



## **Can a person fast but at the same time not consecrate his fast to God?**

Yes, there are many who fast, but God has no share in it. For instance, someone may fast while far from God. He fasts, yet he does not change, still in weaknesses. A person of high profile or authority may even fast as a customary act, lest he should be embarrassed or for the sake of his reputation. Another may fast purely for bodily reasons, while the soul has no part in his fast.

One may fast to parade his ascetic ability or skill to abstain from food. A person may abstain from food for a while and at the same time indulging in worldly lusts which he cannot abstain from!

**Some think that fasting only is associated with food without God being a party to it.** All their cares while fasting is; How long is the period of abstinence? When shall they eat? How can they lengthen the period of their abstinence? What will they eat? How can they keep themselves away from certain kinds of food? How can they fast for days? It appears as if fasting concerns two parties only: them and their food, or them and the body, without God being party to the fast in any way!! Is this a correct fast?!

Fasting is not a mere a bodily deed. Rather it is communion with God. A fast that does not have God in it is no fast at all.

### **We eat and we fast for God.**

We eat for God so that our body may gain strength to serve God and perform our duties and responsibilities towards others. It is also for God that we hunger, to subdue the body lest it sin against God, to control and not be controlled by bodily desires and lusts so that they may not control our actions. We behave in accordance with the spirit, not the body, for the sake of our love of God, and the fellowship with His Divine Spirit.

Fasting for any other reason, is rejected by God.

## **FASTING IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP**

*PROFESSOR DR. HEGOMEN BENJAMIN AL-MOHARAKY*

As we stand on the threshold of the Great Lent, we strive during these holy days to make our worship of God stronger and deeper. We endeavor for this worship to be spiritual worship.

What distinguishes Christian worship is that it is worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Our teacher, Saint Paul the Apostle, says: "For God, whom I serve with my spirit" (Romans 1:9). Worshiping in the spirit means that it is worship from the whole heart and mind, where all of a person's energies—spiritual, psychological, and physical—are dedicated and consecrated to God.

**Spiritual worship is characterized by the following:**



1. **Free Worship**: God created angels and humans and granted them freedom so that their worship would be given freely and by choice. Saint Basil the Great says:

“You do not consider slaves who are forced to serve you as your beloved ones, whereas when you see them willingly and voluntarily fulfilling their duties, you consider them dear to you. Likewise, God does not want His commandments to be fulfilled out of compulsion but rather loves the one who, with freedom, longs to do good and acquire virtues. Virtue is achieved through free will, not compulsion. Free will also depends on our inner readiness, and this readiness is our inner freedom” (God is Not the Cause of Evils).

2. **Inner, Heartfelt Worship**: It arises from the human conscience with love and desire.

Worship in spirit is distinguished by being internal, from the depths. Saint John Chrysostom differentiates spiritual worship from pagan worship, which is false and physical, and from Jewish worship, which—though true—was external and formal, limited to rituals. They were circumcised in their bodies but uncircumcised in their hearts:

“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in hearts” (Acts 7:51).

He says:

“For our worship is not with sacrifices, bulls, smoke, and fat, but with a spiritual soul, as Christ said: ‘God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth’” (John 4:24).

3. **Intellectual Worship**: It stems from rational conviction, as faith supported by reason is unwavering faith. When Paul the Apostle entered the synagogue of the Jews in Thessalonica, it was said:

“Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women” (Acts 17:4).

4. **Fervent Worship**: Without ceasing, as this is the fundamental pillar of the continuity of worship. Saint Paul the Apostle states:

“For God, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you” (Romans 1:9).

He strongly connects “I serve Him with my spirit” with “unceasingly I make mention of you.” How can the heavenly hosts praise God without ceasing, day and night, if their worship were not spiritual?

##### **5. Not Relying on the Flesh:**

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

Our salvation is based on the work of the Spirit. We should not practice bodily worship that concerns the flesh without the spirit, nor rely on the flesh—that is, we should not depend on ourselves in our worship, making self-satisfaction our motive for worship.

Bodily worship is also limited to physical instincts. It is temporary and changeable—emotional rather than spiritual. Saint John Chrysostom says:

“If no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit, then what can we say about those who call upon His name but do not have the Spirit? Here, we must understand that Paul was not speaking about the catechumens who had not yet been baptized but about believers and non-believers” (Homily 29 on 1 Corinthians).

