



6 **Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria**

St. Mary and St. Moses Coptic Orthodox Church

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Amshir / Baramhat

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

MEANING OF GREAT LENT

His Eminence metropolitan Serapion
Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California and Hawaii

Great Lent is considered the holiest fast since our Lord Jesus Christ Himself had fasted it. Therefore, during Great Lent we follow the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ, who fasted on our behalf forty days and forty nights (Matthew 4:2). Also during Holy Week, which comes after the 40 days, we live the Passion of Christ day by day and hour by hour. Because of the significance and holiness of Great Lent, the Church designated a week of preparation to precede the 40 days. The Church is teaching us to prepare for Great Lent in a spiritual manner. We fast to prepare ourselves for the 40 holy days. In fact, the preparatory week is not the only fast which the Church designated to get us ready for Great Lent and Holy Week. Two weeks prior to Great Lent there is Jonah's Fast, also known as Nineveh's Fast. It is a short fast, only three days, and it is a fast of repentance. During this fast, we live with Jonah his fasting and repentance in the whale's belly. We also live with the Ninevites their fasting and repentance. Just as the fasting accompanied by repentance saved Jonah and the Ninevites from perdition, also our fasting accompanied by repentance will save us from eternal destruction and death due to sin.

Great Lent is an Apostolic Fast:

It is mentioned in the Didaskalia (chapter 18) the following: "Great Lent should be honored before Holy Week. It starts on the Monday following the Saturday and is completed on the Friday preceding Holy Week. After it, you must pay great attention to Holy Week and fast it with fear and piety." In Canon 69 from the Canons of our Fathers the Apostles, the following is mentioned: "Any bishop, priest, deacon, reader, or chanter who does not fast Great Lent or Wednesdays and Fridays shall be excommunicated, unless he has a physical ailment. As for a lay person, he shall be excluded."

Great Lent is an Ascetical Fast:

The Church teaches us to fast until sunset. Fish is not allowed during this period. Also married couples should refrain from physical relations to give themselves time for fasting and prayer (1 Corinthians 7:5). We would like to emphasize the importance of the period of strict abstention during fasting. It is refraining from eating and drinking for a period of time, followed by eating vegetarian food. Some people practice fasting by abstaining from meat and they eat vegetarian food, disregarding the period of strict abstention. These people should actually be regarded as vegetarians and not as fasting. A vegetarian eats only vegetarian food, but is not considered a fasting person. True fasting must be accompanied by abstention from food and drink until sunset as designated by the Church. However, due to variations in people's physical and spiritual abilities, the Church gave the father of confession the authority to designate to his children the length of their strict abstinence. He determines what is suitable for their spiritual benefit according to the nature of their work, as well as their physical ability to endure fasting.

Great Lent is a Period of Prayer:

The period of Great Lent is distinctive for its many Liturgies. They become the spiritual treasure for the fasting person to help him throughout the rest of the year. In addition to the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, which have specific readings, hymns, and tunes, the Church also arranged special readings for the daily Liturgies during Great Lent. Also, during the weekdays, there are special hymns. The Church celebrates the Divine Liturgy almost daily during Great Lent. It is preferred that these Liturgies start late in the day to offer those fasting the opportunity to practice strict abstinence. It is not permitted to have the Divine Liturgy on weekdays early in the morning, since we pray the hours until the Compline Prayer. How can we pray the psalms of the Compline Prayer at 5:00 A.M.? Also, having an early morning Liturgy means there will not be abstention from food, since we can not abstain from food following the Divine Liturgy. The proper time to end the Divine Liturgy during the weekdays of Great Lent is at sunset. Due to the inability of the elderly and the sick, it is permitted to have it end earlier, but not before noon. That way everyone may receive the blessing of Holy Communion, while benefiting from abstention. We hope that the fathers of confession will take great care in guiding their children as to the importance of strict abstinence and how to struggle to keep it for as long as they can.

