

**Spiritual Exercises While Fasting...**

4. To exercise the mental prayer of what you have learned. You may pray during work, on the road, while with people, or at any time.
5. Use these prayers, psalms, and Bible readings as a sphere for contemplation, to enable yourself to pray them with depth and understanding.
6. To exercise spiritual readings: either by reading from the Bible regularly, with understanding and meditation, or reading the lives of the saints or some spiritual books, so that you gain a profitable yield of deep readings.
7. During lent, you may exercise learning the hymns of lent and the Passion Week, and repeating them until you are full of their spirit. The same is true of Advent.
8. You may exercise a certain higher level of fasting, under the supervision of your spiritual father.
9. There are many spiritual exercises in the field of dealing with people... such as gentleness, patience, enduring others' weaknesses, controlling anger, using words of praise and encouragement, serving and helping others, kindness and meekness.
10. Other exercises in purity of the heart: Such as modesty, inner peace, love of God, being satisfied without grumbling, quietness with no disturbance, internal joy in the spirit, faith and hope.



**St. George & St. Shenouda  
Coptic Orthodox Church**

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**St. Athanasius**

**On the Holy Lent**

Wherefore let us not celebrate the feast after an earthly manner, but as keeping festival in heaven with the angels. Let us glorify the Lord, by chastity, by righteousness, and other virtues. And let us rejoice, not in ourselves, but in the Lord, that we may be inheritors with the saints. Let us keep the feast then, as Moses. Let us watch like David who rose seven times, and in the middle of the night gave thanks for the righteous judgments of God. Let us be early, as he said, 'In the morning I will stand before Thee, and Thou wilt look upon me: in the morning Thou wilt hear my voice.' Let us fast like Daniel let us pray without ceasing, as Paul commanded; all of us recognizing the season of prayer, but especially those who are honorably married; so that having borne witness to these things, and thus having kept the feast, we may be able to



enter into the joy of Christ in the kingdom of heaven. But as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement, so that when we depart hence, having been careful of fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber with the Lord, to sup with Him; and may be partakers of the joy which is in heaven. In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days.

St. Athanasius. Sixth Festal Letter. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Series 2. Vol 4.

## **SPIRITUAL EXERCISES WHILE FASTING**

**H.H. Pope Shenouda III**

To have a powerful effect on your spiritual life during Lent, you need to follow certain exercises. These exercises, when you apply them to life's situations, will help you benefit from your fast:

1. To exercise giving up a specific sin, from the sins that prevail upon you, and which are repeated in many of your confessions.
2. To exercise learning some psalms from the Agpeya. You may choose one or two psalms from each of the seven prayers, especially the psalms that have an effect on you.
3. To exercise learning the Bible readings of the different hours. Divide them into parts, analyze them, knowing that for each prayer there are three or six parts.



# **Book Review**

## ***The Spirituality of Fasting* by H. H. Pope Shenouda III**

This book is a compiled series of lectures delivered by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on the subject of fasting. The main focus of the book is to delve into the meaning of fasting, why we as Orthodox Christians fast, and to explain how to properly go about fasting in order to gain spiritual benefit and to draw closer to God.

Reading Pope Shenouda's written works or hearing his lectures, one quickly realizes his distinct style, a style that feeds heavily on the Holy Bible in whatever topic is being discussed. His lectures compiled in this book, the first dating back to 1969, expectedly demonstrate this same style of writing. The Pope begins by citing examples from the Bible of fasting and explains their importance and meaning. He then, throughout the book, delves into the mindset and the ascetic practices that should accompany one's physical act of abstaining from food in order for one to gain spiritual benefit.

The book is divided into five chapters which, as stated, are previous lectures given by His Holiness. They are titled *The Importance of Fasting*, *Fasting and the Body*, in which the pope explains the physical act of fasting and how one should deal with food, *Consecrate a Fast*, in which he explains what it means to consecrate a fast and brings up the essential question, "Is the Lord the aim of your fast?", *Virtues and Feelings that Accompany Fasting*, and *Drills while Fasting*, in which practical steps one could take to improve and benefit from fasting are discussed. It should be noted that the English translation of the book is inaccurate and sloppy in some parts; nevertheless, the spiritual depth and meaning intended by His Holiness remains intact.

This is a highly recommended read during the Great Lent. The pope, using his wisdom and immense experience, allows the reader to zone in on the important aspects of fasting. He beautifully blends his profound spiritual insight, meditating on the mindset and spiritual understanding one should have during the fast, with tangible and practical actions one should take to make his fast acceptable and beneficial. Through it, the pope imparts his valuable spiritual insight and wisdom on how one can truly draw close to Christ through fasting, now one year after his departure.

