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faithful are invited to respond accordingly, each to the best of his or her strength and ability, while not allowing such liberty to diminish this holy institution: *"See that no one make thee to err from this path of doctrine... If thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou wilt be perfect; but if thou art not able, what thou art able, that do. But concerning meat, bear that which thou art able to do"* (Didache 6, 1-3).

3. As a spiritual endeavor, the true fast is inseparable from unceasing prayer and genuine repentance. Repentance without fasting is fruitless (Basil the Great, *On Fasting* 1, 3. PG 31, 168A), as fasting without merciful deeds is dead, especially nowadays when the unequal and unjust distribution of goods deprives entire nations of their daily bread. "While fasting physically, brethren, let us also fast spiritually. Let us loose every knot of iniquity; let us tear up every unrighteous bond; let us distribute bread to the hungry, and welcome into our homes those who have no roof over their heads..." (Sticheron at Vespers on Wednesday of the First Week of Lent; cf. Is 58:6-7). Fasting cannot be reduced to simple and formal abstinence from certain foods. "So let us not be selfish as we begin the abstinence from foods that is the noble fast. Let us fast in an acceptable manner, one that is pleasing to God. A true fast is one that is set against evil, it is self-control of the tongue. It is the checking of anger, separation from things like lusts, evil-speaking, lies, and false oaths. Self-denial from these things is a true fast, so fasting from these negative things is good" (Basil the Great, *On Fasting*, 2, 7. PG 31, 196D). Abstinence from certain foods during the fast and temperance, not only with regard to what to eat but also how much to eat, constitutes a visible aspect of this spiritual endeavor. "In the literal sense, fasting is abstinence from food, but food makes us neither more nor less righteous. However, in the spiritual sense, it is clear that, as life comes from food for each of us and the lack of food is a symbol of death, so it is necessary that we fast from worldly things, in order that we might die to the world and after this, having partaken of the divine nourishment, live in God" (Clement of Alexandria, *From the Prophetic Eclogae*. PG 9, 704D-705A). Therefore, the true fast affects the entire life in Christ of the faithful and is crowned by their participation in divine worship, particularly in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

4. The forty-day fast of the Lord exemplifies fasting for the faithful, initiating their participation in the obedience in the Lord, that through it *"we might recover by its observance that which we have lost by not observing it"* (Gregory the Theologian, *Homily 45, On Holy Pascha*, 28. PG 36, 661C). The Christocentric understanding of the spiritual dimension of fasting – in particular the fast of Great Lent – is a general rule in the entire patristic tradition and is characteristically epitomized by St Gregory Palamas: *"When you fast like this you not only suffer with Christ and are dead with Him, but you are also risen*

you fast like this you not only suffer with Christ and are dead with Him, but you are also ri-

6. Like a nurturing mother, the Orthodox Church has defined what is beneficial for people's salvation and established the holy periods of fasting as God-given protection in the believers' new life in Christ against every snare of the enemy. Following the example of the Holy Fathers, the Church preserves today, as she did in the past, the holy apostolic precepts, synodal canons, and sacred traditions, always advancing the holy fasts as the perfect ascetic path for the faithful leading to spiritual perfection and salvation, while proclaiming the necessity to observe all the fasts throughout the year, namely, the fasts of Great Lent, Wednesdays and Fridays, testified in the sacred canons, as well as the fasts of the Nativity, the Holy Apostles, and the Dormition of the Theotokos; there are also the single-day fasts on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on the eve of the Epiphany, and on the day commemorating the Beheading of John the Baptist, in addition to the fasts established for pastoral reasons or observed at the desire of the faithful.

in the local Churches.

