
On Fasting¹

Homily I

by *St. Basil the Great*
Archbishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia

1. “Sound the trumpet at the new moon,” says the Psalmist, “in the notable day of your feast.”² This injunction is prophetic. The Scripture readings indicate to us more loudly than any trumpet and more distinctly than any musical instrument the Feast that precedes these days. For we have learned from Isaiah the Grace to be gained from the fasts. Isaiah rejected the Jewish way of fasting and showed us what true fasting means. “Fast not for quarrels and strifes, but loose every bond of iniquity.”³ And the Lord says: “Be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, but anoint thine head, and wash thy face.”⁴ Let us, therefore, exhibit the demeanor that we have been taught, not being doleful about the coming days, but maintaining a joyful attitude, as befits holy people. No one who desponds is crowned; no one who sulks sets up a trophy of victory. Do not be sullen while you are being healed. It would be absurd not to rejoice over the health of your soul, but rather to be distressed over a change of diet and to give the impression of setting more store by the pleasure of your stomach than by the care of your soul. For satiety brings delight to the stomach, whereas fasting brings profit to the soul. Be of good cheer, for the physician has given you a medicine that destroys sin. For, just as the tapeworms that breed in the intestines of children are obliterated by certain very pungent drugs, so also



1 Translated from the Greek original in *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxi, cols. 164A-184c.

2 Psalm 80:4, *Septuaginta*.

3 Isaiah 58:4, 6.

4 St. Matthew 6:16, 17.

fasting—a remedy truly worthy of its appellation⁵—, when introduced into the soul, kills off the sin that lurks deep within it.

2. “[A]noint thine head, and wash thy face.”⁶ This sentence summons you to mysteries. One who has been anointed has received unction; he who has been washed has been cleansed. Apply this injunction to your inner members. Wash your soul clean of sins. Have your head anointed with holy oil, so that you might become a partaker of Christ, and approach the fast in this spirit. Do not disfigure your face as do the hypocrites.⁷ The face is disfigured when one’s inner disposition is obscured by a sham external appearance, concealed by falsehood as if beneath a veil. An actor in a theatre is one who assumes someone else’s persona—if he is a slave, he often plays a master, and if he is a private citizen, he plays a king. Likewise, in this life, as if on some stage, the majority of people turn their existence into a theatre, entertaining one thing in their hearts, but displaying something else to men by their outward appearance. Therefore, do not disfigure your face. Whatever you may be, appear as such. Do not transform yourself into a sullen person, seeking the glory that comes from appearing to be abstemious. For there is no profit in trumpeting your good deeds, nor any gain in advertising your fasting. Things that are done for outward show do not yield any fruit in the age to come, but terminate in human praise. Run with gladness to the gift of the fast. Fasting is an ancient gift, which does not grow old or become outmoded, but is ever renewed and flourishes with vigor.

3. Do you think that I am resting the origin of fasting on the Law? Why, fasting is even older than the Law. If you wait a little, you will discover the truth of what I have said. Do not suppose that fasting originated with the Day of Atonement, appointed for Israel on the tenth day of the seventh month.⁸ No, go back through history and inquire into the ancient origins of fasting. It is not a recent invention; it is an heirloom handed down by our fathers. Everything distinguished by antiquity is venerable. Have respect for the antiquity of fasting. It is as old as humanity itself; it was prescribed in Paradise. It was the first commandment that Adam received: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ye shall not eat.”⁹ Through the words “ye shall not eat” the law of fasting and abstinence is laid down. If Eve had fasted from the tree, we would not now be in need of this fast. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”¹⁰ We have been wounded through sin; we are healed through repentance, but repentance without fasting is fruitless. “Cursed is the ground.... Thorns and this-

5 “Νηστεία” literally means “not eating.” St. Basil is arguing, here, that fasting kills off sin by starving it of the aliment on which it feeds.

6 St. Matthew 6:17.

7 St. Matthew 6:16.

8 Leviticus 23:27.

9 Genesis 2:17.

10 St. Matthew 9:12.

bles shall it bring forth for thee.”¹¹ You were ordered to live in sorrow, not in luxury. Make amends to God through fasting. Yet even life in Paradise is an image of fasting, not only insofar as man, sharing the life of the Angels, attained to likeness with them through being contented with little, but also insofar as those things which human ingenuity subsequently invented had not yet been devised by those living in Paradise, be it the drinking of wine, the slaughter of animals, or whatever else befuddles the human mind.

