

WHY WE FAST AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

By fasting, a man lifts his soul above its earthly prison and penetrates through the darkness of animal life to the light of God's Kingdom, to his own true homeland.

Fasting makes a man strong, decisive and courageous before both men and demons.

Fasting also makes a man generous, meek, merciful and obedient.

By fasting, Moses was made worthy to receive the Commandments from God's hands.

By fasting, Elijah closed the heavens, so that there was no rain for three years; by fasting, he called down fire from heaven onto the idol-worshippers, and by fasting made himself so pure that he was able, on Horeb, to talk with God.

By fasting, Daniel was saved from the lion's den, and the Three Children from the burning fiery furnace.

By fasting, King David lifted up his heart to the Lord, and God's grace descended on him and he sang the sweetest and most surpassing prayers that any man, before the coming of Christ, has ever raised to God.

By fasting, King Jehoshaphat crushed his enemies, the Ammonites and the Moabites (2 Chronicles 20:23).

By fasting, the Jews were saved from persecution by Haman, the imperial deputy (Esther 4:3).

By fasting the city of Nineveh was saved from the destruction that the Prophet Jonah had prophesied for it.

By fasting, John the Baptist became the greatest of those born of woman.

Armed with fasting, Saint Antony overcame all the hordes of demons and drove them from him. What? Only Saint Antony? An uncountable army of Christian saints, both men and women, have purified themselves by fasting, strengthened themselves by fasting and became the greatest heroes in human history. For they conquered that which is most difficult to overcome-themselves. And, in conquering themselves, they conquered the world and Satan.

Saint Basil says: "Fasting strengthens the mind."

St. Diodore says: "True ascetics refrain from food, not because they consider that is evil in itself, but in order, through restraint, to bridle the body's burning members."

And Blessed Jerome said: "To God, the Creator and Lord of the universe, the sound of a rumbling stomach is not necessary, but without it there cannot be chastity."

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.



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