

## The Fast and its Benefits (1)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Let us observe an acceptable fast, pleasing to the Lord. A true fast: estrangement from evil, restraint of the tongue, control of anger, abstention from desires, slander, falsehood and perjury. If there is a paucity of these, then our fast is true and acceptable.

***Apostikho, Vespers, Monday in 1st week***

We practice the virtues in secret, anticipating spiritual rewards. We do not trumpet them in the open places but rather benefit from them in our hearts. And He who sees all things which occur in secret will grant us reward for our restraint. Let us keep the fast not with frowning faces, but praying in the depths of our souls

***Stikhero, Vespers, Wednesday, 4th week***



Let us fast in the body, brethren, and fast in the spirit. Let us loose every bond of iniquity. Let us undo the knots of contracts imposed by violence. Let us breach every unjust agreement. Let us give bread to the hungry and bring the homeless poor into our house, so that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God.

***Stikhero, Vespers, Wednesday, 1st week***

So Jacob ate and was filled... he grew fat, he became thick and broad: then he forsook the God that made him, and departed from God his Saviour.

***Deuteronomy 32, 15***

If a king wants to capture a city from his enemies, he first cuts off the water and food so that the enemies, debilitated by hunger, submit to him.

The same with the passions of the flesh: if you live with fasting and hunger, the enemies of your soul weaken.

***Abba Ioannis Kolovos***

To fast is to change every part of our life, because the sacrifice of the fast isn't in the abstinence, but in the banishment of sins. So those who limit the fast to abstention from food, are the ones who, in fact, abhor and ridicule the fast. Are you fasting? Show me your fast with your works. What works? If you see someone who's poor, show them mercy. If you see an enemy, become reconciled to them. If you see a friend who is becoming successful, don't envy them. If you see a beautiful

woman on the street, pass her by.

In other words, not only should the mouth fast, but the eyes and the legs and the arms and all the other parts of body, as well. Let the hands fast, kept clean by not stealing or being grasping. Let the legs fast, avoiding roads leading to sinful sights. Let the eyes fast by not staring at beautiful faces and by not observing the beauty of others. You're not eating meat, are you? Well, don't feast on debauchery with your eyes, either. Let your hearing fast, as well. The fast of the ears is not to accept gossip against others and wicked defamations.

Let the mouth fast from shameful and abusive words, because, what gain is there when, on the one hand we avoid eating chicken and fish and, on the other, we gnaw at and consume other people? If you condemn others and blaspheme, it's as if you've eaten the meat of your brothers and sisters, as if you've bitten into their flesh. It's because of this that Paul has put fear into us, saying: 'If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another' (Gal. 5, 15).

***Saint John Chrysostom***

For many people, when they're about to enter a period of fasting, you'd think that their stomach was about to undergo a long siege and that they needed to fill it to overflowing with food and drink.

When they finish fasting- as if they've just concluded a long period of starvation and terrible incarceration, from which they've just escaped- they scamper back to the tables laden with food, as if they wanted- through gluttony- to lose the benefit they've gained from the fast.

***Saint John Chrysostom***

Don't pretend to be ill instead of fasting, because often enough those who haven't fasted fall prey to the same sicknesses.

Have you started well? Don't stop when the enemy interrupts you, because he's eliminated by your patience.

Those who are setting sail first wait for a favourable wind, but when the sails are in place they may immediately encounter a headwind. The sailors don't throw the cargo overboard because they've been taken aback. They simply ride out the storm and then continue with their voyage.

We, too, when faced by a headwind, should set the cross instead of sails and

complete our voyage without fear.

***Saint Synklitiki***

Fasting and restraint calm the rebellions of the flesh, and quench the madness of rage and desire. They bring a fresh, cloudless breeze to the mind, cleansing it of the fumes which arise from the excess of food and of the reek thus caused.

Through fasting and restraint, the outer person diminishes. And, according to Paul, the more this person wastes away, the more the inner person is renewed (2 Cor. 4, 16).

Someone said: 'A fat belly doesn't beget a refined mind'. But one refined by fasting and restraint certainly refines the mind.

***Gregory Palamas***

A joyful feast today and our attendance here more splendid than usual. This is the achievement of fasting! I know this, too. The fast hasn't yet begun, but we're awaiting it. This is what's gathered us in the house of our Father. This is what's brought them back to their mother's embrace today even those who were very indifferent. And if the mere expectation of it has made us so keen, just think what reverence it'll bring us when it actually comes and is manifestly here.

***Saint John Chrysostom***