



October 30, 2020

The Nativity Fast

Dear to God,

Christ is in our midst! The verses of the psalmist which we hear every week should be our point of reference in life. Currently, there is much division, anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and fear over the election, politics and mitigation measures for the virus. Perhaps, we listen to the news to a greater degree than we listen to the Lord.

Regardless of one's view point, earthly and temporal political affiliation, our lives are in God's hands. They always have been, but now we sense a loss of control. Control we never really had.

Our Faith clearly teaches us that in life, we have little to no control over our external situation. What we do have is the ability, through prayer, fasting, Confession and Communion is to choose *how* we respond to the things going on around us. Early on in life, I found it *counterproductive* to make choices based upon coercion, pressure or fear. Those decisions were often based upon raw emotion, *not* reason or even faith.

Let us seek the Lord! Pour out our hearts to Him! The psalms are full of mankind expressing the full range of human emotion. Trust me, the Lord can handle it. The reality is we cannot handle keeping these things bottled up! That will only make us ill and perhaps, even toxic. Nor is it productive or helpful to dump all of our raw emotions on some poor unsuspecting soul who has nothing to do with it and is unable to change anything. All the raw visceral emotions expressed over the last several months through postings, verbal disputes or body language have accomplished nothing positive. In fact, it has only lead to greater harm, division and isolation.

Let us pray! Let us fast! Let us pour out our hearts to the Lord and seek His Divine Presence and Assistance. He does not need our direction or advice on how to address the ills of our world. We have the Nativity Fast ahead of us. Sadly, for many, they seek to gain control over the world around them, yet have little to no control over themselves. They seek for answers or help from the political or the medical spheres, but perhaps not entreated the Lord, Who gives man wisdom. The Nativity Fast is an opportunity to correct our vision, regain some measure of inner peace and stillness.

Let us not only keep the Traditional Fasting Guidelines, but fast from Social Media, TV, radio and frivolous or divisive conversation. If you must watch the news, keep it to a minimum. Absolutely *do not keep listening to the same thing from secular sources repetitively* as it will disturb inner peace and stillness. As St John Chrysostom would say, let us fast with our eyes, ears, hands and feet as well. Let us devote ourselves to the reading of Holy Scripture and know salvation comes from the Lord.

PSALM 146

PRAISE FOR GOD'S HELP

1 Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!



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"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine

*2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.*

*3 Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortals, in whom there is no help.*

*4 When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.*

*5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
6 who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;*

*7 who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free;*

*8 the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.*

*9 The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

*10 The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the Lord!*

Have a Blessed Nativity Fast! Be at peace within yourself and with one another.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

+ *Mark*

+ MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania