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Under the auspices and guidance of H.G. Bishop Mina bishop of Mississauga, Vancouver and west of Canada

CONSECRATE A FAST

From the book the spirituality of fasting by HH Pope Shenouda

The meaning of “Consecrate a fast”

The word “Consecrate” in its Greek origin means to sanctify. Thus, when the Lord said to Moses: “Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb ... it is Mine.” (Ex 13:2), He meant that those firstborns should be sanctified to Him and not for any other purpose. The firstborn males used to devote themselves to the service of the Lord before Aaron and his offspring. The firstborn of cattle was also offered as a sacrifice.

Sacred garments for the service of priests were consecrated to God. In this, the Lord said to Moses: “So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister to Me as priest.” (Ex 28:4).

Altar vessels are sacred for the Lord, devoted to His service, and were not use for any other purpose. Sanctifying a house for the Lord is to devote it to Him and cannot be used for any other thing but the worship of the Lord: “My house shall be called a house of prayer.” (Matt 21:13).

Some may ask: What does the Lord mean by His words to His disciples: “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself.” (John 17:19). He means that He devotes Himself to them and the church for He came to redeem her.

Sacraments are the Lord's appropriations; they belong to the Lord alone and to no one else. They are consecrated to the Lord in the same way as the firstborn were. As the Lord says through the Prophet Ezekiel: “There I will require your offerings and the first fruits of your sacrifices, together with all your holy things.” (Ezek 20:40). About the first fruits of every fruitful tree, He says: “But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the Lord.” (Lev 19:24). Their fruit was for the Lord and was given to the Lord's priests. (Ezek 44:30).

It was said that the money going into the Lord's money box in the sanctuary “are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.” (Josh 6:19) to be devoted to the Lord.

In the same way, days were consecrated or devoted to the Lord.

To “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Ex 20:8), to devote the day to the Lord, namely not performing any work for it is for the Lord. In the same way, we should consecrate to the Lord all His feast days on which holy gatherings are held, to cease from work and devote to the Lord. (Lev 23:3,7,8, 21,25,31,36).

Thus, sanctification of fasting is to consecrate it to the Lord.

Days of fasting are sacred, and are devoted to the Lord. They do not belong to the world but to the Lord's as a sanctification to Him.

That is why God's inspiration clarified this meaning when He said “Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly” (Joel 1:14,2:15), because a “sacred assembly” is fit for the consecration of the fast to the Lord, devoting it to Him.

However, what can you do if it is not possible for you to devote all your time to the Lord, and withdraw from your official work?

Withdraw as much as you can to devote yourself to God. However, if, despite your efforts, time becomes limited, devotion takes on another meaning:

At least, aim to devote the fast for the Lord.

In this way, it becomes a sacred fast, for it is consecrated to God as far as its aim and approach are concerned. In this we comprehend the dual meaning of the word sacred namely pure for it is to the Lord.

Is the Lord the aim of your fast?

Why do we fast? What is our goal when fasting? Our aims in fasting determine our means and according to our goal, results follow.

Do we fast merely because it is a rite, mentioned in the Kutamarus and the church calendar, or because the Church has announced it? If so, then internally we are not complete. Of course, obedience to the Church and the commandment is important, but obedience to the Commandment should be done in spiritual commitment and not in a superficial fashion. When the Church planned this fast, it did so for the sake of the spiritual depth that is in that fast.

So what is this spiritual depth? And what is the goal of our fasting? **Is it merely to deprive and humiliate the body?**

Deprivation of the body is in fact, not a virtue in itself but only a means by which the soul can take its hold. Do we therefore, confine ourselves to the means, or move to the target which allows the soul to take it restrain?

How many are the false goals that rise before man in his fasts! **Some may fast merely for self-approval**, to feel pious, to gain approval in spiritual gatherings, to avoid being negligent to a biblical commandment or to gain praise from others for his fast or his level. In this way, one falls in to the sin of false self-glory.

What then should be the sound aim in fasting?

Our aim should always be to fast out of love for God.

