Pure Saturday

Father John Kudrick

"The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath."
Mark 2:27

God has given us the three great spiritual practices of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving to help us in our resolve to live the Christian life. Sometimes we approach these practices as if they were our masters and we their slaves. We know, however, that God has given them to us to serve our needs. God wants us to approach the Great Fast as something that was made for us and not vice versa.

We must consider fasting as something that God has given to us for our own good and not as a burden or a challenge. We know that fasting brings us closer to that true and healthy relationship with God that He wills for us. There is a reason for fasting; it is not a punishment or a bitter medicine.

We must consider prayer as an opportunity to communicate with our God, not as an obligation. God intends prayer to be for our good; we were not made for prayer but prayer for us. The expanded schedule of liturgical services in our parishes during the greatfast season is intended to provide us with opportunities for growing in our love for God and for others through prayer and public worship.

We must consider almsgiving as an opportunity to share the hardships of others and to share with them our resources. Self-sacrifice is not a punishment for success; it is God's way of helping us to realize our interdependence with others.

During this first greatfast week, we have attempted to purify ourselves spiritually. On this first Saturday of the Forty-Days Fast, we commemorate the holy greatmartyr Saint Theodore of Tyre. In the year 362 A.D., he encouraged the Christians of Tyre to subsist on boiled wheat throughout Pure Week rather than become defiled with foods which had been sprinkled with the blood of pagan sacrifices. Saint Theodore's dual examples of martyrdom (witness-ship) and asceticism (prayer and fasting) are held up to us as sterling examples for us to emulate.

Let's take a positive approach, then, expecting that we will be better for our constancy during this holy time. We Christians were not made to serve the Great Fast, but the season of the Great Fast was initiated to be of service to us.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Hebrews 1:1-12
Mark 2:23 - 3:5