues that are related to each other. Fasting helps one to stay up late, because of the lightness of one's body, and staying up late leads to reading and prayer. Spiritual reading also helps one to pray, and it is a source of contemplation, which, in turn, strengthens prayer. Fasting is related to metanoias,

which lead to humility and the meekness of the heart. The humbling of the body, through fasting, also leads to a humbling of the soul. Fasting is connected with virtues that are related to the purpose of fasting. There is a fast, such as that of the Apostles, that prepares one for service, while another fast, such as that of Nineveh, aims at repentance. The purpose of some fasts, such as Esther's, aims at saving people, and there are those who fast for others, and their fast includes love, sacrifice, and cooperation. These are all fasts that are mingled with special virtues. We should remember in our fast that the Lord Jesus Christ fasted while He was filled with the Spirit, but as for us, at least let us fast so that we may become filled with the Spirit.

Fasting should be accompanied by repentance.

Fasting days are sacred, and man lives them in holiness. During these days, the mind, heart and body must also be sacred. Fasting is a training period during which one attempts to approach God, while at the same time being pulled away by sin.

Therefore, one must escape from sin through repentance in order to draw one's self closer to God.

While fasting, the body abstains from food, and the soul abstains from every earthly lust, every worldly lust, and all lusts that pertain to the body. Thus, through repentance, one approaches God. Therefore, ask yourself: Are you on this track?

Without repentance, God does not accept your fast, and thus, you gain neither heaven nor earth, and you make yourself suffer in vain. If you want God to accept your fast, check yourself, as far as all your sins are concerned, and revoke them.

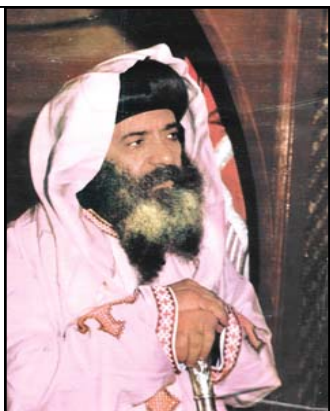
On this matter, we may take the clear example of the fast of Nineveh. The Bible says that the people of Nineveh turned, "every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. " (Jonah3 :8) For this reason, God did not destroy them when He "...saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. " (Jonah3 :10) It was not said that, 'when He saw their ascetic garb or their fast,' but when he saw their repentance, which was a principal element in their fast.

In the Book of Joel, we see an example of repentance that accompanies fasting. The Lord addressed the people through His prophet, saying: "Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful" (Joel2 :13 12). It is clear here that fasting is accompanied by repentance and weeping. Therefore, fasting is not mere abstinence from food, but rather, it is the true yearning of the heart for God.

In his fast, Daniel, the prophet, presented the repentance of the whole population.

He fasted and confessed to God, saying, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts... O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but unto us shame of face... O Lord, to us belongs shame of face to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned

against You. " (Daniel9 :5-8) Therefore, be reconciled with God in your fast. Do not say: "How long will You forget me, O Lord : for ever?" (Psalms13 :1) You should rather say. 'How long will I forget You, O Lord? For ever? Until when will I hide my face from You?' Purify your souls then, and sanctify them. Prepare for a meeting with these days. Become ready by making God reside in your hearts, and not be merely abstaining from food. If you are in sin, be reconciled with God, and if you are reconciled with Him, deepen your love for Him. If you have done away sinfulness during a fast, continue on in the same manner. Repentance is not confined to fasting alone, but it is made fit through fasting. Man becomes trained in it, his heart is purified, and he keeps this purity as a lifestyle. In all this, be ready to strive against the Devil. Joshua, son of Sirach, told his son that if he set forward to serve God, he should prepare himself for all trials. When the Devil sees your fast and repentance, he becomes envious of your spiritual acts. Thus, he fights you to deprive you of the fruit of your labour, and seeks every trick to bring about your downfall, saying, 'I shall not leave you until you give up.' Remember the words of Saint Peter who said, "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith. " (1Peter5 :9) Thus, fasting is a period of spiritual warfare, as was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Matthew4 . It is also a period of triumph for him who shares it with Christ.



Coptic People ask His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Question: The Bible says "*So the Master commended the unjust steward*" (Luke 16:8). How did the Lord commend the unjust steward?

His Holiness Pope Shenouda

III answers: The Lord did not commend all his actions, He only commended his wisdom.

The conclusion of this verse says "*so the master commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely*". This man was prepared for whatever the future might bring him before he was discharged from his stewardship. This readiness in this parable symbolises the readiness that we should have toward eternity before we depart from this world.

The Lord, by this parable admonishes us by the wisdom which the people of the world have.

So if the people of this world in spite of their sins, have such wisdom then the sons of God should also have it. For immediately after praising the unjust steward on his wisdom. He said, *'for the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light'* (Luke 16:8). The Lord is reproaching us by the parable of the unjust steward who being a son of this world, knew how to be ready for his future. We need to bring up an important point in this parable and other parables like it:

There is a specific point of comparison, not a generalized one.

For example if we praise the lion, we do not praise its savageness and wildness but we praise its strength and courage. If we describe a man as a lion we do not mean that he is an animal or a savage but we praise him for his strength and courage. Also in the parable of the unjust steward the praise was for one specific point only which is the wisdom of being ready for the future, not his other qualities. Here we give another example to clarify this point: The serpent, which is the cause of the calamity and fall of the human race, the Lord found a nice thing about it that we might adopt, He said:

"Be wise as serpents..." (Matt. 10:16)

Does that mean that we should be like the serpent in every thing?