4. Since we did not fast, we fell from Paradise; let us, therefore, fast in order that we might return thither. Do you not see how Lazarus entered Paradise through fasting?¹² Do not emulate the disobedience of Eve; never again accept the advice of the serpent, who suggested eating out of regard for the flesh. Do not use bodily sickness and infirmity as an excuse for not fasting. You are not offering such excuses to me, but to Him Who knows all about you. Tell me, you are unable to fast, and yet you are able eat to satiety throughout your life and oppress your body with the burden of what you eat? And yet, I know of doctors who prescribe for sick people not a variety of foods, but fasting and abstinence. How is it, then, that, while you are able to carry out doctors’ orders, you allege that you are unable to keep the fasts ordained by the Church? What is easier for the stomach? To pass the night after observing a frugal diet, or to lie in bed weighed down by an abundance of foods? Or rather, not lying down, but tossing and turning, heaving and groaning—unless you are going to say that it is easier for a helmsman to save a vessel weighed down with cargo than one that is less encumbered and lighter. The one that is laden with a multitude of goods will be submerged when any wave, no matter how low, rears up against it, whereas the one carrying a moderate quantity of freight easily rides the waves, there being nothing to prevent it from rising above the surge. Likewise, the bodies of men, when weighed down by constant surfeiting, easily become overwhelmed by illnesses, whereas, when they avail themselves of simple and easily-digested fare, they not only escape, as from the eruption of a tempest, the suffering that is to be expected from any disease, but also repel like the onslaught of a squall the sickness that is already present within them. In your view, I suppose, it is more laborious to rest than to run and to be still than to struggle—if, indeed, you assert that it is more appropriate for those who are ill to indulge in delicacies than to observe a frugal diet. For the force that governs living creatures naturally engenders moderation and frugality and adapts itself to that which is eaten; but when the body ingests sumptuous and varied foods, this force, being entirely unable to tolerate them, gives rise to a variety of diseases.

5. But let our discourse proceed to history in reviewing the antiquity of fasting, and how all of the Saints, receiving it as an ancestral legacy,

11 Genesis 3:17-18.

12 St. Luke 16:19-31.

preserved it in the way that fathers hand things on to their children; thus, this possession has come down to us by a process of successive transmission. There was no wine in Paradise, nor any slaughter of animals, nor any consumption of meat. After the flood, there was wine; after the flood came the ordinance: “Eat all things as the green herb.”¹³ When hope of human perfection was abandoned, then enjoyment was permitted. Noah, who knew nothing about the use of wine, is proof that men had no experience thereof. For wine had not yet found its way into human life, nor had men become accustomed to it. Therefore, when he had neither seen anyone else drinking wine nor tried it himself, he unguardedly succumbed to the harm that comes therefrom: “For Noah...planted a vineyard; and he drank of its fruit, and became drunk”;¹⁴ not because he was a drunkard, but because he did not know how much wine he could imbibe. Thus, the discovery of wine-drinking is more recent than Paradise, so ancient is the dignity of fasting. Moreover, we know that Moses ascended the mountain while fasting.¹⁵ For he would not have dared to touch the peak of the mountain while it was smoking, nor would he have made bold to enter the darkness, had he not been armed with fasting. It was through fasting that he received the commandment inscribed on the tablets by the finger of God. Above, fasting ushered in the Law; below, gluttony led to the madness of idolatry. “And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.”¹⁶ The forty days in which the servant of God waited on God in fasting and prayer were rendered futile by a single drinking bout. For the tablets inscribed by the finger of God that Moses obtained were shattered by drunkenness, since the Prophet did not judge the drunken people worthy to receive the Law from God. In one moment of time that people, who had been taught about God through stupendous miracles, plunged headlong, through gluttony, into the idol-madness of the Egyptians. Now juxtapose both of these facts: how fasting brings one close to God, and how indulgence drives away salvation. Once you descend to indulgence, you are on the road to perdition.