##### **6. Spiritual Worship Lies in the Submission of Our Spirits to the Work of the Holy Spirit:**

“Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

The fundamental criterion of worship is that it must be genuine—that is, from the whole heart, soul, and mind, which also means with all our bodily strength.

# Rites:

*Bishop Mattaous*

## ❖ THE INCENSE CIRCUIT OUTSIDE THE ALTAR "

After incensing before the clergymen, the Incense Tour around the Church begins. Most churches nowadays have four rows of pews, with three aisles between them; to the North, south, and central. When the community of Incense finishes, the priest walks to the North of the sanctuary door to the iconostasis and offers incense before the icons of the angels, the apostles and saints. Here he prays such prayers as:

"Hail to Archangel Gabriel", while standing before Archangel Gabriel's icon,

"Hail to the martyr, St. George", before the icon of St. George,

"Hail to the martyr, Saint Mina", before the icon of Saint Mina, or

"Hail to the Saint Abba Antonious", before the icon of Abba Antonious.

He continues as such until he reaches the door of the northern sanctuary where he bows and raises incense saying, "Hail to the sanctuary of God the Father."

He then continues offering incense before the icons on the North side of the iconostasis.

After offering incense before the icons to the North of the sanctuary the priest proceeds Westward among the congregation, offering incense and blessing them, saying,

During Vespers Incense: "The blessing of the Vespers incense be with us, Amen."

During Morning Incense: "The blessing of the Morning incense be with us, Amen."

He then walks to the North-West corner of the Church behind all the seats at the back and then walks South until he reaches the centre walkway. He walks down the centre walkway towards the East until he reaches the middle sanctuary door, then he turns South to the iconostasis and offers incense to the icons there. He continues incensing before the icons on the South side of the iconostasis until he reaches the Southern sanctuary door where he bows and offers incense to the icons.

Moving from the Southern door the priest then he proceeds Westward down the Southern-most aisle of the Church, offering incense to the congregation and blessing them while repeating the phrase, "The Holy blessing of Vespers Incense/Matin Incense be with us, Amen."

The congregation respond with silent words of repentance, such as, "Lord Jesus Christ forgive me my sins of which I am aware, and those of which I am unaware", or maybe, "O God, forgive me for I am



a sinner", or they may pray the Repentance Psalm (Psa. 51), which begins, "Have mercy upon us O God..." The priest continues down the Southern walkway in a Westerly direction, until he reaches the back of the Church where he then turns North and travels behind the pews to the centre aisle. Again, he walks down the centre toward the East, while offering incense and blessing the congregation as before.

## **AUDIO SERMONS**

### **HOW TO LIVE A LIFE OF REPENTANCE**

*H.G. BISHOP SURIEL*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkfqWMIsCnM&t=2s>



## **SAINT OF THE MONTH:**

***"Whose faiths follow, considering the outcome of their conversation?" Heb 13:7***

### **ST. FATHER ABBA FANA**

Saint Abba Fana was born to devout Christian parents who raised him in the fear of God and adherence to His commandments. He grew up loving solitude, meditation, and showing mercy to the poor and needy.

In his youth, he became a monk at one of the monasteries of Ashmunein, where he trained in ascetic life while engaging in manual labor. He would sell the work of his hands, using part of the proceeds for his sustenance and giving the rest to the poor.

He advanced in worship, asceticism, and love for his brethren.

Eventually, he desired to live in seclusion to devote himself more fully to God and Christ. With the permission of the abbot, he departed and settled in a cave in the Western Desert, west of the village of Abu Sir, where God granted him a spring of water for drinking.



The saint would fast daily until evening in the summer, and in the winter, he would fast for two days at a time. He dedicated himself to prayer and prostrations to the extent that his skin clung to his bones, and he appeared as a charred piece of wood.

Despite his love for solitude, he kept his heart open to his brethren. His dwelling became a center of spiritual enlightenment, and monks would visit him for guidance. God also granted him the gift of performing miracles.

