

## The Presents of Presence (Magnus Frangipani)

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In the forty days prior to Christmas, the Christians fast from meat, dairy, fish, wine and oil anticipating the birthing into the world of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. In my experience, the Nativity fast isn't a war against the senses, rather it is a prescription for detoxifying them, cleansing us in order to receive the source of our senses. The fast is a preparation, a sort of house cleaning for the soul, emptying our rooms for heavenly company.

When our rooms are ordered and cleansed, a soothing silence and interior solitude follows. In this way, our mind, body and soul are intimately connected. In an age where 'staying connected' looks like updating everyone about who or what we think we, fasting could inform us who we aren't and who we need in order to experience true fulfillment.

The true 'fast' food emphasizes not what can be quickly attained but what gradually is cultivated in the human soul. Through absence one perceives presence, silence the vivifying and soundless Word, and through hunger the true Bread.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Christ says: "When you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:6). Spiritual solitude gives way to company, the company of the Holy Trinity.

But 'progressive' society increasingly emphasizes indulgence over fasting, the complex over the simple, sexuality over chaste and spiritual love. In a progressive society, however, what are we progressing from, and what do we progress toward? When fashioning heaven after what is earthly, what is fleeting and passing away, we celebrate death.

So caught up are we with the *presents* of God that we tend to forget His actual *presence*.

We must commit ourselves to untying the donkey of our soul from fetters of this world so she carries us, unencumbered, through death into the heavenly Jerusalem.

To union with our Lord, Jesus Christ.

«It is one thing to believe in God, and another to know Him.» ~ St Silouan

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