(Continued)

The Temptation on the Mount

By His Eminence: Metropolitan Bishoy

The Lord Jesus Christ after fasting on the mount for forty days and forty nights permitted Satan to tempt Him. On the side of Christ the Lord, the goal of the fast and the temptation was scoring victory against Satan, on behalf of those who believe in His name. This was achieved through fasting and prayer, to teach us that fasting and prayer are those that cast out devils and conquer their accursed power.

Claims of the Adventists :

The Adventists claim that Christ the Lord bore a human nature with the possibility of yielding to sin. Their indication is the incident of the temptation on the mount, saying that the temptation on the mount would only be a dramatic scene if the possibility of Christ's fall was not present.

In their book "Seventh Day Adventists Believe" page 47 they mention the following:

- ✠ "When Christ took the human nature that bore the consequences of sin, He became subject to the infirmities and weaknesses that all experience".
- ✠ "Temptation and the possibility of sinning were real to Christ. If He could not sin He would have been neither human nor our example".

This erring doctrine echoes the teachings of Nestorius who said that Jesus Christ offered on the cross a sacrifice and atonement for His own self as well as for others because God the Word assumed a man in need of salvation as the rest of human beings.

In reply to the heresy of the Adventists we say that if Christ the Lord is God the Word Himself Who incarnated for our salvation, then saying that He had a possibility of yielding to sin according to His human nature would be a serious blaspheme against God Himself. Since God the Word emptied Himself from His privilege taking the image of a servant and becoming in the likeness of men; He accepted death and suffering according to the flesh for our salvation. As Jesus Christ is Himself truly God the Word, we apply to God the Word: His birth from the Virgin, suffering and death according to His humanity; without relating any of this to His divinity. However, suffering and death can be accepted as deeds of love from the Person (Hypostasis) of God the incarnate Word. To apply to Him the possibility of yielding or submitting to sin is impossible, for it carries in it no glory. However, it is considered a plain insult against the Person of God the incarnate Word as well as an unacceptable blaspheme against God. This means that the Adventists do not have a sound believe that Christ of Nazareth is God the Word and not someone else.



When God the Word conceals His glory through the incarnation or when He endures pain humanly for those whom He loved to the end; this is completely opposite from becoming exposed to sin or falling, since it is not within the frame of the glory of sacrificial love.

While innocent, Christ the Lord carried the sins of others and paid the ransom on their behalf. He Himself carried a nature that is entirely void of any type of tendency to sin. Thus, pertaining to the birth of Christ the Lord from the Virgin, the angel said to her “Therefore, also, that Holy One Who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

No one can redeem the world unless He is absolutely null and void of any defect; entirely void of any tendency towards sin. Our nature would not have been blessed in Him unless His nature -that was united to the divinity in the incarnation- is exclusively void of any trends towards evil and sin.

Real unity, i.e. natural and Hypostatic union, cannot be achieved -between the divinity and humanity in Christ- unless the humanity is absolutely void of everything that opposes the holiness and goodness of the divinity. For how can light meet with darkness?!

On the eve of His suffering, Christ the Lord spoke to His heavenly Father saying “I have glorified you on earth... And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:4,5). The humanity of Christ the Lord was glorified when He ascended into heaven and entered into His glory by the glories of His divinity. This is due to the perfect and natural unity between the divinity and humanity. When Jesus was glorified and was enthroned on the right of the Father in the heavens, His humanity no more concealed the glory of His divinity.

The Reasons for the Temptation :

The temptation on the Mount was not a dramatic scene as the Adventists claim. When Christ the Lord allowed Satan to tempt Him He taught him a lesson which he will never forget. In other words Christ the Lord retained to man his awe and honor. Firstly by being triumphant over the devil in the temptation on the mount, and later, in a decisive final way through the cross. It is written “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (i.e. in the cross)” (Col.2:15).

Christ the Lord sanctified fasting through His fast granting it superior power to defeat the devil. He offered us a pattern to follow His footsteps and imitate Him in fasting and being triumphant over the evil spirits.

The Lord also gave us lessons on spiritual warfare and how to face it. For instance when Satan used a biblical verse Christ the Lord replied using a biblical verse as well saying: “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord You God’” (Matt. 4:7).