Great Lent is a Period of Repentance:

Fasting without repentance and changing one's life becomes useless. Unless the fasting person changes his life during fasting, he will only be hungry and exhausted without gaining anything else. Therefore, the Church constantly reminds us of the importance of repentance during fasting. Before Great Lent, we fast Jonah's Fast and we live the story of Jonah and the Ninevites' repentance. During the third Sunday of Lent, the Holy Church offers us the Gospel reading of the Prodigal Son as a model of repentance, which requires an awakening, confession of sins, leaving

the place of sin, and returning to the Heavenly Fr. with confidence in His mercies and acceptance. This parable reveals to us the depth of God's love for sinners and how He accepts them no matter how horrendous their sin is. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37) Christ "has come to save that which was lost." (Matthew 18:11) God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Christ is the True Physician who is needed by those who are ill by sin. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). Repentance is a result of divine action; it is the Spirit of God, Who moves the hearts of sinners to repent. It is written in the Holy Bible, "For it is God who works in you both to will and do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13) God's pleasure is in the return of a sinner so that he will not die in his sin. When God sees his sinful child returning to Him, He has compassion and goes to him, kissing him, and welcomes his return by saying, "It is right that we should make merry and be glad." (Luke 15:32) The return of a sinner and his repentance results in joy to God, as well as all those in heaven, because, "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)

During Great Lent, we praise God for His many mercies. The Doxology of Great Lent presents to us a magnificent hymn in praising God on His mercies, as well as asking for His mercies. The first Doxology of the Sundays of Great Lent starts with the following:

I will praise you, O Lord, for your mercies are forever.

From generation to generation, my mouth shall declare Your truth.

VIRTUES ACCOMPANY FASTING (CONTINUED)

*From **The Spirituality of Fasting**, by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III*

Fasting accompanies prayer and worship:

Fasting without prayer is a bodily act. As such, it loses its spiritual nature and benefit.

Fasting does not mean depriving the body of food, which is a negative aspect. The positive aspect manifests itself in giving the soul its nourishment.

Those who fast without any spiritual act, such as prayer, contemplation, spiritual reading, Psalms, Hymns, or prostration, their fast becomes a useless burden. What is the difference between their fast and that of the Buddhists and Hindus? What role did the Holy Spirit play in your fast?

Fasting provides an opportunity for prayer. A prayer while fasting is more profound than one hundred prayers conducted with a full stomach full and a voice jolting mountains.

The Church teaches us that prayer and fasting are interrelated. In the Lent Fraction during the divine Mass, the statement "Through prayer and fasting" is repeated a number of times. When

the Lord Jesus Christ spoke about exorcising devils, He said: “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” (Matt 17:21).

Well-known fasts in the Bible were also bound to prayer.

Thus, when Nehemiah fasted, he said: “When I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned ... And I said: "I pray, Lord God of heaven, ... let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night... “ (Neh. 1:4-6). He then started confessing his sins and the sins of his people calling for the Lord’s intervention and mercy.

Ezra's fast was also accompanied by prayers. (Ezra 8:21,23). The Prophet Daniel's fast was accompanied by prayer and struggle with God. He said, “O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.” (Dan 9:18,19). In the fast of Nineveh, the people cried “mightily to God” (Jon 3:8).

Therefore, cry to God during your fast, lifting up your abased heart to Him.

Be confident that God will respond to your fast and clamour, and that when He reproaches the winds and the waves, the sea will become calm. How deep indeed are your prayers if conducted on sacred days from a humbled hearts before God through fasting and purified by repentance. How much more profound they become if accompanied by attendance to the Holy Mass and communion.

Train yourself while fasting in the love of prayer and the struggle with God.

In Chapter five, we have written out a up a guide for your prayer. It is important in prayer, to submit your heart and thought to God.

Do not subdue your conscience with formalities and with shallow readings not emanating from the heart, and then say: " I have fasted and prayed!" God will blame you, saying: “This people honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.” (Mark 7:6). Prayer is a fellowship, thus, during your prayer and fasting feel that you are in communion with God.

If consecrating a fasting means devoting it to God, then have you devoted your fasting period to prayer and spiritual work?

