



## *Fasting*

With fasting I gladden my hope in You, my Lord, Who are to come again.

Fasting hastens my preparation for Your coming, the sole expectation of my days and nights.

Fasting makes my body thinner, so that what remains can more easily shine with the spirit.

While waiting for You, I wish neither to nourish myself with food nor to take life—so that the animals may sense the joy of my expectation.

But truly, abstaining from food will not save me. Even if I were to eat only the sand from the lake, You would not come to me, unless the fasting penetrated deeper into my soul.

I have come to know through my prayer, that bodily fasting is more a symbol of true fasting, very beneficial for someone who has only just begun to hope in You, and nevertheless very difficult for someone who merely practices it.

Therefore I have brought fasting into my soul to purge her of many impudent fiancé's and to prepare her for You like a virgin.

And I have brought fasting into my mind, to expel from it all daydreams about worldly matters and to demolish all the air castles, fabricated from those daydreams.

I have brought fasting into my mind, so that it might jettison the world and prepare to receive Your Wisdom.

And I have brought fasting into my heart, so that by means of it my heart might quell all passions and worldly selfishness.

I have brought fasting into my heart, so that heavenly peace might ineffably reign over my heart, when Your stormy Spirit encounters it.

I prescribe fasting for my tongue, to break itself of the habit of idle chatter and to speak reservedly only those words that clear the way for You to come.

And I have imposed fasting on my worries so that it may blow them all away before itself like the wind that blows away the mist, lest they stand like dense fog between me and You, and lest they turn my gaze back to the world.

And fasting has brought into my soul tranquility in the face of uncreated and created realms, and humility towards men and creatures. And it has instilled in me courage, the likes of which I never knew when I was armed with every sort of worldly weapon.

What was my hope before I began to fast except merely another story told by others, which passed from mouth to mouth?

The story told by others about salvation through prayer and fasting became my own.

False fasting accompanies false hope, just as no fasting accompanies hopelessness.

But just as a wheel follows behind a wheel, so true fasting follows true hope.

Help me to fast joyfully and to hope joyously, for You, my Most Joyful Feast, are drawing near to me with Your radiant smile.

*From Prayers by the Lake, section 41*

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