6. What ruined Esau and made him a slave of his brother? Was it not a single act of eating, which caused him to sell his birthright?¹⁷ Was it not prayer combined with fasting that bestowed Samuel on his mother?¹⁸ What was it that rendered the mighty champion Samson invincible? Was it not fasting, with which he was conceived in his mother’s womb?¹⁹ Fasting gave birth to him; fasting suckled him; fasting made him grow to manhood, and an Angel enjoined this fast on his mother: “She shall not eat of

13 Cf. Genesis 9:3.

14 Genesis 9:20-21.

15 Exodus 24:18.

16 Exodus 32:6.

17 Genesis 25:29-34.

18 1 Kings 1:13-16, *Septuaginta*.

19 Judges 13:4.

anything that cometh from the vine, neither shall she drink wine or strong drink.”²⁰ Fasting gives birth to prophets and strengthens the powerful; fasting makes lawgivers wise. Fasting is a good safeguard for the soul, a steadfast companion for the body, a weapon for the valiant, and a gymnasium for athletes. Fasting repels temptations, anoints unto piety; it is the comrade of watchfulness and the artificer of chastity. In war it fights bravely, in peace it teaches stillness. It sanctifies the Nazirite²¹ and perfects the Priest. For it is not possible to dare to perform sacred actions without fasting, not only in the mystical and true worship of the present era, but also in the symbolic worship offered according to the Law. Fasting made Elias a beholder of that great vision; for, having cleansed his soul by fasting for forty days, he was thus vouchsafed, in the cave in Horeb, to behold the Lord as far as it is possible for a man to do so.²² While fasting he restored to the widow her son, having been fortified against death itself through fasting.²³ A voice that went forth from the mouth of one fasting shut the heavens for the transgressing people for three years and six months. For, in order to soften the untamed heart of his stiff-necked people, he chose to condemn himself to hardship together with them. Hence, he said: “As the Lord liveth, there shall not be water upon the earth, except by the word of my mouth.”²⁴ He brought a fast upon the people through famine, so as to correct the evil caused by their dissolute life of luxury. What kind of life did Elissaïos have? How did he enjoy hospitality from the Shunamite woman? How did he himself welcome the prophets? Did he not fulfill the duties of hospitality with wild greens and a little flour?²⁵ At that time, after the gourd had been placed in the pottage, those who had tasted it would have been in peril, had not the poison been neutralized by the prayer of the faster.²⁶ There is a physical substance called amianthus,²⁷ which is noncombustible, and which, when placed in a flame, appears to glow like coal, but emerges purer when removed from the fire, as if it has been brightened and cleansed with water. Such were the bodies of those three Youths in Babylon, which, on account of their fasting,²⁸ possessed the properties of amianthus. For in the fiery furnace, as if they were golden by nature, they thus proved to be invulnerable to the fire. In fact, they proved to be stronger than gold. For the fire did not smelt them, but preserved them intact. And yet, nothing could have withstood those flames, which were being fed with naphtha, pitch, and

20 Judges 13:14.

21 Another name for an ascetic; cf. St. Basil the Great, “Epistle 44,” §1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxii, col. 361c.

22 III Kings 19:8-13.

23 III Kings 17:17-24.

24 III Kings 17:1.

25 IV Kings 4:39-41.

26 Elissaïos, as a Prophet, was an ascetic and therefore a practitioner of fasting.

27 Amianthus is a fine, silky type of asbestos.

28 Daniel 1:8-16.

brushwood, to such an extent that they streamed forth forty-nine cubits into the air and, feeding on what surrounded them, consumed many of the Chaldæans.²⁹ Entering that conflagration, therefore, armed with fasting, the Youths trampled it underfoot, breathing refined and dew-laden air in such a fierce fire. The fire did not dare to touch even their hair, because they had been nourished by fasting.³⁰

