

# The Gospel's Voice



## Orthodox Parish of the Holy Transfiguration

Number 13, December 2016

### Christmas is coming

We are preparing ourselves to celebrate the Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. I therefore thought it useful to offer you a reminder of the rules of fasting since we are in full Lent. Then we must also invite you to reflect on the use we make of our possessions with Saint Clement of Alexandria.

And an extract from the declaration of the Holy Pan-Orthodox Council which met last June, tells us the importance of the Orthodox Church's commitment to the poor.

Finally, you will find some news about our work, on the ground, in favor of the most deprived.

Christmas is at the same time the birth of Jesus in conditions of great poverty, and it is also the gifts offered by the Magi (gold, incense and myrrh, which are products of great price).

Good reading and good Lent.

P. Athanasios

# The practice of fasting

The periods and dates of fasting shall be fixed as follows:

- Every Wednesday and Friday (commemorating the Holy Cross).
  - The period of the Great Lent beginning on pure Monday (after the Sunday of the Tyrophagy).
  - The Great and Holy Week.
  - The period before the feast of the Holy Apostles (June).
  - The fortnight that precedes the Feast of the DORMITION of the Blessed Virgin (August 1 to 14).
  - The forty days preceding Christmas (from 15 November to 24 December).
- Similarly, fasting is prescribed for the following festivals, unless they fall on a Saturday or Sunday, in which case one feeds only on wine and oil (but not dairy, meat and fish).

- 1) January 5, the eve of Epiphany.
- 2) August 29 commemorating the head off of Saint John the Baptist.
- 3) September 14, Exaltation of the Cross.
- 4) December 24, Eve of the Nativity.

N.B. On Wednesdays and Fridays where a feast of the Lord or the Mother of God is commemorated, there is total suppression of fasting. Saturdays and Sundays that are part of the period of fasting proper to that of the Feast of the Holy Apostles and Christmas, one can consume fish.

Throughout the year, Saturdays and Sundays, in principle, there is no fasting (except the Eucharistic fast for those who communicate) with the exception, of course, of Holy Saturday.

## **Rules of total suppression of the fast.**

They feed on all foods, even on Wednesdays and Fridays, in the following cases:

- 1) From December 25th to January 4th.
- 2) From the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican until the Sunday of the Prodigal Son.
- (3) During the week of Tyrophagy (or dairy), any product may be consumed, as well as milk and eggs; But not meat.
- 4) From Easter Sunday to Thomas Sunday included.
- 5) During the week of Pentecost.

*Transmitted by Father Loukas*



## F. The Mission of the Orthodox Church As a Witness of Love through Service

In fulfilling her salvific mission in the world, the Orthodox Church actively cares for all people in need, including the hungry, the poor, the sick, the disabled, the elderly, the persecuted, those in captivity and prison, the homeless, the orphans, the victims of destruction and military conflict, those affected by human trafficking and modern forms of slavery. The Orthodox Church's efforts to confront destitution and social injustice are an expression of her faith and the service to the Lord, Who identifies Himself with every person and especially with those in need: Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me (Mt 25:40). This multidimensional social service enables the Church to cooperate with various relevant social institutions.

Competition and enmity in the world introduce injustice and inequitable access among individuals and peoples to the resources of divine creation. They deprive millions of people of fundamental goods and lead to the degradation of human person; they incite mass migrations of populations, and they engender ethnic, religious, and social conflicts, which threaten the internal cohesion of communities.

The Church cannot remain indifferent before economic conditions that negatively impact humanity as a whole. She insists not only on the need for the economy to be grounded upon ethical principles, but that it must also tangibly serve the needs of human beings in accordance with the teaching of the Apostle Paul: By laboring like this, you must support the

weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). Basil the Great writes that each person should make it his duty to help those in need and not satisfy his own needs (Moral Rules, 42. PG 31, 1025A).

The gap between rich and poor is dramatically exacerbated due to the financial crisis, which normally results from the unbridled profiteering by some representatives of financial circles, the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and perverted business practices devoid of justice and humanitarian sensitivity, which ultimately do not serve humanity's true needs. A sustainable economy is that which combines efficiency with justice and social solidarity.

In light of such tragic circumstances, the Church's great responsibility is perceived in terms of overcoming hunger and all other forms of deprivation in the world.

