



A Short Conversation with Moses the Fasting Prophet!

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty



Inspired by Saint Jacob of Serugh's mentality, I envision the beginning of the Great Lent, as an invitation for us to have a conversation with the one who is great among the prophets, Moses. We are told, "Come, let us turn to Moses and ask him about fasting, whether there is a need for it and how to prepare ourselves for it? How do we practice it? We ask him, 'What ought we do on the Sunday before lent?' He responds saying, 'I am really saddened at how some people misuse the Sunday on which we ought to prepare ourselves to fast. It is inappropriate to prepare for fasting by preparing delicious meals prior to the start of lent. A true preparation is when the faithful embraces all humanity with true love. It is when the faithful elevates himself together with all of humanity through the Cross, so that everyone will enjoy seeing the Holy God who rose from the dead, the Savior of the world.'"

- What do you mean, Moses?
- When the Lord called me to go up on Mount Sinai, He did not ask me to fast, because my mind was not concerned with what I would eat on the mountain. I never thought if I would be able to find a natural fountain or a well to drink from during those forty days. I felt that I was held in His eternally loving arms. I bore the people of God in my heart. I even longed to carry all of humanity, so that we may all enjoy God's encounter together and have an open conversation with Him. My nature is like everyone else's, my body needs food and drink, but with my zeal for my people's salvation and my longing for God, I did not feel hungry, thirsty, or sleepy. The forty days passed by like the blink of an eye. I was talking to God, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11). I always wonder, was I on earth or in heaven? But even this did not concern me.
- You are the greatest among the prophets, but we are weak and surrounded by diabolic wars from every side, because the enemy wants to separate us from God, so how can we fast like you?



- Don't say that! God is very close to you, He is closer to you than your family and friends. He is in your hearts. You do not need to go up a mountain like me to fast! You can practice it in your church, your homes, your work, in your sleep, even as you eat and drink and talk to people.
 - Practically speaking, how can we fast?
 - My children, listen to me. Lent is the "dynamo" that strengthens your spiritual life throughout the year from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18) by encountering your Savior, the desire of all nations! When you wake up and before you get out of bed, let your hearts cry out to Christ, "May Your Holy Spirit work within us, so that today becomes the day of the Lord. May we remember You with every breath. Sanctify our thoughts, our senses and our entire being with the Spirit of holiness that we may be dedicate to You, becoming Your ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) before the people and angels."
 - Pray for a strong guardianship over your mouths (Psalm 141: 3), so that they may be silent so that the Lord may speak from within you even at work.
 - It is good for you to have discipline in your daily worship, but not by the deadly letter (literality), yet with the life-giving spirit.
 - Let the Agpeya prayers include the cries of your hearts, praying that He may accompany you, so that you may see Him, have a daily conversation with Him, and so He may reveal His secrets to you. Beware my children of selfishness! Pray for the whole world, the unbelievers and sinners, for the church, the congregation, your families, and finally for your souls! Pray in the spirit of love and humility.
- The Lord asks you to do charitable deeds, along with fasting and prayer (Matthew 6) During the visit of St. Mary to Elizabeth, she did not offer her food or clothes for the child, but rather the Lord Jesus



Christ incarnated in her womb. This is the greatest offering that the whole world needs!

Remember, my children, that both Elijah and I fasted for forty days, and we enjoyed seeing Christ transfigured on Mount Tabor.

We felt that the great Moses was withdrawn with all his heart towards heaven. How much would we have loved for our conversation to be longer, so that we may further draw on his experience with God, but we thanked him for the time he took to speak to us, hoping to meet him in the Lord again and again.

Moses and His Mind's Enlightenment by Fasting

Moses's greatest desire was to see the glory of God (Exodus 33:18) and talk to Him. He was the Prophet who fasted for forty days and forty nights. Also, our Lord Jesus was transfigured before Moses and Elijah who also fasted for forty days.



It is as though the Lord is calling us to participate with them in their fasting, and to sanctify our fasts with His divine fast, so that the Lord of glory may transfigure - as on Mount Tabor - within our hearts and that He may establish His kingdom within us, as He mentioned in His divine promise, "For indeed the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). It is appropriate for us to fast, in order to see God and talk to Him; saying,



"See, we have left all and followed You" (Luke 18:28). On Mount Tabor St. Peter asked: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matthew 4:17). Indeed, a poor person is the one who fasts and is not concerned with longing to see the Lord and talk to Him, as he suffers from the hunger of both the body and the soul!

St. Basil the Great says, "Fasting made Elijah an observer of that marvelous vision. His soul was purified by fasting forty days, so that in the cave **on Mt. Horeb he was considered worthy to see the Lord** like one sees a man. By fasting, he returned the widow's child to her—he became stronger than death through fasting!"¹

Again, he says, "Fasting is the likeness of the angels, the tent-companion of the righteous, the moderation of life. **It made the divine Mosaic Law.** Samuel is the fruit of fasting. Hannah was fasting when she prayed to God saying, "O sovereign Lord, God of hosts, if you will look upon your servant, and give me a male child, I will give him to you as a dedicated gift. Wine and liquor he will surely not drink, until the day he dies."