Is it a period of prayer, contemplation, spiritual storage, and devotion to God and His company? Are your prayers double or triple those of your regular days? If you have not devoted most of your time to God, have you devoted your feelings and emotions to Him?

Fasting, accompanied by an intimate relationship with God, becomes spiritual enjoyment.

In this kind of enjoyment, one tries to increase his fasts and his food becomes heavy for him because causes him to use his body which took some rest during the hours of abstention.

Fasting is accompanied by self-abasement and weeping:

Fasting is a period for an abased soul before God through repentance, tears and humility. Thus, one becomes aware of its weakness, knows that he is from dust and ashes and appeals to the Higher Power.

When the body is humbled by hunger, the soul too is humbled. Thus, it humbles itself while it bows down before God in obedience and humility confessing its sins. Humility softens the heart of God and all the dwellers of Heaven.

In his humility and weakness, man renounces all. His heart is no longer attached to any worldly lusts and he addresses God in a profound manner.

The Holy Bible presents us with several examples of self abasement in fasting since God cannot bear to see the humility of His children before Him. Examples abound in the Book of Judges where God saw the humility of His people, descended, and saved them. (Judges 2). "In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them." (Is 63:9). Through self-abasement and defeat, the people become humble and the Lord comes to the aid of those who are humbled and to those with a crushed heart and He saves them.

The fast that the Prophet Joel ordered is a clear example: He said: "Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; ... Come, lie all night in sackcloth, You who minister to my God; ... Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly. " (Joel 1:13,14) "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, ... Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly ... Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, `Where is their God?' " (Joel 2:12-17).

Here we see details of an integral fast.

Fasting, together with repentance (returning to God), prayer, self abasement, weeping, lamentation, shunning bodily desires, seclusion are all elements of fasting and no longer becomes mere abstention from food.

Another example is the fast of the people of Nineveh.

All the people, even children and babies, fasted and neither ate nor drank anything. They did not stop at that but humbled themselves before God, covering themselves with sackcloth and ashes. Even the King himself removed his crown and royal attire, did not sit on his throne but sat with the people on sackcloth and in ashes and they all cried mightily unto God. (Jon 3).

Such also was the fast of Nehemiah and that of Ezra.

Ezra, the scribe and priest, said: "Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones ... So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer." (Ezra 8:21,23).

Nehemiah also said: "I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." (Neh 1:4). He said this about himself, but as for the people, he said that they "were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God." (Neh 9:1-3). Is this not also an integrated fast: through prayer, weeping, lamentation, Bible reading, repentance, confession, and abasing oneself in sackcloth and ash! Therefore, fasting is not merely abstention from food. **In the same way was the Prophet Daniel's fast.**

He said: "Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession

Rites:

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE RITES OF THE HOLY LITURGY:

THE RITUAL OF THE OFFERTORY WEARING THE VESTMENTS

THE OFFERTORY

by H.G. Bishop Mettaous

In His love, "He goes after the one which is lost until He finds it. And when He has found it, He lays it on His shoulders, rejoicing and brings it home" (Luke 15:4-6). Jesus also took the children in His arms, laid His hand upon them and blessed them (Mark 10:16).

There is a curvature in the Eastern Wall of the Sanctuary, known as The Eastern of the Sanctuary, which symbolizes the Lord's embracing bosom, His compassion and His care.

The lit lamp that is always hanging there represents the Lord's watchful eye which beholds and guards the whole world, especially those who call His Name and throw themselves into His bosom;

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show His might on behalf of those whose heart is blameless toward Him" (2Chron.16:9)." Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning..." (Psalm 30:5).

Since the priest is going to serve the sacraments and partake of the Holy Communion he should be prepared, that is, repentant. Therefore, on the night before a Holy Mass he should offer true repentance to God, weep, and ask forgiveness of his sins so that in the morning when he wears

the white garments his heart is as white as his clothes, being full of joy and happiness. The evening and night time represent a life of darkness and sin when a person becomes weary in heart and mind but the life of purity and repentance is clear and white like the daylight when a person feels happy and joyful in heart and mind."

