

Patriarch Daniel of Romania offers three pieces of advice for Great Lent



On Cheesefare Sunday, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania said that ‘fasting is an offering of man’s love brought to God’ and gave three fundamental pieces of advice for Christians to be able to bring this God-pleasing offering.

‘The Gospel reading of this Sunday has a major importance for the entire Lenten season,’ His Beatitude said adding that Great Lent is ‘a long period of inner spiritual ascent towards resurrection.’

3 pieces of advice for Lent

The Patriarch offered his reflections on the gospel passage read on the Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise and insisted on three central teachings:

Forgive: ‘forgive the flaws of our neighbours so that God may forgive our own debts’.

How to observe fast? ‘When fasting, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, so that it will not be obvious to others that we fast, putting oil on our head and washing our face, and the Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward us’.

Be free from greed for material things: ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on

earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal’.

‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,’ the Patriarch stressed citing the Gospel of Matthew.

On Sunday, March 10, Patriarch Daniel attended the Divine Liturgy celebrated at St Gregory the Enlightener Chapel of his patriarchal residence in Bucharest.

Why forgive others?

Patriarch Daniel said that ‘forgiveness is the good beginning of the fasting season.’

Why? Because ‘by forgiving others we cultivate humility and inner freedom to live in God’s merciful love.’

‘When we forgive, we free ourselves from a state of sadness, hatred or hostility towards somebody. If we forgive, we are free in our soul and we can truly pray and show that we desire God’s merciful love to forgive our own sins.’

‘Forgiving the faults of our fellows is a condition to have our own sins forgiven by God,’ Patriarch Daniel said.

The Patriarch of Romania explained that ‘by forgiving someone’s mistakes we admit that a person should not be reduced to a bad act committed at a certain time upsetting someone, because the same person can do also much good.’

‘Forgiving the mistakes of a neighbour often involves a crucifixion of our own selfishness and opens the soul to the resurrection, to a new state of human communication and communion with God and with our fellow people,’ His Beatitude noted.

How to observe fast?

‘We must fast in a state of joy, not with sadness,’ His Beatitude recommended.

In his homily, the Patriarch pointed to the fact that we can easily check whether our fasting is true and sanctifying by observing ‘if we have humility and joy in our soul.’

‘The human soul that is fasting becomes humble and joyful. Then does the soul find that it feeds more with God’s merciful love through prayer than with the consumption of limited and fleeting food.’

‘Fasting should not be understood as an obligation, but as free joyful self-offering brought to God as gratitude for the gift of life and as desire to sanctify our life.’

His Beatitude noted that through this self-offering ‘we show that we love God more than His transient, material gifts that we consume. We entrust ourselves to Him, because He is the source of our life.’

Be free from greed for material things

‘We often become slaves of material things through covetousness, the desire to dominate others, the desire to selfishly affirm ourselves in relation to others,’ Patriarch Daniel said.

‘Fasting refers not only to abstaining from food, but also to control everything that diminishes our love for God and our fellow people.’

‘Fasting is also a work of liberation from greed for material, limited and transient goods in order to unite us through more intense prayer with the unlimited and eternal God, the Source of Life and eternal joy,’ he said.

Finally, the Patriarch said that ‘we have to gather treasures in the soul, not around us, that is spiritual treasures: humility, strong faith, love for God and for others, mercy, kindness, purity, holiness.’

Published by Aurelian Iftimiu

Foto credit: Basilica.ro / Mircea Florescu

<https://basilica.ro/en/patriarch-daniel-of-romania-offers-three-pieces-of-advice-for-great-lent/>