7. Daniel, a man greatly beloved,³¹ who ate no bread and drank no water for three weeks,³² when he descended into the den, taught even lions to fast.³³ The lions were not able to sink their teeth into him, as if he were made of stone, bronze, or some other harder material. Thus, fasting, as when iron is dipped in water, had toughened that man's body and rendered it impregnable to lions; for they did not even open their mouths against the Saint. Fasting extinguished the power of fire and stopped the mouths of lions. Fasting sends up prayer to Heaven, becoming, as it were, a wing for it on its upward journey. Fasting is the enhancement of households, the mother of health, the guide of the young, the adornment of elders, the good companion of wayfarers, the steadfast comrade of married couples. A husband does not suspect a plot against his marriage when he sees his wife observing the fast. A wife does not pine with envy when she sees her husband embracing the fast. Who has ever diminished his resources during a fast? Count up today what is in your house, and after a fast count it again. You will not have run short of any household goods because of the fast. No animal laments death, nowhere is there any blood, no sentence is pronounced against animals by the inexorable stomach. The knives of cooks are checked; the table is content with foods that grow naturally. The Sabbath was given to the Jews, Scripture says, that your beast of burden and your servant might enjoy a rest.³⁴ Let the fast be a rest from constant toils for the menials who serve you throughout the year. Give your cook a break, grant your footman a holiday; stay the hand of your cupbearer. Let your pastry cook have a vacation from time to time. Let your household at last have some respite from the never-ending commotion, smoke, the odor of fat, and people running hither and thither and ministering, as it were, to that implacable mistress, the stomach. In any case, even tax-collectors sometimes give small breaks to those who owe them money. Let the stomach give the mouth some rest, and let it make a truce with us for five days³⁵—for otherwise it is always making demands and never desists, receiving today and forgetting tomor-

29 Daniel 3:46-48, *Septuaginta*.

30 Daniel 3:50, *Septuaginta*.

31 Daniel 10:11.

32 Daniel 10:2-3 (where it is stated that Daniel drank no wine).

33 Daniel 6:16-22.

34 Exodus 20:10.

35 During five weekdays in Lent, the Fast is observed with greater strictness than on weekends, when wine and oil are permitted.

row. When it is full, it philosophizes about abstinence; when it is deflated, it forgets such ideas.

8. Fasting knows nothing of loans; the table of a faster does not reek of usury. A father's debts do not suffocate the orphaned son of a faster like serpents that coil themselves around their victims. In other ways, too, fasting is the occasion of gladness. For, just as thirst makes a drink refreshing and prior hunger makes a meal pleasant, so also fasting heightens our enjoyment of food. For, by interposing itself and interrupting your constant self-indulgence, it will make the consumption of food appear desirable to you, like an absent friend. Hence, if you wish to make a meal appetizing, accept the transformation that comes about in you from fasting. Because of your intense addiction to lavish fare, you have dulled your enjoyment of food without realizing it, ruining pleasure through hedonism. For nothing is so desirable that it does not become contemptible through constant gratification. It is the things that rarely come our way that we enjoy with the greatest avidity. Thus, He Who created us provided that we should take abiding delight in His gifts through an alternation in our lifestyle.³⁶ Do you not see that the sun is more resplendent after the night, that being awake is more pleasant after sleep, that health is more desirable after the experience of the opposite condition, and that the meal table is more gratifying after a fast? It is the same for the rich and those who dine sumptuously as it is for those whose diet is frugal and improvised.

9. Fear the example of the rich man, who was consigned to the fire by his lifelong luxury.³⁷ It was not for injustice that he was condemned, but for his sumptuous lifestyle, and for this reason he was tormented in the fiery furnace of Hell. Now, in order to extinguish that fire, we need water. Fasting is beneficial not only for the life to come, but even more is it profitable for the flesh itself. For even those in the peak of condition experience reverses and changes, when nature fails and proves unable to maintain an abundance of good health. Beware of spurning water now,³⁸ lest you subsequently find yourself longing for a drop of it, as did the rich man. No one has ever gotten drunk on water. No one has ever contracted headaches from drinking too much water. No one who drinks only water has ever needed someone else's feet.³⁹ No one has lost the use of his feet or hands through their being nourished with water. Bad digestion, which inevitably dogs those who indulge in dainties, causes serious bodily disorders. The complexion of a faster is venerable, not breaking out in unseemly red blotches, but adorned with the pallor of temperance.⁴⁰ His gaze is calm, his gait is sedate, his countenance is thoughtful—not demeaned by unrestrained laughter—, his speech

