



Father Joseph's Outline for Cheesefare Sunday

Matthew 6:14-21 - Sunday 03/01/2009

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.” (Matthew 6:16)

Why was this reading chosen for today?

- This reading is part of a group of sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ that addresses the necessity of doing acts of righteousness in private or in secret.
 - ✓ “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:1)
 - ✓ “When you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you.” (Matthew 6:2)
 - ✓ “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.” (Matthew 6:6)
- Today's reading was specifically chosen to be on the day preceding Great Lent so Christians will make a point to conduct quiet fasting.

Brief historical background about Great Lent & Fasting

- The current system of fasting during the Great Lent developed over the first centuries of the Christian Church
- By the 7th century it had reached the state of what is practiced today.
- From the very start of the Church, fasting always had a spiritual element to it to accompany the physical element. It was never meant to be a dietary system alone.
- Christian Fasting was a process built to involve the body and the soul together, as one unit.
- Saint Basil the Great explains that the true way of fasting is not abstaining only from certain types of food, but rather it is a process aimed to protect the soul from the various evil deeds by:
 - ✓ controlling the tongue
 - ✓ fighting against the various passions
 - ✓ abstaining from anger
 - ✓ abstaining from gossiping and lying

The purpose of Fasting

- The main purpose of fasting is to help the Christian simplify his/her life, in order to bring him/her closer to God and teach him/her how to rely on God.

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- It is a training process to voluntarily do away with as many distractions as possible to bring the person into a bond with God, his neighbor, and nature.
- “Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on...your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:25-33)

Practical implementations of fasting in Great Lent

- Great Lent has always been a more rigid fasting system than other fasting periods of the ecclesiastical year.
- While different people have different capabilities and so the same specific efforts do not necessarily apply to everyone, Christians are advised to strive to do the following:
 - ✓ Keep a simple diet, one that
 - excludes any type of meat, dairy, and animal products, or even expensive seafood;
 - avoids consuming alcohol;
 - and when possible, even reduces the amount of food and/or the number of daily meals.
 - ✓ Simplify daily life and cares during Great Lent by doing away with distractions such as TV, radio, loud music, and extravagant parties.
 - ✓ Dedicate more time to family and church life, scripture readings, and prayers.
 - Involve the children in this process.
 - Additional services will become available on Monday (Great Compline), Wednesday (evening Pre-Sanctified Liturgy), Friday (morning Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and evening Salutations to the Mother of God).
 - ✓ Put away some of the money saved by observing simpler habits during this special time, which can be used to serve the needs of the Church and less fortunate people.
 - Savings boxes will be available to help the whole family learn and support Orthodox Christian mission work, which spreads and promotes the faith in other countries and places around the world and offers services for people’s basic needs such as clean water and food.

Very Important Part of Great Lent

- Christians are advised to exercise systematic and mindful control over their bad habits, anger, and tongue.
- They are advised to exercise positive enforcement instead, by trying to redirect their focus on themselves and learn about their own souls and sins, making Great Lent a healing process.
- Do not forget to smile, especially during Great Lent, it is contagious.

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Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, as we enter into Great Lent, I pray You to give me the strength to conduct a fast that is pleasing to You. Give me the sensitivity to feel the pain that other people suffer. Give me the wisdom to know what to do about it. Lord, help me discover the faults and sins of my soul and heal me through Your divine grace. Amen.

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