

The Second Friday of the Great Fast

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“By fasting, we were raised up beyond earthly passions. Let us exalt the Lord Who was lifted upon the Cross to raise up the world with Him. With full knowledge, let us drink at the streams of compunction; let us meditate on the day and the moment when we shall appear before the eternal Judge.”

Matins for the Second Greatfast Friday: Sessional Hymn

My Lord and my God! How broken are we, Your sons and daughters! So often we are given to laziness, depression, apathy, negativity, self-glorification. But You, out of Your limitless love, have given us the means to rise above and go beyond those weaknesses that interfere with the way we were naturally intended to live. You have given us the Great Fast as a time for not only our bodies to abstain from food but also for our souls to abstain from sin.

Guide us in our understanding of fasting. Let us bear in mind that fasting is not a juridical obligation with dietary restrictions or a way of gaining merits by giving up something pleasurable. Rather, the time of fasting is a gift, a time of grace, a way of returning to our natural state of life. For “the Fast, which destroys our passions, offers a remedy to souls bruised by sin. Let us cultivate it as a help coming from God.” (*Matins for the Second Greatfast Friday: Aposticha*) Through our ascetical practices, we gain the spiritual strength to repel temptation and to dispel the powers of evil.

Lord, it is difficult to maintain this course. Help us to keep Your face before us. We need to persevere in our efforts of abnegation. Adam did not abstain, and look what it got him! Let us not forget that when we begin to fast, we can truly begin to feast spiritually. When we die to ourselves and to our misdeeds, then we truly begin to live.

It is instinctive to avoid pain. Enable us, Father, to endure the pain of our guilt. We cannot ignore those twinges of conscience. As painful and shameful as they are, they force us to come face to face with our shortcomings. This is the only way we will effect a conversion, which is the goal of our greatfast efforts.

But why change? What motivates us to undergo a transformation? Simply this: our need, our hunger to be loved—to be loved in the most perfect way—as only You can love us, without condition and unceasingly!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 7:1-14

Genesis 5:32 - 6:8

Proverbs 6:20 - 7:1