

a beginning, and this questioning must be our approach to all the values that the world regards as necessary and even virtuous—victory, self-defense, getting ahead, accumulating wealth and property, competition, popularity, self-aggrandizement. All of these are then signed with a question mark.

The Church, in asking her people to fast, is declaring a moratorium on the world. The very normality of life here is a deception. On a cosmic level, the fast is this effort to put the world and life in the world in its proper perspective. To accept the present patterns of the world as normal is a deception! It is not hate for the world but a recognition that something has happened to the "worldliness" which God created and declared "good."

We must never see fasting as a rejection of food or the world, but as a search for true worldliness; a search which must necessarily

pass through the stage of preferring something else to the world. "Seek first the kingdom of God and all else will be given to you." In the same way we fast from all food before liturgy so that we might receive the one true food in the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist



that we can get a glimpse of the true nature of food. There is no judgment on food as such. The same is true of the world. As food completed itself in the Eucharist, so the entire created world completes itself in the Kingdom of God.

The world is ours, it belongs to us and, needless to say, we were not meant to be slaves to its pleasures, its categories, and its values. Fasting is then a declaration of independence from the world and a proclamation of victory over its limitations and evil. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (*John 16:33*). This does not mean that we cannot take pleasure in the world. It is a recognition that the values of the world are limited and often perverted.

For us Christians who live in the world, we are offered a choice: we can consume the world or allow the world to consume us. The first is the only creative approach. The second is psychological and personal disintegration. The fast is what gives us this opportunity.

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