Nowadays, we find many critics and some scholars using biblical verses in the wrong way against sound doctrines and apostolic heritage. We should answer them by biblical verses.

Christ the Lord also gave us a hint in not using His divine power to give comfort or rest to His body. Moreover, He gave us an idea on how not to use the earthly glory and power in spreading the Gospel’s preaching, and not renouncing principles in our service despite of any materialistic gain whatsoever.

Rites:

Bishop Mattaous

THE OFFERING OF INCENSE TO A PRIEST

The procedure is the same as that stated above, whereby the priest who is to perform the Incense Circuit opens the palms of his hands, the other priest responding in the same way as in the case

of a hegomen (as seen above), his response being guided by whether or not the priest is offering the sacrifice.

Some Points on Offering Incense to the Clergy

The aim of offering incense to clergymen, in general, is to involve them all in the offering of incense and in raising their prayers and supplications to the Lord. This intention can be seen in the incensing priest's request of his associate which asks the associate to pray for him, while they offer incense to the Lord together, coupled with a supplication for the Lord's assistance. This is known as the 'Fellowship of Incense'. Such 'fellowship' can be seen in the Bible when the Apostle Paul said,

"They gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship" (Gal 2:9),

- ❖ referring to the Apostles who gave them fellowship as they were fellows in the ministry.
- ❖ Incense is offered three times before a bishop, twice before a hegomen, and once before a priest. The priestly kiss that is exchanged between a priest and a hegomen is called 'The Oath of the Community', that is, the community of 'incense'.
- ❖ The tradition of offering incense to the clergy is still followed in some other orthodox Churches.
- ❖ The detail given in the Liturgy to describe the offering of incense to the clergy is evidence of its importance as being a proper rite of the church.
- ❖ It is stated here that the offering of incense to a Bishop is the same as offering it to a priest, except for the difference in the number of hands offered (3 to the bishop, 2 to the hegomen and 1 to the presveter).

THE INCENSE CIRCUIT OUTSIDE THE ALTAR "

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

AUDIO SERMONS

FASTING

BISHOP ANGAELOS, UK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-UEhyvZjKI&t=329s>



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

“Whose faiths follow, considering the outcome of their conversation?” Heb 13:7

ST. ABE-FAM THE SOLDIER

The Soldier, St. Abe-Fam or Phoebammon was born in Oseem (Awsim) to a wealthy father whose name was Anastasius, and a righteous mother whose name was Susanna. They brought him up in the Christian faith. He grew up in the fear of God, merciful to the poor, and steadfast in prayer and fasting. His parents wanted him to get married, but he declined. When Emperor Diocletian reigned and knew that this saint did not raise incense to the gods, the Emperor sent to the governor Arianus to torture St. Abe-Fam if he did not offer incense to the idols. Arianus went to Oseem and when he saw the saint he said, "Peace be with you," and the saint replied, "Why do you speak the word of peace? Did you not know that peace is only for the righteous?" and "there is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord." (Isaiah 48:22) The Governor became extremely angry and took the Saint to Qaw where he tortured him severely, then beheaded him. The Saint received the crown of martyrdom. God honored this saint by performing many miracles through his body. the monastery and transferred the holy remains there, naming it the Church of the Elders.



May the blessings of his prayers be with us all, and Glory be to God forever Amen.

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ Fasting, my children, is the first com-mandment that God has delivered unto mankind, when He commanded our fore-parents Adam and Eve that they should not eat certain fruits in the Garden **Pope Cyril VI**

- ❖ It is not by a sign from heaven or earth that humanity repents or his iniquities are pardoned, but by humility, fasting, prayer, and humiliation of the heart before the almighty God!! **Fr. Matta the poor**

- ❖ Fasting cleanses the soul, raises the mind, subjects one's flesh to the spirit, renders the heart contrite and humble **Saint Augustine**

- ❖ If any man does not receive baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who even without water will receive the kingdom..... **St. Cyril of Jerusalem**

Question and Answer:

Question

By: HH Pope Shenouda III

Why don't we eat fish on Wednesdays and Fridays but during some other fasts, in view of the fact, so I have heard, that in olden times they used to eat fish on Wednesdays and Fridays?