Fasting brought about the great Samson, and brought him up until the time when he appeared publicly before men. Enemies were falling by the thousands, and many of their cities were being torn up, and lions were yielding to the strength of his hands. But when he came under the power of drinking and took up with harlots, he was easy prey for his enemies. He was bereaved of his eyes, and he was set out as a plaything for the children of foreigners.

After Elijah fasted, he closed up the heavens for three years and six months. After he saw how much wantonness had been born from the people's fullness, he thought it would be necessary to bring an

¹ Saint Basil's First Homily on Fasting



involuntary fast upon them by means of famine. Through that he stood, while their excessive sins were already being poured out. Their fast cut down their evil leaders to pieces.²

- Through fasting, Moses was able to encounter the Lord, and to speak to Him amid the smoke, about the hidden mysteries (Exodus 19: 18-19).

On the mountain, Moses "consumed" fasting as though it was bread, gaining weight, beauty, and shine, all without food.

He fasted from bread and sat on God's table. He consumed light, drank glory, and gained beauty...

Fasting made him a feast on a life-giving table, with food that does not perish.

Seeing the Lord filled him who fasted, and through His grace, he was spiritually fattened.

Fasting brought him into the House of Mysteries, revealing to him the secrets of God's creation of the world from nothing.

He had been cleansed of the heavy foods and his mind was enlightened to clearly see the hidden mysteries.

Saint Jacob of Serugh

Moses Fasted Forty Days and was Enlightened, Adam Ate and Lost his Paradise

Saint Jacob of Serugh compares Moses, who has seen God, had a joyful conversation with Him and received the law (as though it was a contract for the heavenly betrothal) to Adam who enjoyed the creation that God created for him and his descendants, that this creation may serve them and for them to learn from it.

² Saint Basil's Second Homily on Fasting



In his disobedience, Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus broke the commandment. As a result, he lost the teaching offered to him by God. Because of this fruit, his mind and heart were hardened, and he no longer understood the divine commandment that he could have benefitted from. Because he disobeyed it, his spiritual understanding diminished, and his eyes were darkened. Adam fell from his spiritual rank. After he was admired by the heavenly people and feared by the earthly creation, his soul was weighed down by sin. He did not digest the food that he ate, but rather this food caused his death.

As for Moses the Prophet, who is a descendant of the Levites, he fasted for forty days and forty nights and did not burden himself with food and gluttony. In humility, he knew that he must fast in order to have a conversation with his Creator and learn more about the divine mysteries. His soul got enlightened by fasting like a gorgeous spiritual lamp. He experienced the heavenly mysteries, instead of falling into desires and pleasures. His face shone so wonderfully that he had to put a veil on his face when he met his people. Moses the Prophet recognized the Creator's ability through fasting. He dwelt in the smoke that no one else could enjoy and his depths were opened up with the knowledge of the secrets of the Almighty, the Lover of mankind.

- Moses and Adam were both disciples of God. One fasted and learned and the other, because he ate, lost his teaching. The disciple (Adam) ate the fruit in Eden, forsaking what he had learned from God (Genesis 3). His Great Teacher repeatedly commanded him not to eat and as he ate, he did not accept the teaching (Genesis 2:16-17). His mind and heart got thickened by his food and he was no longer able to learn that law that could have revived him.



His nature was corrupted through the fruit which he ate from the tree. His nature was darkened and was blinded to spiritual understanding.

He ate and fell from his spiritual rank and was no longer able to learn, because he was weighed down.

The food that he had consumed with gluttony, weighed him down and since he had consumed it gluttonously, he was unable to digest it and thus it killed him.

Moses, the son of the Levites, was also taught, so he kept himself away from food, lest it may weigh him down.

He knew that Adam was expelled by His Teacher because he ate, so he weaned his mouth from the foods that may be enlightened.

With a great mind, he meditated on fasting which has the ability to teach the hidden secrets and mysteries of God.

Through his humility, he knew that through fasting, the eyes of the soul become opened to behold what is hidden.

He saw that Adam was driven out of Paradise because he ate, so he fasted to enter it and see the tree of life in all its beauty (Genesis 2:8-9, 3:23-24, Exodus 34: 28)

He emptied himself from the heavy foods to be able to contain the depths of the divinity.

He became enlightened by fasting like a lamp of great light.

He reclined for forty days with God in a feast, basking in the waves of light without bread.

Fasting purified him until he was full of light, and he came to see what is above the world and what lies beyond it.

He became a stranger to bread and water because he knew that it darkens the mind and burdens the soul.

By fasting, Moses saw God and learned His mysteries, and if he had eaten, he would not have acquired that education.

He got to learn a great deal about the hidden mysteries of theology, and with this divine education, he forgot to eat bread. He got to learn



a great deal about the hidden mysteries of theology, and with this divine education, he forgot to eat bread.

Adam died by eating, and Moses the Prophet recognized the Creator's might by fasting.

Adam was taken out of Paradise because he was gluttonous, and when Moses fasted, he entered into God's smoke.

The one who fasted climbed the Lord's mountain

He became lustrous and dwelt in God's smoke, and there He taught him all the mysteries of the creative power.

Saint Jacob of Serugh

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