The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today

8. It is a fact that many faithful today do not observe all the prescriptions of fasting, whether due to faint-heartedness or their living conditions, whatever these may be. However, all these instances where the sacred prescriptions of fasting are loosened, either in general or in particular instances, should be treated by the Church with pastoral care, "for God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek 33:11), without, however, ignoring the value of the fast. Therefore, with regard to those who find it difficult to observe the prevailing guidelines for fasting, whether for personal reasons (illness, military service, conditions of work, etc.) or general reasons (particular existing conditions in certain regions with regard to climate, as well as socioeconomic circumstances, i.e., inability to find lenten foods), it is left to the discretion of the local Orthodox Churches to determine how to exercise philanthropic *oikonomia* and empathy, relieving in these special cases the "burden" of the holy fast. All this should take place within the aforementioned context and with the objective of not diminishing the importance of the sacred institution of fasting. The Church should extend her philanthropic dispensation with prudence, undoubtedly to a greater extent when it comes to those fasts, on which the ecclesiastical tradition and practice have not always been uniform. "It is good to fast, but may the one who fasts not blame the one who does not fast. In such matters you must neither legislate, nor use force, nor compel the flock entrusted to you; instead, you must use persuasion, gentleness and a word seasoned with salt" (John of Damascus, *On the Holy Fasts*, Homily 3, PG 95, 68 B).

9. Fasting for three or more days prior to Holy Communion is left to the discretion of the piety of the faithful, according to the words of Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite: "... fasting before partaking of Communion is not decreed by the divine Canons. Nevertheless, those who are able to fast even a whole week before it, are doing the right thing" (Commentary of the 13th canon of Sixth Ecumenical Council, Pedalion – English translation 307). However, the totality of the Church's faithful must observe the holy fasts and the abstinence from food from midnight for frequent participation in Holy Communion, which is the most profound expression of the essence of the Church. The faithful should become accustomed to fasting as an expression of repentance, as the fulfillment of a spiritual pledge, to achieve a particular spiritual end in times of temptation, in conjunction with supplications to God, for adults approaching the sacrament of baptism, prior to ordination, in cases where penance is imposed, as well as during pilgrimages and other similar instances.

† Bartholomew of Constantinople, Chairman

† Theodoros of Alexandria

† Theophilos of Jerusalem

† Irinej of Serbia

† Daniel of Romania

† Chrysostomos of Cyprus

† Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece

† Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland

† Anastasios of Tirana, Durres and All Albania

† Rastislav of Presov, the Czech Lands and Slovakia

Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

† Leo of Karelia and All Finland

† Stephanos of Tallinn and All Estonia

† John of Pergamon

† Theodoros of Alexandria
Σαββιτης

† Theophilos of Jerusalem

† Irinej, Cr. M. M. M. M.

Daniel of Romania

† Chrysostomos of Cyprus

† Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece

† Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland

† Anastasios of Tirana

† Rastislav of Presov, the Czech Lands and Slovakia

Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

† Leo of Karelia and All Finland

† Stephanos of Tallinn and All Estonia

† John of Pergamon

The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today

† Elder Archbishop Demetrios of America

† Αρχιεπίσκοπος Δημετρίος

† Augustinos of Germany

† Αγιόκληρος Αυστρίας

† Irenaios of Crete

† Ιερώνυμος Κρήτης

† Isaiah of Denver

† Ισαiah του Ντινβέρ

† Alexios of Atlanta

† Αλεξάνδρος Ατλάντα

† Iakovos of the Princes' Islands

† Ιακώβος των Πριγκιπέσσης

† Joseph of Proikonnisos

† Ιωσήφ της Προικοννήσου

† Meliton of Philadelphia

† Μελιτων της Φιλαδέλφειας

† Emmanuel of France

† Εμμανουήλ της Γαλλίας

† Nikitas of the Dardanelles

† Νικήτας των Δαρδανελών

† Nicholas of Detroit

† Νικόλαος του Ντιτρόιτ

† Gerasimos of San Francisco

† Γερασίμος της Σαν Φρανσίσκο

† Amphilochios of Kisamos and Selinos

† Αμφιλόχιος της Κισάμου και Σελίνου

† Amvrosios of Korea

† Κοσμάς Ἀμβρόσιος

† Maximos of Selyvria

† Μάξιμος τῆς Σελεύριας

† Amphilochios of Adrianopolis

† Ἀμφιλόχιος

† Kallistos of Diokleia

† Κωνσταντῖνος Κιλλίστιος

† Antony of Hierapolis, Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox in the USA