36 That is, through the alternation of fasting and non-fasting seasons.

37 St. Luke 16:19-31.

38 That is, during Lent.

39 That is, to carry him home when drunk.

40 Cf. *Long Rules*, xvii.2, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxi, col. 964c.

is moderate, and his heart is pure. Call to mind the Saints from all ages, “of whom the world was not worthy, [who] wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.”⁴¹ Emulate their way of life, if you seek their portion. What was it that gave Lazarus rest in the bosom of Abraham?⁴² Was it not fasting? The life of John the Baptist was one continuous fast.⁴³ He did not have a bed, a table, arable land, a plough ox, wheat, a quern, or anything else that pertains to nourishment. For this reason, “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”⁴⁴ Among other things, fasting, which Paul reckoned among the afflictions in which he gloried, raised him up to the third Heaven.⁴⁵ To cap all that we have said, our Lord, having fortified through fasting the flesh which He assumed for our sake, submitted to the attacks of the Devil therewith, both instructing us to anoint and train ourselves with fasting for the struggles that we must undergo amid temptations and affording the adversary a handle, so to speak, through hunger.⁴⁶ For on account of the height of His Divinity He would have been inaccessible to the Devil, had He not submitted to human weakness through hunger. However, before He ascended back to Heaven, He tasted food, giving assurance of the true nature of His risen body.⁴⁷ Will you not give up fattening and gorging yourself? Will you allow your mind to waste away through lack of nourishment, because you take no thought for saving and life-giving teachings? Or do you not know that, just as in the case of a battle those who fight for one side cause the defeat of the other, so he who sides with the flesh prevails over the spirit, while he who aligns himself with the spirit brings his flesh into subjection? “[For] these [flesh and spirit] are contrary the one to the other.”⁴⁸ Hence, if you wish to make your mind strong, tame your flesh through fasting. For this is what the Apostle says, that to the extent that our outward man perishes, our inward man is renewed;⁴⁹ he also says: “[W]hen I am weak, then am I strong.”⁵⁰ Will you not disdain perishable foods? Will you not conceive a desire for the table in the Kingdom of Heaven, for which fasting here on earth is assuredly a preparation? Do you not know that by immoderate satiety you fatten for yourself the worm that torments? For who amid lavish feasting and perpetual delectation has become the partaker of any spiritual gift? Moses needed a second fast in order to receive the

41 Hebrews 11:38, 37.

42 St. Luke 16:23.

43 St. Matthew 3:4.

44 St. Matthew 11:11.

45 II Corinthians 11:27; 12:2.

46 St. Matthew 4:2.

47 St. Luke 24:43.

48 Galatians 5:17.

49 II Corinthians 4:16.

50 II Corinthians 12:10.

second set of laws.⁵¹ If the animals had not fasted along with the Ninevites, the Ninevites would not have escaped the threat of destruction.⁵² Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?⁵³ Were they not those of the people who demanded to eat meat?⁵⁴ As long as they were content with manna and water from the rock, they overcame the Egyptians and journeyed through the sea; there was not a feeble one among their tribes.⁵⁵ But when they recalled the fleshpots⁵⁶ and returned to Egypt in their desires, they did not see the Promised Land. Do you not fear their example? Do you not shudder at their gluttony, lest it exclude you from the good things for which we hope? But not even the wise Daniel would have seen visions, had he not rendered his soul more pellucid through fasting. For certain thick vapors are emitted from rich foods, which, like a dense cloud, prevent the illumination produced by the Holy Spirit from entering the mind. But if there is any food that is proper even to Angels, it is bread, as the Prophet says: “Man ate the bread of Angels”⁵⁷—not meat, nor wine, nor those items that are zealously sought after by those enslaved to their stomachs. Fasting is a weapon against the army of demons. “[For] this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”⁵⁸ So many are the benefits of fasting, whereas satiety is the beginning of lasciviousness. For sybaritism, inebriation, and all manner of rich foods immediately give rise to every kind of brutish wantonness. Hence, men become lecherous stallions⁵⁹ on account of the frenzy wrought in the soul by self-indulgence. Perversions of nature arise from drunkards when they seek the feminine in the masculine and the masculine in the feminine. Fasting teaches moderation in conjugal relations, and, by chastising intemperance even in licit sexual activity, engenders abstinence by mutual agreement, so that married couples may devote themselves to prayer.⁶⁰

10. Do not, however, define the benefit that comes from fasting solely in terms of abstinence from foods. For true fasting consists in estrangement from vices. “Loose every burden of iniquity.”⁶¹ Forgive your neighbor the distress he causes you; forgive him his debts. “Fast not for quarrels and strifes.”⁶² You do not eat meat, but you devour your brother. You abstain from wine, but do not restrain yourself from insulting others. You wait until evening to eat, but waste your day in law courts. Woe to those

51 Exodus 34:28.

52 Jonah 3:4-10.

53 Hebrews 3:17; cf. Numbers 14:29.

54 Numbers 11:33.

55 Psalm 104:37, *Septuaginta*.

56 Exodus 16:3.

57 Psalm 77:25, *Septuaginta*.

58 St. Mark 9:29.

59 Jeremiah 5:8.

60 1 Corinthians 7:5.

