

Patriarch Daniel: Forgiveness is the first condition to enter Lent



His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel said that forgiving the mistakes of others is “the first condition to enter this inner ascent towards Resurrection, which is Great Lent.”

The Gospel on the Sunday of Adam’s Expulsion from Paradise shows us that forgiving others’ mistakes is “essential” for us to receive forgiveness from God. “Through forgiveness, we humble ourselves. We crucify our selfishness, we forgive the mistakes of those around us, and we enter into a state of peace and communion with our neighbours, including those who wronged us once,” the Patriarch of Romania said March 14.

“Forgiveness makes us free,” His Beatitude stressed.

Forgiveness presupposes “a liberation from a state of selfishness, hostility towards others and the entry into a state of communion, of overcoming past conflicts; it makes us free to pray more to God and especially to say the Our Father.”

Fasting

“We do not fast to be praised by people, but we fast secretly, discreetly, not to be noticed in society, but to give thanks to God, gratitude for the gift of life and to express the desire to sanctify our lives through prayer, through a mystical relationship with God, Who secretly sees our love for Him and through this we sanctify our lives, as we secretly connect through fasting and prayer with God the Holy One.”

“Fasting is a spiritual sacrifice, self-sacrifice or an offering to God, as gratitude for the gift of life and a desire to sanctify life, and this self-sacrifice shows that the man who fasts and prays values more the Giver, God, than the material gifts he receives from Him. We first love God, the Giver of life and all material and spiritual gifts, and secondly, we enjoy limited and transient material gifts.”

“Fasting is a change, as a transition from the passion of greed for the material, to the virtue of generosity. Therefore, during Lent, we turn hunger and physical thirst into hunger and thirst for God. If we fast but do not pray, we gain neither joy nor light in the soul. But if we combine fasting with prayer, we turn physical hunger into a hunger for God; we turn physical thirst into a thirst for God.”

“This explains why some Desert Fathers, but first the Saviour Jesus Christ, fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Instead of material food, He multiplied spiritual food, which is prayer, that is, man’s direct connection with God,” the Patriarch added.



“Fasting, a means to sanctify life

During Great Lent, we reduce material food but increase spiritual nourishment. “We read more spiritual books – especially the Holy Scriptures -, we listen to the services of the Church carefully, we confess more often, we partake of the Holy Eucharist more often and, thus, as St. Basil the Great said, through fasting, we weaken physically, but increase spiritually.”

“Fasting is a means to sanctify life, to be renewed and to be enlightened, as well as to accumulate spiritual treasures: “This gathering of spiritual treasures means that during Lent we gather much light in the soul through prayer, participation in holy services, and spiritual conversations, through spiritual readings and especially through more frequent confession and more frequent Eucharistic communion,” His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel highlighted.

His Beatitude explained the title of the Sunday of Adam’s Expulsion from Paradise, noting that Adam was expelled from Paradise for three great mistakes:

- He did not obey God;
- He did not fast, that is, he did not restrain himself;
- He did not repent, that is, he did not admit his mistake and did not ask for forgiveness.

Ending his sermon, Patriarch Daniel said that the 40-day fast of Holy Easter is a participation in the fast of the Saviour Jesus Christ and at the same time is a school

of holiness, purification, enlightenment, change of sinful life into virtuous life, full of the light of love for God through prayer, and for fellow people through good deeds.

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