† Ἀντώνιος

† Job of Telmessos

† Ἰώβ τῆς Τελμεσσός

† Jean of Charioupolis, Head of the Patriarchal Exarchate for Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe

† Γιάννης τῆς Χαρειούπολης

† Gregory of Nyssa, Head of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox in the USA

† Ἐπίσκοπος Γρηγόριος τῆς Νύσσης

Delegation of the Patriarchate of Alexandria

ἐκ τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς ἐκτελεστικῆς ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Αἰγύπτου

† Gabriel of Leontopolis

† Makarios of Nairobi

† Μακάριος τῆς Ναϊρόμπι

† Jonah of Kampala

† Ἰωνᾶς

The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today

† Seraphim of Zimbabwe and Angola

† Σερραφίμης Ζιμπάβγου και Ανγκόλας

† Alexandros of Nigeria

† Αλεξάνδρος Νιγηρίας

† Theophylaktos of Tripoli

† Θεοφύλακτος Τρίπολης

† Sergios of Good Hope

† Σεργίους Καλής Ελπίδας

† Athanasios of Cyrene

† Αθανάσιος Κυρήνης

† Alexios of Carthage

† Αλεξίους Καρθαγίνης

† Ieronymos of Mwanza

† Ιερώνυμος Μβανζα

† George of Guinea

† Γεώργιος Γουινέας

† Nicholas of Hermopolis

† Νικόλαος Ερμυπόλης

† Dimitrios of Irinopolis

† Διμήτριος Ιρίνπολης

† Damaskinos of Johannesburg and Pretoria

† Δαμάσκιος Τζοχάνεσμπουργκ και Πρετορίας

† Narkissos of Accra

† Νάρκισσος Ακκρά

† Emmanouel of Ptolemaidos

† Εμμανουήλ Πτολεμαίδος

† Gregorios of Cameroon

† Γρηγόριος της Καμερόν

† Nicodemos of Memphis

† Νικόδημος της Μενφίς

† Meletios of Katanga

† Μελέτιος της Κατάγγα

† Panteleimon of Brazzaville and Gabon

† Παντελεΐμων της Μπραζαβίλ και Γαβόν

† Innokentios of Burudi and Rwanda

† Ιννοκέντιος της Μπουρούδι και Ρουάντα

† Crysostomos of Mozambique

† Κρυσόστομος της Μοζαμβίκη

† Neofytos of Nyeri and Mount Kenya

† Νεοφυτός της Νyeri και Όρους Κένυα

Delegation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem

† Benedict of Philadelphia

† Βενέδικτος της Φιλαδέλφειας

† Aristarchos of Constantine

† Αριστάρχος της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως

† Theophylaktos of Jordan

† Θεοφύλακτος της Ιορδανίας

† Nektarios of Anthidon

† Νεκτάριος της Ανθιδόνας

† Philoumenos of Pella

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Delegation of the Church of Serbia

- † Jovan of Ohrid and Skopje
† Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral
† Porfirije of Zagreb and Ljubljana
† Vasilije of Sirmium
† Lukijan of Budim
† Longin of Nova Gracanica MWA
† Irinej of Backa
† Hrizostom of Zvornik and Tuzla
† Justin of Zica
† Pahomije of Vranje
† Jovan of Sumadija
† Ignatije of Branicevo

