

On we march

Informative bulletin of the Paphos Latin Parish

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The true meaning of fasting



The practice of fasting is a practice known to all religions and in all parts of our planet.

For us Christians, however, what is its meaning?

The aim of fasting is not, primarily, a personal exercise and victory over our self—although this dimension is a part of it.

Fasting is, rather, a willed orientation towards God and an effort to distance the objects that mar our way to Him

For that reason fasting cannot be limited to mere abstinence from certain foods, but it has especially to do with our refusal to ill-use our goods we possess and, in parallel, to put them in positive and good use, as well as to use our time well.

It is evident that the above aims should be part and parcel of the life of every single Christian every day and at all days.

Certainly, in the period preceding Easter, and during other periods in our liturgical calendar, Holy Mother Church exhorts us to live our Christian life with more awareness and intensity.

Better prepared through fasting and prayer we will be able to truly and deeply experience and better celebrate the Mysteries of Faith.

The “yes” yes and the “no” no!

«Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago,

Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.

But I tell you, do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

Simply let your “Yes” be “Yes”, and you “No”, “No”; anything beyond this comes from the evil one».

(Mt. 5, 33-37)

In Smyrna, in the 2nd century

In 155 A.D. In Smyrna, twelve men were arrested whose sole crime was to be Christian.

The angry crowd was seeking even more victims.

Somebody mentioned the name of the city's bishop, Polycarp.

Two whole days they were searching for him and, finally, they found him, after one of his servants betrayed him under torture.

Polycarp impressed his captors by his serenity and dignified demeanor.

That day happened to be a Games Day at the Amphitheatre of Smyrna.

Polycarp was brought into the arena mounted on a donkey.

"Take oath in the name of Cesar" they told him. "Blaspheme the name of Christ!"

"I am eighty-six years old" the holy bishop replied: "and in all those years He has never done me any harm. How can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?"

Neither the threat of wild beasts, nor the menace of the pyre did make him lose courage.

At the end, the blood-thirsty crowd, Jews and pagan alike, brandishing lit torches ran into the arena and burned the holy bishop at the stake.

"You threaten me with the pyre" Polycarp had the time to say to his executors. "Do you know, though, the fire of divine justice?"

His exemplary life became a holocaust –a burnt offering– for God, and seed of life for the Church.

The calendar showed the 23rd February

Smyrna in history

Smyrna, on the coast of Asia Minor, has been inhabited since at least the third millennium before Christ.

Later on the Greek Aeolian moved eastward from Lesbos and Cyme (Euboea) and settled there.

In the 7th century B.C. the Ionian Greeks took control of the city.

Smyrna had an important port which facilitated the trade between the Aegean Sea and Anatolia.

In 113 B.C. Smyrna falls under Roman control.

Smyrna competed with Ephesus and Pergamum in fame and splendour.

It is mentioned as one of the "seven churches" in the Book of Revelation and its bishop and martyr Polycarp was a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist.

Saint Irenaeus, (†202), martyr and bishop of Lyons came also from Smyrna.

In 1922, during the Turkish-Greek war, Smyrna was deliberately destroyed by fire and its Greek inhabitants had to flee; they sought refuge in mainland Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and wherever else they could.

The city, like its holy bishop, was burned in the fire; the good seed, however, did not die and the diaspora (dispersion) of the Greeks of Smyrna enriched all the countries into which they tried to survive.

Did you know...



The **bouzouki**, that very characteristic musical instrument associated always with modern Greek song and dance, **has its origins in Smyrna**.

After **the destruction of Smyrna in 1922** the refugees from Smyrna and Asia Minor brought along to their new homes their music and songs.

They introduced to mainland Greece oriental instruments such as the sandouri, outi, kanonaki, sazi and of course the baglamas and the bouzouki.

This music was not well received in Athens at first.

Gradually though great composers appeared and their new musical style won over the hearts of the people.



Christian thought—secular thought

In 2017 Pope Francis founded the **Pontifical Theological Institute John-Paul II**.

Its subject-matter is the Science of marriage and Family.

On 25/1/2018 a new Chair was inaugurated, dedicated to studying the interaction between Christian and secular thought. This Chair was named after the Apostolic Constitution “**Gaudium et Spes**” (= **Joy and Hope**) of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Gaudium et Spes is about the Church in the Modern World; it is a Pastoral Constitution.

It is a heartfelt appeal to the whole world, both within the Church and beyond.

It calls for a sincere dialogue and admits that this is only the beginning.

The Church is here to better help all men, believers or not, to find their vocation, to build a world that better reflects the dignity of man and to foster a wider brotherhood.

The Apostolic Constitutions are the documents with the highest level of authority and importance and are binding on all members of the Church.



An enterprise of justice

Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice. The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law. But since the concrete demands

of this common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly. Moreover, since the human will is unsteady and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant mastering of passions and the vigilance of lawful authority.

But this is not enough. This peace on earth cannot be obtained unless personal well-being is safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents. A firm determination to respect other men and peoples and their dignity, as well as the studied practice of brotherhood are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace. Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide.

That earthly peace which arises from love of neighbor symbolizes and results from the peace of Christ which radiates from God the Father. For by the cross the incarnate Son, the prince of peace reconciled all men with God. By thus restoring all men to the unity of one people and one body, He slew hatred in His own flesh; and, after being lifted on high by His resurrection, He poured forth the spirit of love into the hearts of men.

For this reason, all Christians are urgently summoned to do in love what the truth requires, and to join with all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and bringing it about.

Gaudium et Spes, §78

Hail Mary



*Hail Mary
Full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou
amongst women
and blessed is
the fruit of thy womb,
Jesus.*

*Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour
Of our death.
Amen.*