*From: <https://www.holycouncil.org/official-documents>*



*With the approach of Christmas and the end of the year, it seems good to remind us what is the right attitude in relation to our goods. We read the Gospel of the rich young man during the month of November, and on this occasion we meditated on the text below:*

## **"What rich man can be saved? "**

By St. Clement of Alexandria (150-213)

We must not reject goods that can help our neighbors.

The nature of possessions is to be possessed; That of goods is to spread good; God has destined them for the welfare of men. Goods are in our hands as tools, instruments of which we derive a good use if we know how to handle them. Nature has made wealth a servant, not a mistress. We must not decry it, since it is neither good nor bad, but perfectly innocent. Of us alone depends the use, good or bad, that we will make of it: our mind, our conscience are entirely free to dispose of the goods entrusted to them as they please. Let us not destroy, then, our goods, but the lusts which pervert their use. When we become honest, then we will know how to use them honestly. These goods, of which we are told to get rid, let us well understand that these are the disordered desires of the soul. You gain nothing by impoverishing your money, if you remain rich in disordered desires.

This is how the Lord conceives the use of external goods: we must get rid not of money that makes us live, but of the forces which make us misuse them, that is, the diseases of the soul ... We must purify our souls, that is, make them poor and naked and listen in this state to the call of the Savior: "Come, follow me." He is the path where he who has a pure heart is walking. The latter considers his fortune, his gold, his money, his houses as God's graces, and shows his gratitude by helping the poor from his own funds. He knows that he possesses these goods more for his brothers than for himself; He remains stronger than his riches, far from becoming the slave; He does not enclose them in his soul ... And if one day his money disappears, he accepts his ruin with a heart as joyful as in the best days. This man, I say, declares him blessed and calls him "poor in spirit" (Mt 5,3), a sure heir of the kingdom of heaven, which will be closed to those who can not do without their opulence.

# Meeting the Excluded

Last June, I received a call from a man who wanted to know more about the Orthodox Church: Mario Edouard, social worker. We met and Mario introduced me to what are modestly called "spots of poverty", that is to say, real shanty-towns where misery, violence, drugs, etc. reign.

I met some charming people, there, who welcomed me with joy, for it was the first time that a priest came to their homes. I could pray and bless many children, sick people, abandoned women with their young children. Many of these people are illiterate.



The Government of Mauritius has set up a Marshall Plan for the Abolition of Poverty. Social Security and the National Empowerment Foundation, among others, are working on this. I have been able to meet and work with officials of these institutions.

My work as a priest is above all to give comfort, hope, love, from our Lord.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

P. Athanasios

## The sharing

A long time ago, I was in Kerala (South India) where an Orthodox Christian family belonging to the Mar Thomas Church (founded by the Apostle Thomas) had welcomed me.

One day I was asked this question:

- In Europe, you say the « *Our Father* »?

- Yes of course.

- So you say, " *Give us our daily bread.* "

- Yes.

- We do too. So why do you have too much to eat in Europe, when here we sometimes lack the essentials and are hungry?

I was much embarrassed to answer.

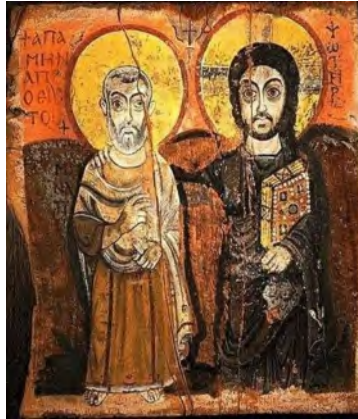
Then the man continued:

- God hears our prayer and gives bread to the whole world, but men do not know how to share!



Thank you for continuing to bring clothes, especially for children, food and toys for Christmas.

This will make happy people!



## **Divine Liturgy**

*Every Sunday at 9.30 a.m.*

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>:** Ste Barbara

**11<sup>th</sup>:** Memory of the ancestors of our Lord.

**18<sup>th</sup>:** Memory of the old testament Fathers, from Adam to Joseph, husband of the Holy Virgin.

**25<sup>th</sup>: NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS-CHRIST.**

## **The Orthodox Church of the Holy Transfiguration**

Grande-Rivière N-O

Mauritius

(behind Garage BALA)

**Divine Liturgy every Sunday at 9.30 a.m.**

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