While it is a symbol of wickedness, evil and cunning. The only point that God praised in the serpent is the wisdom, so the resemblance is only limited to this quality, as with the unjust steward..

The Spirit of Serving

(3)

You Yourself Be Good News

People need one who makes them happy and alleviates their troubles. With the hope that he has, he can let in light to shine amidst their tribulations making them disappear and giving a new hope...

You too, be like that. If you have a joyful word, give it to people. If you have inconvenient word, postpone uttering it in order not to cause trouble to others.

Blessed are the words of the Bible, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things." (Rom.10 :15).

Be cheerful with everyone and do your utmost to spread happiness among people.

Meet people with a gentle smile and a sweet word, for people do not like frowning or angry looks that make them lose the peace of heart and quietness.

Make people happy to meet you, make them feel that you bring them joy and that your arrival is good news to them.

Look how people draw a good omen and rejoice in a happy word that they read in the horoscope or fortune-book. It could fill their heart with joy and boost their morale although nobody knows the future except God. What made them happy was nothing but a word...

Can't you see that the word Gospel means Good News?! Preaching the Gospel was the announcing of the Good News which the Angel gave to the shepherds, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people." (Luke 2:10).

Look how the Lord Jesus Christ said to the people, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11 :28).

So, if you are unable to carry people's burdens, at least do not cause them troubles.

Look how the photographers ask people to smile before they take their photo. They want the picture to be a happy one. You too should be smiling so that your face might be a source of joy for people...

Some wrongly think that religion means a gloomy face and that gloominess indicates seriousness! Religion is in fact joy, and gentleness and joy are the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal.5 :22).

Forget What is Behind

St. Paul the Apostle said, "...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press towards the goal." (Phil.3 :13). By referring to what is behind St. Paul did not mean sins but righteousness; that he put his virtues behind and was pressing forward.

Therefore, it justifies the saying, "A good man forgets all the

good deeds that he has done as he is too busy in the good deeds that he is still doing..."

The saints never put their good deeds in front of them, but behind. They forget such deeds and never talk about them. And if it happens that somebody mention their deeds in their presence, they change the subject so that this person would forget this too...

If they remember their good deeds, they might feel self-satisfaction about their present state and forget about the work of grace in them. But if they forget these deeds and remember nothing but God's grace that works in them, then they will reach forward, feeling that there are wide spheres ahead of them, leading to the desired perfection...

I wish you would forget the past completely, not only the righteousness you did in it but also all hardships and troubles you faced therein. Forget also the evil which spoils the purity of the heart when you remember... Instead of that, reach forward in positive steps towards the love of God... and towards eternity...

Poor are those who limit their thoughts to the past with all its troubles, mistakes or its sweet dreams. There would not be any time or strength left for them to do something for the future.

They talk about the beauty of the past, the greatness of the past, either boasting in it or grieving over it. As for the present, there is nothing about it, it does not exist, the same goes with the future... etc.

The beautiful past cannot satisfy you if the present is troublesome. Therefore, do not live on sweet memories but reach forward. Let your present always be better than your past...

Do not remember from the past except what could make your present better and gives you a push forward in repentance or in growth...

تتقدم الكنيسة بخالص الشكر لصاحب القداسة البابا
الأنبا شنوده الثالث لانتداب القس اسحق شكرى
للصلاة في أسبوع الآلام و عيد القيامة المجيد
وافتقاد شعب الكنيسة.



Services during the Holy (Pascha) week 2004

Lazarus Saturday, April 3rd

Raising of Vespers Incense and distribution of Palms 6 - 8 PM

Palm Sunday, April, 4th

Divine Liturgy 7 AM-2 PM

Evening Pascha 6 -9 PM

Monday & Tuesday of the Holy Pascha, April 5th and 6th

Morning Pascha 9 AM-12 Noon

Evening Pascha 6 - 9 P M

Wednesday of the Holy Pascha, April 7th

Morning Pascha 9 AM-12 Noon

Evening Pascha 6 -10 PM

Covenant Thursday, April 8th

Morning Pascha, Liturgy of the blessing of water & Divine Liturgy
7 AM- 2 PM

Evening Pascha 6 -10 PM

Great Friday, April 9th and Bright Saturday, April 10th

Morning Pascha 8 AM-6 PM

Apocalypses Vigil (Abu Ghalamsees) & Divine Liturgy 11 PM-7 AM

Easter Mass Saturday night - April 10th

Divine Liturgy 7 PM-12 Midnight

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish
but have everlasting life.

(John 3:16)

COPTIC FEASTS

March 19 ——— **The Cross Feast**
March 25 ——— **St. Mary Apparition**
April 4 ——— **Palm Sunday**
April 8 ——— **Covenant Thursday**
April 9 ——— **Good Friday**
April 10 ——— **Bright Saturday**
April 11 ——— **Easter**

CHURCH SERVICES

FRIDAYS

-7:30 PM-8:00 PM

English Prayer Meeting

-8:00PM-9:30PM

Arabic Bible Study Arabic Prayer Meeting

-8:00PM-9:30PM

Midnight Praises /Midnight Prayers /Hymns

SATURDAYS

-8:00AM-11:30AM:

Divine Liturgy

-12 Noon-1:00PM:

Sunday School & Youth group meeting