

God with Adam himself. The fast is Adam's experience of temptation. Breaking the fast his fall into sin.

Likewise fasting is a concrete way we can experience temptation. How do we respond. Do we rely on our own strength and tough it out? Do we succumb and give up? Or do we come to Christ in prayer? In fasting we experience our weakness and face the temptation of the devil. Is ours the response of Adam or of Christ?

## Style of Life

Liturgical prayer, fasting and personal prayer are the foundation of the Fast. But these are not the end. The goal of Christian life is Theosis, becoming one with God. God is revealed to us in Trinity, three in one. Jesus calls us out to participate in the life of the Trinity. We can only do this by rejecting the way of Adam and embracing the way of Christ.

Jesus calls us to a change of heart, metanoia, this must reach into our entire life. Fasting and prayer are the means to this change of heart. Fasting and prayer break down the barrier of sin and help us achieve Theosis.

This attitude of repentance must permeate our lives. If we experience this metanoia we will change our behavior. King David committed adultery and arranged for his lover's husband to die in battle. He committed these grievous sins, but he had a change of heart. He came to God in fasting and prayer when confronted by the prophet. Even more David appeared in the city in sackcloth in repen-

tance. Public prayers in the temple were not enough. Fasting was not enough. Constant private prayer was not enough. He gave up all manner of entertainment to demonstrate his repentance to God.

From this, and other, biblical examples we see the reduction of entertainment of all sorts to

Let my way be straight according to your word; let no sin overcome me. Save me from the wickedness of evildoers, and I will keep your commandments. Let your face shine upon your servants, and teach me your laws. Let my mouth be filled with your praise, O Lord, and let me sing your glory and magnificence all the day long.

Prayer of the First Hour

connect with an attitude of repentance. We see our life refocused on our personal connection with God, not our personal connection with the pleasure of entertainment. This is NOT a rule, but a change of heart, a change of attitude. This foregoing of entertainment has no value without this connection to our change of heart.

Almsgiving in the spirit of Christ flows from these actions. We take our time and resources and give back to the community. Our sacrifice of food and entertainment fuels our support for the poor.

Charity in words as well as deeds redoubles the benefit. While fasting in body, we fast from idle talk, from malicious comments, from hurtful remarks.

I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.  
**Matthew 12:36-37**

Our entire being, body, thinking and expression must enter the Great Fast.

"After they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe."

Acts 14:23

## Taking the Great Fast Seriously

The structure of the Great Fast is ancient. This liturgical season is handed down to us in a form that is hundreds of years old, a form that was created and grew up in small agrarian communities. The shift in liturgical spirit from weekdays to weekends, and the change in liturgical schedule assume that the Church is close and convenient to all of the people. The spirit of the season was designed to be shared by a supportive community, not experienced by a small minority struggling to move against the tide of commercial temptation. None of these circumstances apply in America today.

The journey can only be experienced in the services of the Church, both weekday and weekend services. The rhythm of the season plays out in these services. We encounter the themes of repentance and absorb them into our lives.

If the prayer life is not experienced no journey is taken. The prayers create the spiritual journey.

# Journey to Pascha

Lent in our Life: Chapter 5

Great Lent by Fr. Schmemmann

These pages contain amplifications and additional reflections on the themes presented in the book **Great Lent—Journey to Pascha** by Father Alexander Schmemmann. Copies can be obtained from the publisher St. Valdimir's Seminary Press at 800-204-book or their website at <http://www.svots.edu>.



The unfolding themes of the Great Fast are revealed in these services.

Without taking these prayers to heart, a change of heart (metanoia) does not happen.

The real danger of the shift from small agrarian community to large consumer society is the reduction of the Great Fast to a set of rules to follow. When the Great Fast ceases to be a spiritual journey and becomes a contest of rules, we have already lost. Even if we keep the rules we lose. The mere idea of seeing them as rules means we have lost. They must become the tools of conversion, the means of a change of heart. All aspects of our life in the Great Fast support this goal of

My soul is wounded and my spirit disabled by the poison of the passions; have mercy on me, O Lord, strengthen me by your Cross and by the blood which flows from your side, so that I may sing in joy: Bless the Lord, O you priests; O people, exalt Him forever.  
Monday Matins Fourth Week

metanoia.

Intention of the heart is the ultimate measure of

success. Do we use Lenten cookbooks to make the fasting a mere symbol, not a manifestation of our inner repentance? Are we going to these resources to maintain the tasty variety of our meals without breaking the “rules” of the fast? Or are these a tool to keep a healthy diet while experiencing a true physical hunger?

Are community Lenten dinners a supportive environment to share our faith and keep the true fast? Or do they provide the “legal” means for a party?