As the time of his departure drew near, an angel of the Lord informed him of his impending transition. He requested the priest of the area to administer the Holy Sacraments to him. He received them while standing on his feet, which had swollen from prolonged standing in prayer. He then bade farewell to the brethren, blessed them, and asked for their prayers before surrendering his pure soul. The fathers shrouded him and buried him with great reverence. This was during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great.

A monastery was built in his name near the village of Bani Khalid, and the Monastery of Abu Fana still exists today in the desert west of the city of Mallawi.

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

### **Sayings of the Fathers:**

- ❖ Repentance a renewal of baptism and is contract with God for a fresh start in life.  
.....St. John Climacus
- ❖ "Fasting ends lust, roots out bad thoughts, frees one from evil dreams. Fasting makes for purity of prayer, an enlightened soul, a watchful mind, a deliverance from blindness. Fasting is the door of compunction..... St. John Climacus
- ❖ Devils take great delight in fullness, and drunkenness and bodily comfort. Fasting possesses great power and it works glorious things. To fast is to banquet with angels  
..... St. Athanasius the Great

### **Question and Answer:**

**By: HH Pope Shenouda III**



*Is it possible to get married on the Sunday preceding lent?*



Answer

The Patriarchate issued an instruction some years ago to all its churches to forbid marriages on the Sunday before Lent and the reason for this is that it would be likely to cause a breaking of the fast. One could hardly expect the bridal couple to fast, either on the morning of their marriage, from the point of view of taking no food, or from the abstention from marital relations for 55 days straight after the marriage (this being the period of the Great Fast). The Bible says: " Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? (Matt. 9:15)

If we were to allow couples to get married on the Sunday before Lent, we would be implicitly permitting them to break the fast, which would not be right. This same situation would apply to any period of fasting, which is why it is necessary for marriage to be prohibited at such times.

Question

The making of the Chrism, the Holy Myron used in baptism and consecration, was sometimes carried out in the sixth week of the Lent and sometimes in the Pascha (passion week). Which of them is more suitable?

In actual fact, it is better not to make the Holy Myron during the Pascha days. This is because the readings for preparing the unction are different from those for Holy Week, and their times are different too. Also the days of Passion Week are totally taken up with remembering the

sufferings of Christ. So how can we properly divert our attention during this time to

Answer

making the Holy Myron? These are also days of sorrow, while the making of the Myron requires more of a festival spirit, for which the piety of fasting, rather than the sadness of the Passion, is more appropriate. The original method dating from the time of St Athanasius was not to make it during the Holy Pascha.

## VERSE OF THE MONTH

*But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting* Mathew 16:17



## ***THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH “SYNAXARIUM”***

- ❖ Departure of St. Hosea the Prophet (26 Amshir) .....5 March
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (29 Amshir) .....8 March
- ❖ Departure of Abba Kyrillos the Sixth (30 Amshir) .....9 March
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Macrobius (Makrawy) the bishop (2 Baramhat) .....11 March
- ❖ Departure of St. Cosmas, the 58 Pope of Alexandria (3 Baramhat) .....12 March
- ❖ Departure of Anba Serapamon, Archpriest of  
Abba Yehnis (John) monastery (5 Baramhat) .....14 March
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Arianus, the Governor of Ansena (8 Baramhat) ..... 17 March
- ❖ Commemoration of the Appearance of the Glorious Cross (10 Baramhat) .....19 March
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Archangel Michael (12 Baramhat) .....21 March
- ❖ The Commemoration of the revealing of the virginity of  
St. Demetrius the Twelfth Pope of Alexandria. (12 Baramhat) ..... 21 March
- ❖ Return of the Great Saints Anba Macarius the Great and Anba  
Macarius of Alexandria from Exile (13 Baramhat) .....22 March
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Sedhom Bishay in Dumyat (17 Baramhat) .....26 March
- ❖ Departure of Lazarus, the beloved of the Lord (17 Baramhat) ..... 26 March
- ❖ Commemoration of Raising of Lazarus from the dead (20 Baramhat) .....29 March
- ❖ Commemoration of the Virgin St. Mary (21 Baramhat) .....30 March

### **CHURCH SERVICES SCHEDULE:**

**PLEASE, CHECK CHURCH WEBSITE IN THE FIRST PAGE.**

### **YOUTUBE SERVICE STREAMING ADDRESS:**

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