† Охридско-Скопско Епископство

† Црногорско-Поморско Епископство

† Загребачко-Лубљанско Епископство

† Српско-Варшавско Епископство

† Београдско Епископство

† Сремско Епископство

† Бачко Епископство

† Топличко Епископство

† Жичко Епископство

† Радничко Епископство

† Епископство у Српској

† Епископство у Српској

† Fotije of Dalmatia

† Fotije of Dalmatia

† Athanasios of Bihac and Petrovac

† Athanasios of Bihac and Petrovac

† Joanikije of Niksic and Budimlje

† Joanikije of Niksic and Budimlje

† Grigorije of Zahumlje and Hercegovina

† Grigorije of Zahumlje and Hercegovina

† Milutin of Valjevo

† Milutin of Valjevo

† Maksim in Western America

† Maksim in Western America

† Irinej in Australia and New Zealand

† Irinej in Australia and New Zealand

† David of Krusevac

† Jovan of Slavonija

† Jovan of Slavonija

† Andrej ^{of} Austria and Switzerland

† Andrej of Austria and Switzerland

† Sergije of Frankfurt and ^{all} Germany

† Sergije of Frankfurt and all Germany

† Ilarion of Timok

† Ilarion of Timok

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Delegation of the Church of Romania

† Teofan of Iasi, Moldova and Bucovina	<u>Teofan, M.B.</u>
† Laurentiu of Sibiu and Transylvania	<u>Laurentiu M.H.</u>
† Andrei of Vad, Feleac, Cluj, Alba, Crisana and Maramures	<u>Andrei</u>
† Irineu of Craiova and Oltenia	<u>Irineu</u>
† Ioan of Timisoara and Banat	<u>Ioan</u>
† Iosif of Western and Southern Europe	<u>Iosif al Europei Occidentale si Meridionale</u>
† Serafim of Germany and Central Europe	<u>Serafim</u> <u>Wagner</u>
† Nifon of Targoviste	<u>Nifon</u>
† Irineu of Alba Iulia	<u>Irineu</u>
† Ioachim of Roman and Bacau	<u>Ioachim A.B.</u>
† Casian of Lower Danube	<u>Casian al Dunarii de Jos</u>
† Timotei of Arad	<u>Timotei</u>

† Nicolae in America

† Nicolae al celor din
America

† Sofronie of Oradea

† Sofronie al Oradei

† Nicodim of Strehia and Severin

† Nicodim al Strehiei
si Severin

† Visarion of Tulcea

† Visarion

† Petroniu of Salaj

† Petroniu al Salajului

† Siluan in Hungary

† Siluan, Episcop al Episcopiei
Ortodoxe Romane din Ungaria

† Siluan in Italy

† Siluan al Episcopiei Ort. Ro.
a Italiei

† Timotei in Spain and Portugal

† Timotei al Ep. Int. Ro.
a Spaniei si Portugaliei

† Macarie in Northern Europe

† Macarie Fleisler

† Varlaam Ploiesteanul, Assistant Bishop to the Patriarch

† Emilian Lovisteanul, Assistant Bishop to the Archdiocese of Ramnic

† Emilian Lovisteanul

† Ioan Casian of Vicina, Assistant Bishop to the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas

† Ioan Casian al Americii

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Delegation of the Church of Cyprus