61 Isaiah 58:6.

62 Isaiah 58:4.

who get drunk, but not from wine.⁶³ Anger is inebriation of the soul, making it deranged, just as wine does. Grief is also a form of intoxication, one that submerges the intellect. Fear is another kind of drunkenness, when we have phobias regarding inappropriate objects; for Scripture says: “Rescue my soul from fear of the enemy.”⁶⁴ And in general, every passion which causes mental derangement may justly be called drunkenness. Pray consider a man smitten with anger, how he is inebriated by this passion. He is not in control of himself, he does not know who he is, nor does he know those around him. He attacks everyone and collides with everyone just as in a night-battle; he speaks recklessly, cannot restrain himself, rails, pounds his fists, utters threats, swears, shouts, and becomes apoplectic. Avoid such inebriation as this, and do not accept the inebriation that comes from wine. Do not precede the season in which you drink only water by consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. Let not drunkenness initiate you into the fast. For neither through greed do you attain to righteousness, nor through wantonness to temperance, nor, in short, through vice to virtue. The door to fasting is a different one. Inebriation leads to wantonness, frugality to fasting. An athlete trains before a contest; a faster practices abstinence before a fast. Do not indulge in drunkenness before the five days as if taking revenge for the days of fasting or attempting to outwit the Lawgiver. For you toil in vain if you afflict your body, but do not receive consolation for your privation.⁶⁵ The receptacle is unreliable, you are drawing water with a perforated jar.⁶⁶ For wine flows through your body, coursing along its own path, but sin remains in you. A servant runs away from a master who beats him; but you cleave to wine, which beats your head every day? Bodily need is the best criterion for the use of wine. If you exceed your limits, on the following day you will have headaches, you will be listless and dizzy, and you will reek of putrid wine. Everything will seem to you to be spinning around and unstable. For drunkenness not only brings on sleep, the brother of death, but also a wakefulness that resembles dreams.

11. Do you know Whom you are going to receive?⁶⁷ He Who gave us this promise: “I and my Father will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”⁶⁸ Why do you forestall Him by inebriation and prevent the Mas-

63 Isaiah 51:21.

64 Psalm 63:2, *Septuaginta*.

65 That is, by excessive drinking before the Fast or on weekends during the Fast, one impairs his ability to live a more spiritual life by giving himself the spiritual consolation of the prayers appointed for Great Lent.

66 The latter phrase is taken directly from Xenophon (*Economicus*, vii.40) and cited elsewhere by St. Basil, e.g. in “Homily xxi, ‘That We Should Not Be Attached to Earthly Things,’” §3, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxi, col. 545c.

67 That is, in Holy Communion. The verb ὑποδέσθαι is very commonly used by the Greek Fathers to denote the reception of Communion; cf. St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, iv.13, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xciv, col. 1149A.

68 Cf. St. John 14:23.

ter from entering you? Why do you encourage the enemy to occupy your ramparts? Inebriation does not receive the Lord; inebriation drives away the Holy Spirit. For smoke drives bees away, while drunkenness drives away spiritual gifts. Fasting is the adornment of a city, the stability of the marketplace, peace in the home, and security of possessions. Do you want to see its dignity? Pray compare this evening with tomorrow evening, and you will see a city transformed from tumult and commotion into profound tranquillity. Would that today might resemble tomorrow in dignity, and that tomorrow might yield nothing to today in gladness. May the Lord Who has brought us to this period of the year grant us, as contenders, to display steadfast and vigorous perseverance in these preliminary contests and to attain to the Day of the Lord, whereon crowns are bestowed, so that we might now commemorate the saving Passion of Christ, and in the age to come enjoy the reward for our deeds in life at the just Judgment of Christ Himself, for unto Him be glory unto the ages. Amen.



Source: *Orthodox Tradition*, Volume xxiii, Number 3 (2006), pp. 6-16.