



"This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting."

Night vigils, even in the reduced form that we do at the mission, are not very popular. In the past they were generously tolerated by "Economía"!

The unpopularity of keeping vigil is part of a general trend today in the church, to see fasting and works of mercy as private, individualistic works and not as ecclesial moments of celebration and of great grace.

Friday, I left the mission and wandered into a street full of people and into, alas, a traffic jam! It was past midnight! Everyone seemed to be up and about.

Who even among church goers does not stay up on a Friday night looking at a movie or viewing a video on the latest Ortho-news and not think twice about it?

The world certainly feels this need to keep watch into the night. Not as a punishment, but as way to break the monotony of daily necessity. It's healthy to want to do this. Maybe the world has something to teach us. There is something about staying up in the night that is attractive especially to young people.

The vigils at the mission are really beautiful and a wonderful way of living in community Great Lent. This coming Friday will be the last one for great lent.

pRoberto

"... and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; ..."

So I just wanted to share with you my thoughts: the boy's demon possession sounds a lot like what I was told I experience when I have seizures - told to me by witnesses, as obviously, at the time this occurs I am unconscious....Apparently, suddenly I stand there looking at the sky - at the heavens, then quickly my head jerks up and to the left, I collapse, convulse, bite my tongue to the point of blood, foam at the mouth, my eyes roll back into my head.

The first time this happened I was outside, and when I opened my eyes, I was looking to the heavens again, the stranger holding my hand must have been an angel, as I slowly asked: "What's going on?". She softly and gently said: "It's alright." And she seemed to vanish as soon as the paramedics arrived. They were reassuring angels too - carrying me to the stretcher, wiping the blood from my face, asking me gently to try and count back from ten, and when I was

terrified, I could only make it to 6, the guy in the back just said "Aw, it's ok. They'll take good care of you at the hospital". And once there, the nurses and doctors were the angels, reassuring me my memory would return.

Tests were run, I had several more seizures after that and, thanks be to God, haven't had a seizure in a very long time. I am on medication, but perhaps the Lord wanted me to always have the gift of the only clear memory of that first terrifying seizure be my looking up at a clear blue sky for a couple of moments and the angels who took such good care of me. The thorough neurologist who prescribed my anti seizure medication.

I have to worry about it happening again everyday - but the heavens and the angels!

I was living in Montreal at the time, and a lot of the French are Catholic, although there is a beautiful Greek Orthodox church I stumbled upon in my neighbourhood one day - so I don't know how many of these of God's angels on earth prayed and fasted - they may each and every one of them been non believers, but I truly believe that The Lord sent them to compassionately take care of me.

So that *I* might rise, and walk, and believe.

And I do.

(from a member of St John's community)

"This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting."

Fasting, as it was understood and lived within the tradition of the church, is a time of grace that gives new depth to our freedom. Freedom is understood not as the ability to choose between things or to self determine your own way of living but in a Christian way: to pursue good, to walk the way. Through fasting freedom finds a new depth within itself because it almost takes a U-turn. How free can one be when he is hungry? (As Ozzy put it this week, he cannot keep the Ramadan because he becomes angry, and it defeats the purpose). Where is the freedom if you cannot move because of your sickness? (like Ricky who was pulling his wheelchair up the ramp on Friday morning, being soaking wet). Where is the freedom when you are left alone in a nursing home, or when you are a young person who does not fit in this multicultural world run by an ideology that amputates young people's spirit? How do you find the freedom to love anybody if you spend most of the time by yourself because nobody bothered to check on you in the first place? And yet, the tradition of the church teaches us that there is fresh freedom to discover when fasting is undertaken by the human being, when lacking is experienced. We don't need to look for monastic witness in the desert during great lent to find such a freedom that comes from having less. This would actually be good for us to know. But we only need to take a

closer look at Hector: walking the streets at night and making music in his mind, while putting together puzzles of broken colourful pieces of glass or plastic. He emanates plenty of freedom. He seems to live within an honest solitude and yet his cheerful presence betrays a genuine freedom which today is hard to encounter. (On Thursday, at the table, Hector looked at his plate saying to himself: "Maybe I eat, maybe I don't, I'll see." He must have been hungry, and he liked the food).

