

## FASTING: WHAT FOR?

Fasting is fashionable in the world, whereas it seems neglected by many Christians. It's a sad paradox! Today the world sees the various "benefits" of fasting: diet, detox, enhancement of cognitive abilities ... so many reasons that are not ours! Actually, fasting is above all spiritual (it is found in all religions), it is regularly mentioned in the Bible. If the Word of God invites us to fast, then it is not "accessory" to our Christian life but on the contrary: essential and important!

One can practice various types of fasting: intermittent, prolonged, of biblical inspiration: the Esther fast, the Daniel fast, fasting with bread and with water, etc. The main question we must ask ourselves is "why fast?" But first, let us ask which fast God prefers. Isaiah 58: 6-8 tells us that the fast God chooses is: "to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke" and "to share your bread with the hungry, to provide the poor wanderer with shelter" with a promise "Then your light will break forth like the dawn..." In summary, fasting is lived in the exercise of charity!

- **First of all: Fasting is to put God in the first place!** Fasting and prayer go together and bring us closer to God. We want more of God, more of his influence; we seek his face; we seek the powerful action of his grace to change us. We say with the psalmist: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." It is about yielding the temple of our heart while fasting and praying to make ourselves available to his word, to a new manifestation of his Glory, to new revelations. In the world, we are quick to let ourselves enter into the current of domination of the flesh, separated from Christ, the Kingdom and its justice, sometimes imperceptibly slipping towards the concerns of this world. There is freedom available, internally and externally, to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Times of fasting are used in prayer to listen to God and to enter into greater intimacy with Him.

- **For repentance.** In many Bible verses we find situations where God reveals the sins of men and thus brings repentance through fasting and prayer. If we know and believe that Jesus justified us with his blood on the cross and that his grace is undeserved, fasting leads us to see the offense of sin with humble hearts and open our hearts to receive his mercy.

- **Fasting is a victory weapon for spiritual warfare!** Just after John baptized him in the Jordan, Jesus was driven to the desert for 40 days and 40 nights to be tempted, and there he fasted and prayed. This time was a crucial spiritual preparation for the public ministry that was to follow. The Holy Spirit led him to the desert, so that, in his humanity, Jesus would be equipped, strengthened, and ready for his ministry. Jesus, fully God, did not need any preparation, but in his humanity, fasting was necessary. It is equally so for us, if not more so, in order to be shaped, sharpened, and conformed to God's plan for the ministry He has prepared for us in every stage of life). Through fasting, the power of God is released to make us free and victorious over our struggles. We fight personal battles to remain faithful, in unity with God, so his Grace can act more and more in us. But there are also battles of the Body of Christ that we must fight together: fights to drive out the darkness of this world, to break the yokes, the occult links, to bring down the enemy strongholds, to take ground for Christ. As believers, Jesus told us to announce His Kingdom and to manifest Him, to act in His name and through the power of His Spirit. Thus, we must be aware of the enemies that oppose us, which are not



"beings of flesh and blood" but, according to Paul in Eph. 6:12: we fight against "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the spirits of evil." Jesus tells us that "this kind of demon only comes out by fasting and prayer" (Mt 17,21). We believe a powerful wave of awakening is rising in the world and that the nations will come and bow down before the majesty of Christ. We believe in this time of abundant harvest that is coming, with the sharp awareness of sin and repentance, the world will be saved. We must prepare ourselves for this ministry of a new time, and already declare all the enemy strongholds defeated. Fasting and prayer are essential for our training and our stance, to bring this victory of Christ.

- **Finally, fast for a specific purpose.** When we fast, we should do so with a purpose in mind: healing, freedom by grace, growth and fruitfulness of the Church, the awakening of Europe! We do not fast to earn our salvation! That would be falling under the yoke of the law and the old covenant. No, God blesses us according to his will with his undeserved favor! We do not deserve, we receive! We fast, however, with a special purpose, with a target for our intercession. We fight with the spiritual weapons that God gives us, including fasting and prayer. It is important to give meaning to our fasting to fast with joy! Jesus tells us in Mt. 6:16 " When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. (...) But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, (...)"

In joy and in faith! Good fast!

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