† Georgios of Paphos

† Γεώργιος Παφός

† Chrysostomos of Kition

† Χρυσόστομος Κίτιον

† Chrysostomos of Kyrenia

† Χρυσόστομος Κερύνεια

† Athanasios of Limassol

† Αθανάσιος Λεμεσού

† Neophytos of Morphou

† Νεόφυτος Μόρφου

† Vasileios of Constantia and Ammochostos

† Βασίλειος Βερίτης

† Nikiphoros of Kykkos and Tillyria

† Νικήφορος Κύκκου και Τίλλυρια

† Isaias of Tamassos and Oreini

† Ισαΐας Ταμάσσου και Ορεινί

† Barnabas of Tremithousa and Lefkara

† Βαρνάβας Τρεμιθούσα και Λεφκάρια

† Christophoros of Karpasios

† Χριστόφορος Κάρπας

† Nektarios of Arsinoe

† Νεκτάριος Αρσινόης

† Nikolaos of Amathus

† Epiphanius of Ledra

† Εὐφράσιος Λέδρας

† Leontios of Chytron

† Λεόντιος Χυτρίωνος

† Porphyrios of Neapolis

† Πορφύριος Νεαπόλεως

† Gregory of Mesaroria

† Γρηγόριος Μεσαορίας

Delegation of the Church of Greece

† Γενική Σύνοδος της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος

† Prokopios of Philippi, Neapolis and Thassos

† Προκόπιος Φιλιππών, Νεαπόλεως και Θάσσης

† Chrysostomos of Peristerion

† Χρυσόστομος Περιστερίου

† Germanos of Eleia

† Γερμανός Ελείας

† Alexandros of Mantinea and Kynouria

† Αλέξανδρος Μαντινείας και Κυνουρίας

† Ignatios of Arta

† Ιγνατίος Αρτας

† Damaskinos of Didymoteixon, Orestias and Soufli

† Δαμάσκιος Διδυμοτείχης, Ορεστιάδας και Σουφλίου

† Alexios of Nikaia

† Αλέξιος Νίκαιας

† Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Aghios Vlasios

† Ηierotheos Ναυπακτίας και Αγίου Βλασίου

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† Eusebios of Samos and Ikaria

† Εὐσέβιος Σάμου καὶ Ἰκαρίας

† Seraphim of Kastoria

† Σεραφὶμ Καστορίας

† Ignatios of Demetrias and Almyros

† Ἰγνατίος Δημητριάδος καὶ Ἀλμυρού

† Nicodemos of Kassandreia

† Νικόδημος Κασσανδρείας

† Ephraim of Hydra, Spetses and Aegina

† Ἐφραίμ Ἰδρυᾶς, Σπέτσας καὶ Αἰγίνης

† Theologos of Serres and Nigrita

† Θεολόγος Σερρών καὶ Νιγρίτας

† Makarios of Sidirokastron

† Μακάριος Σιδιροκάστρου

† Anthimos of Alexandroupolis

† Ἀνθίμος Ἀλεξανδρουπόλεως

† Barnabas of Neapolis and Stavroupolis

† Βαρνάβας Νεαπόλεως καὶ Σταυρουπόλεως

† Chrysostomos of Messenia

† Χρυσόστομος Μεσσηνίας

† Athenagoras of Ilion, Acharnon and Petroupoli

† Ἀθηναγόρας Ἰλίου, Ἀχαιρῶν καὶ Πετρούπολης

† Ioannis of Lagkada, Litis and Rentinis

† Ἰωάννης Λαγκάδας, Λιτίνης καὶ Ρέντινης

† Gabriel of New Ionia and Philadelphia

† Γαβριὴλ Νέας Ἰωνίας καὶ Φιλαδέλφειας

† Chrysostomos of Nikopolis and Preveza

† Theoklitos of Ierissos, Mount Athos and Ardameri

† Nikongios to Theoklitos Xanthopoulos
† Ierissos Ierissos

Delegation of the Church of Poland

† Simon of Lodz and Poznan

† Abel of Lublin and Chelm

† Jacob of Bialystok and Gdansk

† George of Siemiatycze

† Paisios of Gorlice

† abp Szymon

† Hb

† abp Jacek

† Bishop Jacek

† Bishop Jacek

Delegation of the Church of Albania

† Joan of Koritsa

† Demetrios of Argyrokastron

† Nikolla of Apollonia and Fier

† Andon of Elbasan

† Joan i Korces

† Demetrios Argyrokastron

† Nikolla

† Andon Elbasan

The Importance of Fasting and its Observance Today

† Nathaniel of Amantia

† Nathaniel i Amantia

† Asti of Bylis

† Asti i Bylis? † Asti

Delegation of the Church of the Czech lands and Slovakia

† Michal of Prague

† Michal

† Isaiah of Sumperk

† Isaiah

† Jérémie de Suisse Chef du
Secrétariat Panorthodoxe
du Saint et Grand Concile .

Jérémie de Suisse .