



61st Year

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FOOD AND FASTING

Food but also the temperance of foods has its origin in the first commandment which God gave to the first created humans: “you may taste of the fruits of all the trees of Paradise. However completely avoid tasting the fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:16-17). And on this human challenge of food He also founded the virtue of fasting, as an action of obedience to His Divine Will. Because God’s will is that which validates the final purpose of man’s creation, which is his sanctification, in other words, the in the likeness to God. Despite this He left him the capability of transgressing His commandment, so that his free choice of his free will either towards good, which is God, or towards evil, which is the devil and sin can be evaluated.

The blessing of food

From the moment, however, when Christ came to the earth, no type of food for our physical preservation is forbidden. On the contrary, it is sanctified “through prayer and the word of God”.* With the power of prayer and the grace of the prayer “Christ, our God, bless the food....” Food is consumed by the believers with the sense of gratitude to God. Let us not forget the tables of love in the ancient Church, where based on the presentation of foods in common eating, they expressed and increased, simultaneously, the love between them, and the common faith in the person of Christ and in the Triune God. They had, in other words, a communion of foods, but also a communion of the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, man is not defiled spiritually by foods, as the Lord also teaches us, “what enters his mouth does not make a person impure” (Mt. 15:11). Furthermore food also becomes cause for cultivating virtues: First, with the service and presentation of the meal (food) as an expression of love for one’s neighbor. Subsequently, with the offering of food to all who are deprived of it as an action of charity and mutual support according to the words of the Lord in the gospel passage of the Judgment “you saw me hungering and you offered me food”.

Furthermore, with the virtue of fasting we give a bright example of Christian virtue to others. In other words, that we truly believe, that this ascesis is an expression of faith and obedience to Christ

who first Himself fasted and defeated the temptations and the devil. Also, that the material foods, cover on the one hand, our natural needs, but they don't control us. We control them to the advantage of our spiritual progress but also of our physical health.

So for this reason, consciously and with faith in the Lord, we abstain from certain foods, according to the indications of the Church. For us to show our good disposition and our Godly desire that we want to be fed, not only physically but also spiritually. Because, as the Lord notes, man shall not live by bread alone, but in every word proceeding through the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4). The grace of the word of God makes up for the deprivation of foods in fasting. Instead of us feeling deprivation, we feel blessing and fullness. We feel that we are children of faith and obedience to Christ and to the holy apostles, as the Ap. Paul tells us: "You are the seal of my mission in the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:2).

The teachings of virtue and fasting in the contemporary world.

There is a question for the world: Are we living to eat or eating to live? The Church's answer is that our life, in reality, does not depend on having a sufficiency or deprivation of foods. The main reason depends on God who gave us the gift of life. Consequently, food should not be a purpose in and of itself, nor again the anxious securing of daily food a guarantee of a long life and happiness. While much more so does it not secure our sanctification and doesn't grant us eternal life. It simply covers a basic need for life.

If however, we cast a glance at the misfortune which prevails mainly in the millions of people of the third world, who are undernourished in the age of sciences and technologies, we will perceive the injustice and the indifference on the part of the developed countries and of the strong international organizations for these people, who are deprived of what is for us the expected for us, types of first need. They are unable or they don't want to cover the basic needs of the weaker ones?

Christ fed "five thousand men" when He Himself fasted "for forty days". If our own excess of food and love becomes cause of comfort for those who are deprived of both, then the virtue of fasting inspires love for one's neighbor and certifies the phrase "while they who are seeking the Lord shall not be deprived of every good thing".

Archim. Ch. N.