You have turned my weeping into joy. You have torn down my sack cloth and clothed me with gladness, so that my soul praises You and my heart laments no more..." (Ps.30:11),

As the priest has offered true repentance and a humble heart to the Lord, He has turned his weeping, his tears and his sadness into gladness and great joy. The Lord has removed the sackcloth of sadness and dressed him in the magnificent priestly robes, to serve the Him in honour and glory. He raised him from the dust and humbleness of penitence, and sat him down with the elders of His people. He appointed him as shepherd to His holy flock and as minister to His Divine and Immortal Mysteries. The priest's soul praises the Lord and his heart laments no more. Every day he gets strength through the Holy Communion to fight and overcome sin. "

AUDIO SERMONS

WHY IS FASTING ESSENTIAL IN CHRISTIANITY? "SHORT"

Fr. Anthony Mourad

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/hmHqQRpxt6w>



THE QUALITY OF YOUR FASTING

by HG Bishop Seraphim

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQEzCqxNBYI>



SAINT OF THE MONTH:

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

SAINT THEODORE THE ORIENTAL

Saint Theodore the Oriental was born in the city of Tyre in Syria in the year 275 AD. The Copts called him by this name to distinguish him from Saint Theodore of Shatby, since both were princes and commanders in the Roman army, and both are honored by the Coptic Church.

His father, Sadrikhos, was a minister during the reign of Emperor Numerius, and his mother, Patricia, was the sister of the minister Basilides. After Numerius died in the Persian war, and while his son Justus was away with the army, Sadrikhos and Basilides administered the affairs of the kingdom until Diocletian became emperor, having married the daughter of Numerius, the sister of Justus.



Saint Theodore was renowned for his courage, wisdom, and military skill. He was engaged in warfare near the River of Antioch at the time of the death of Emperor Numerius and the accession of Diocletian. During those days, he beheld a heavenly vision: he saw a ladder extending from earth to heaven, and at its summit the Lord Jesus Christ seated upon a great throne, surrounded by thousands and myriads of the heavenly hosts praising Him. Beneath the ladder lay a great dragon. He heard the Lord say to him, “Do you wish to be a son to Me?” When he asked, “Who are You, my Lord?” the Lord answered, “I am Jesus, the Word of God, and your blood shall be shed for My name.” Then he saw himself baptized with a baptism of fire, becoming entirely light and fire together with those standing around the throne.

Filled with divine love, the saint prayed that he might not be separated from his friend Leontius the Arab. He was told that he would not be separated from him, and that Panigorus the Persian would also share with them. He then saw both men baptized as he was and entrusted to him. When he awoke rejoicing, he told his friend Leontius of the vision, and they shared together in joy and consolation.

Later, the two met Panigorus the Persian, who told them that he too had seen the same vision. At that time, Diocletian had concluded peace with Persia, and he summoned Prince Theodore to inform him of this reconciliation. When the saint learned of Diocletian’s apostasy, he called his soldiers, saying, “Whoever desires to receive the crown of martyrdom for the name of the Lord Christ, let him follow me,” and many joined him.

He then went with his friend Leontius to Antioch. His father had already departed this life, and the king received him with honor. When the king asked him to participate in pagan worship, he refused, openly confessing the Lord Christ. The king therefore handed him over to the governor, who tortured him and ordered his exile to Ctesiphon, where he endured many sufferings. The Lord strengthened him by sending the Archangel Michael.

Finally, he received the crown of martyrdom on the twelfth day of the month of Tobe in the year 306 A.D. After conditions had settled and the edict of Emperor Constantine was issued—by which religious freedom was granted to Christians—Divine Providence willed that the body of this great martyr be transferred to the city of Nyssa, where a church was built in his name.