Is our goal in our Great Fast activities to keep the customs of our ancestors? Or do we strive for a new life in Christ?

No one can know the intentions of the heart of another. But we can challenge ourselves to live up to the ideal. We can support the efforts of our neighbors. We can practice the true spirit of the Great Fast in our own lives. Keeping the fast, channeling the hunger into prayer and alms-

## Participation

Participation in the prayer life of the Church is the best way to appreciate the season of the Great Fast. Participation is more than simply attending services. We should carry the themes of the services into our lives. We prepare for the season by meditating on the five preparation Sunday themes. As we proceed through the Great Fast private prayer and meditation on the ongoing themes provide the reinforcement of the message.

The Church offers a number of special services

during the Great Fast. Attendance at each of these provide the food for these private prayer and meditation sessions.

Forgiveness vespers launches the Great Fast on the Sunday evening of Cheesefare, the last preparation Sunday. Vespers, celebrated at sundown, marks the beginning of the liturgical day. After this vesper service we are in Monday, the first day of the Great Fast. At Forgiveness vespers we experience the fall of Adam and acknowledge our own share in this sinful nature. I acknowledge my own sin. In this public service we each ask forgiveness of the other members of the parish for our sins over the last year. Not in a private confession, but face to face acknowledgement and a promise to have a change of heart.

On the first week of the Fast the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete is spread across the first four days and added to our vesper celebrations. This great hymn of metanoia, change of heart, supports my efforts promised at Forgiveness vespers.

On Wednesday and Friday throughout the Great Fast we have the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Vespers with communion provide the spiritual themes and the Eucharistic food for our journey. The vesper portion of the service feeds my mind with the hymns of repentance. The Eucharist provides the food of everlasting life and the gift of forgiveness from the body and blood of Christ.

During the Great Fast, the Eucharist provides the food of everlasting life and the gift of forgiveness from the body and blood of Christ.

I support these public acts of prayer with an increase in my private prayer and meditation. I adopt the themes of the week in daily life. I reinforce the prayer with a change in attitude and action towards my fellow travelers.

Come, let us celebrate this day with joy and divine fervor, Heaven and earth rejoice; the choirs of angels and the multitudes on earth sing with festive melodies.

Come, O faithful, let us clap our hands at this great sight! The divided members of Christ have found their unity. Let us praise the Lord who grants us peace.

Sunday of Orthodoxy  
Matins

## Prayer & Fasting

Prayer and Fasting is central to the experience of the Great Fast. We are commanded by Jesus to do pray and fast to strengthen our faith. The father of the boy possessed by an unclean spirit appealed to Jesus for help when the disciples could not cure his son. After Jesus performs the miracle he challenges his disciples privately to have faith.

*Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”*

### Matthew 17:19-21

The road to this faith the size of a mustard seed is prayer and fasting. Prayer we understand and practice, both public and private. While our society is full of distractions that keep many from our private and public prayers, there is no open challenge to the value of prayer, simply neglect and distraction. But increasingly our culture is challenging the value of fasting. This challenge reaches fertile ground if the Church does not teach us why we fast and the value of fasting. Fasting is WORTHLESS if it means following rules. The only spiritual power that fasting has is from the correct intentions and prayers of the faster. If the intention is to simply perform a duty or command the exercise is futile.

Rather, fasting is spiritual combat with the forces

aligned against God. The one and only commandment given to Adam was to fast. The fruit of the tree of Knowledge was not for food. Adam cannot keep the fast, through food sin comes into the world.

Jesus begins his ministry by fasting in the desert after his baptism by John. He resists the temptation of the devil that Adam could not. The first temptation is to break the fast, the devil prompts Jesus to turn the stones into bread.

Fasting produces the hunger that shows our dependence on food. Fasting brings us face to face with this dependence. How do we respond. To we turn to God in prayer for strength and enlightenment or do we turn to the prince of this world for temporal relief?

The sin of Adam is not about rules being broken, but a way of life rejected. Knowledge is a broad concept. You can know something intellectually, but you can also know by experience. We see in Genesis the concept of knowledge is applied to having children.

*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain. Genesis 4:1*

The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is an experience of evil. This is not an abstract study or knowledge in the head, but the knowledge of experience, as in having children. Life is granted by communion with God, but the devil (the snake) tempts Adam to replace

May the Fast not only be the abstinence from food, but the estrangement from every carnal passion. Let us overcome the flesh that controls us, so that we may be worthy to partake of the Lamb, the Son of God, who was willingly sacrificed for the world. And we shall celebrate in spirit his Resurrection from the dead, directing ourselves heavenward in the brightness of virtue, and by the goodness of our deeds, we shall bring joy to the Savior and Lover of Humankind.  
Tuesday Vespers  
First Week