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1st Discourse on Fasting [2] (Saint Basil the Great)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



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We should fast without hypocrisy and cleanse the soul from sins.



‘Pour oil on your head and wash your face’ (Matth. 6, 17). This saying is inviting you into sacramental rituals. If you pour oil on your head, you’re anointed; if you wash, you’re made clean. You have to realize within your inner self what the command means. Cleanse your soul from sin. Anoint your head with holy chrism so that you can become a partaker of Christ, and then you can enter the fast. Don’t alter your countenance, the way the hypocrites do. Your face is blackened when your inner disposition is overshadowed by a meretricious external appearance, when it’s hidden by falsehood, as if with a curtain. Hypocrites [the old word in Greek for ‘actors’] are people who assume a different face in the theatre. They may be slaves, but they often play the master; citizens, but assume the part of king. So it is in this life, too, that many people act on the stage, some keeping their deceit in their hearts, others showing it openly to other people. So don’t alter your face. Whoever you are, let other people see it. Don’t pretend to frown so that people will praise you for your self-restraint. Because no good action that’s proclaimed to many people is of any benefit and there’s no profit from fasting if it’s made public. Things which are done for show don’t bear fruit in the next life, but, instead, do no more than bring praise from other people. So hasten joyfully to the gift of the fast. It’s an ancient gift. It doesn’t age or grow old, but is always fresh. It always blossoms and bears ripe fruit.