After his martyrdom, many of the priests of Apollo were deeply moved by him; they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and offered their lives as a sacrifice of love to God, sharing with him in the crown of glory. Many miracles and signs were manifested from his body

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

Sayings of the Fathers:

- ❖ Do not say, 'I am fasting,' but show me your fast by your deeds.
..... St. John Chrysostom
- ❖ Fasting with prayer drives out demons and strengthens the soul.
..... St. Athanasius the Apostolic
- ❖ He who controls his stomach will find it easier to control his thoughts.
..... Abba Anthony
- ❖ Fasting is the beginning of the way, but without humility and love it bears no fruit.
..... St. Isaac the Syrian

Question and Answer:

By: *H. H. Pope Shenouda III*



Are the wicked now suffering actual torment in hell that they can feel? Or is hell, a place of waiting, just as paradise is a place of waiting for the righteous?



The real and actual torment will be after the Resurrection and the Judgment. As it is written in the Gospel:

“The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28–29)

However, after the Resurrection they do not immediately go to the eternal recompense; rather, the General Judgment must first take place.

In the General Judgment, all will stand before the Lord for His verdict to be pronounced.

Concerning this, the Apostle Paul says:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

The Gospel also gives us a picture of this Judgment in Matthew 25:31–46, where it says:

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...’ Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...’” (Matthew 25:31–42)

And then, after this trial, “these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:46)

Therefore, eternal punishment comes after the Resurrection and the General Judgment.

Regarding this Judgment, the worshiper says in the “Veil Prayer” in the Agpeya:

“O Lord, Your judgment is fearful: when You gather the people, the angels stand, the books are opened, the deeds are revealed, and the thoughts are examined. What judgment will be mine, I who am bound with sins? Who will quench the flame of fire for me? Who will enlighten my darkness if You do not have mercy on me, O Lord?”

The Book of Revelation also speaks of this Judgment.

Saint John the Seer says:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11–15)

This is the Gehenna of the wicked.

Hades, however, is a place of waiting for the souls of the wicked.

The eternal punishment will be for both body and soul together after the Resurrection.

As for the suffering in Hades, it is a psychological torment—fear, anxiety, and distress—as the sinner remembers all the sins for which he did not repent. For all who die—whether righteous or wicked—“their works follow them,” as Scripture says (Revelation 14:13).

Before them will stand all the images of their sins.

As for the torments of Gehenna, they are in the lake of fire and brimstone.

These are preceded by important events: the Second Coming, the Resurrection, and the Judgment.

A whisper in your ear

- ❖ Repentance doesn't need a high spiritual mood — it needs a decision. Start while you're tired, while you've fallen, while you're weak... God completes the rest.
- ❖ No one is guaranteed tomorrow. The most dangerous thing about sin is that it whispers, "You still have time."
- ❖ In fasting, what matters most is that we hunger away from evil — from anger, from judgment, and from indifference.
- ❖ God is not waiting to punish you... He is waiting for you to return. Sometimes we run from God because we are afraid. But He stands waiting, like the father of the prodigal son.
- ❖ Start with a small step: a short prayer... an honest confession... a simple decision to stay away from the cause of sin. God rejoices in the beginning, even if it is small.
- ❖ Always remember: sin's pleasure lasts a moment... but its pain can last for years. Repentance may be hard for a moment... but its joy can last a lifetime.

VERSE OF THE MONTH

There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. Luke 15:7

THE CHURCH COMMEMORATES THIS MONTH "SYNAXARIUM

- ❖ Departure of St. Agapetus the Bishop (24 Amshir)3 March
- ❖ Departure of St. Hosea the Prophet (26 Amshir)5 March
- ❖ Martyrdom of St. Theodore the Roman (28 Amshir) 7 March

- ❖ Departure of Abba Kyrillos the Sixth (30 Amshir)9 March
- ❖ Appearance of the Head of St. John the Baptist (30 Amshir)9 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. Matthias, the Apostle (8 Baramhat) 17 March
- ❖ Commemoration of the Appearance of the Glorious Cross
(10 Baramhat)19 March
- ❖ The Commemoration of the revealing of the virginity of
St. Demetrius the Twelfth Pope of Alexandria. (12 Baramhat) 21 March
- ❖ Commemoration of the honorable Archangel Michael (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 Domiat (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/channel/UC_MI2B3NKLi1Y8P3nQR5Amw/video