Answer

Some believers in the past used to eat fish on Wednesdays and Fridays, and this was undoubtedly on account either a mistaken understanding of the Church's teaching on their part, or because it was a wrong habit which they had inherited or had passed down to them from others who had been mistaken.

Our kind of fasting in the Orthodox Church is eating vegan foods. As everyone knows, we abstain from meat and all foodstuff of animal origin during fasting days. Obviously, fish are included as flesh foods, so to eat fish is not in accordance with our kind of fasting at all. So, you mustn't be surprised at the non-eating of fish on the fasting days of Wednesday and Friday. In fact, you should really be surprised at eating fish during a vegan fast! The general rule is not to eat fish during the fasts. However, since there

are so many fasts in the Coptic Church, around two hundred days in the year, which means more than half a year in fasting, the eating of fish during certain fasts, which are of the minor order, is permitted as a way of reducing the lengthy period of the fast for the people. But eating fish is not allowed during major fasts or on Wednesdays and Fridays

because these are counted among the major fasts. The most important of these major fasts is the period of the forty holy days which the Lord fasted, and Pascha

Week, the week of His suffering. On Wednesdays we remember how He was betrayed and plotted against, and on Fridays we recall His crucifixion. People can eat meat all the days of the week, except Wednesdays and Fridays. So if they were to eat fish on those days, the result would be the consumption of fish foods every day of the week, since fish is included in this category! And it wouldn't be right to make things that easy. It wouldn't be very logical either, if we were to remember Christ's betrayal and crucifixion by eating fish! We'd be letting ourselves off rather lightly! This remembrance demands a

greater degree of renunciation and devotion than that. On another occasion some asked whether fish could have eaten on the Day of Our Lady, the festival of the Annunciation, which is one of the Lord's festivals. The Day of Our Lady is of course the 29th Baramhat (the seventh Coptic month), and always comes during the lent. So, the answer to this question is that the lent takes precedence and shouldn't be broken under any circumstances, even on account of the Annunciation, because it is still part of the Lord's fast. To break the fast on this occasion would show a lack of self-control. How could anyone fast for more than a month of the lent and then let himself be tempted by a piece of fish during the fast on the Day of Annunciation? What would that say about one's efforts towards trying to rise above the level of material things and not indulge oneself in scrumptious foods?!

VERSE OF THE MONTH

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me

Mat 10:38

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM”

- ❖ Departure of St. Mary the Ascetic (The Shut-In) (24 Tobeh)1 February
- ❖ Departure of St. Peter the Worshipper and (25 Tobeh)2 February
- ❖ Martyrdom of the Forty-Nine Saints, the Elders of Sheheat (Scetis) (26 Tobeh)..3 February
- ❖ Commemorates the honorable Archangel Suriel (27 Tobeh)4 February
- ❖ Commemoration of the three major feasts of the Annunciation, Nativity, and Resurrection (29 Tubah)6 February
- ❖ Commemoration of the Universal Ecclesiastical Council in Constantinople in presence of 150 bishops 381 A.D. (1 Amshir) 8 February
- ❖ Departure of the Great Saint Anba Paul, the First Hermit (2 Amshir)9 February
- ❖ Commemoration of the Relocation of the Relics of the Forty-Nine Elders of the Wilderness of Shiheet (5 Amshir)12 February
- ❖ Feast of Presenting the Lord Christ to the Temple 40 days (8 Amshir)15 February
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Archangel Michael (12 Amshir)19 February
- ❖ Departure of St. Severus, the Patriarch of Antioch (14 Amshir)21 February
- ❖ Departure of St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist (16 Amshir)23 February
- ❖ Commemoration of the Virgin St. Mary (21 Amshir)28 February

CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:

PLEASE, CHECK CHURCH WEBSITE IN THE FIRST PAGE.

YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:

<https://www.youtube.com/@st.maryst.mosesopticortho489>