The understanding of fasting that leads to the freedom to encounter Christ would help the lives of many who live in postmodern societies today. Modernism took away plenty of good things from life itself, stripping it of flesh and blood down to its very bone. We fast through design in Toronto from the experience of real community life, there is plenty of social isolation, marriage and family life is wounded. There is also an increase in ideological thinking that takes away common sense, that leads to propaganda and amputates the human spirit and its creativity. Even a healthy sense of humor is hard to find. But also, there is fasting of the refugees, who give up on their language and culture, as it is with most of the immigrants. Suddenly you cannot live and speak as before, and people look at you condescendingly. You feel reduced to thinking in a language that is foreign to you and expresses only a part of what you think (maybe this is actually not bad:)). Toronto is like a desert for many people, we live without fulfilling basic human needs. A desert that gets more arid with every day going by.

And just as it is in the real desert, when facing the hardship of lacking what is good, imagination and fantasia take over. It leads to creating idols and imagining oases that do not exist. The reality is hard to bear and therefore fantasia takes over, without much creativity. And this produces more harm than the initial experience of being deprived.

It is the place and time for the church to lead the people to a real encounter, helping them rediscover their dignity. Being grounded in the reality of this fast, in the reality of sorrow, a new fresh freedom is waiting to be rediscovered by the modern man. It is only through this freedom, where the reality of lacking is embraced, that the modern man learns to walk the path again.

It is the church who has this understanding and knows the depth of this freedom. It is the church that could help in finding the way, if it gives up on its own rich cultural heritage and its language, and it becomes poor like the modern man today who lacks in understanding his own meaning. In genesis, God takes the chosen people in the desert to teach them what love is. Now is the time for learning, and the church should go, if the church thinks it is chosen by God to do anything. Now is the time to love beyond what we don't have. To discover a love for God that is not conditioned by anything that is good. The only thing that both the church and the modern man need is to be obedient. To take the first step. To be obedient to the reality of this time. Where God makes His love known to people within the desert. In an atheistic culture, the modern man needs to find the freedom to love Him without yet fully believing. It is this unbelief that the church could help with. A church who will separate itself from richness and power and become modest like the poor modern man today. Just like the mission, where the poor care for the poor.

Community story - A different type of eclipse

The ladder of St John has many stairs. One though seems to be missing. Not that the saint missed something, only that the experience of people within the community reveals new things. On Tuesday I saw at breakfast an old person who used to come daily, maybe 8 or 9 years ago. He was a tough person, living in the neighbourhood. This time he was very thin. One could hardly recognize him. In the past he was also very assertive and sure of himself. He used to have a career and he excelled on a national level. This week he seemed very vulnerable and scared. I have never seen him like that before. Before he left, he wanted to share some of his fears from being homeless now. Among other things he said, and here he became very frightened, that he completely lost connection with God. He did not describe this like an event that one would experience in life. Like a metaphysical experience that takes you to different paths. No, for him it seemed like a physical experience that just happened. Like the eclipse this week. One minute it was day, and the next it turned to night completely.

The way he said it sounded frightening indeed. If it was not for his eyes, I thought this would not be possible. He remembered the fear and he also remembered what brought him back in the light. The voice of his brother calling his name.

It sounded like the young possessed man from today's gospel. He was brought back by the word of God. It was so silent and suddenly somebody utters your name. (from Friday reflection)

Then I understood why, when he came in that morning, the first question he addressed to us with much hope was: "Do you remember me?"

Please take note of the coming week events:

Wednesday, 6:30pm - Small compline with Great Canon

The great canon of St Andrew of Crete is a beautiful way to pray the whole bible in one evening.

Friday, 6:30 pm - Presanctified Liturgy followed by silent meal.

Afterwards we will celebrate small compline with The Akathist Hymn and Katavasias of the Theotokos. It is our last vigil for Great Lent this year, so don't miss it.

We are looking for donations of flowers to decorate the icon of the Virgin for Friday evening.

This coming weekend there will be a Project Rachel retreat for women who have experienced an abortion. Please keep the participants and the leaders of this weekend retreat in your prayers.

If you are interested in visiting the sick, please speak to Fr. Nicolaie.

Please remember to use the antidoron bags.

April 15 - 21

Tuesday	8:30 am	Morning Prayer	Wednesday	4:00 pm 6:30 pm	Vespers Great Compline – Great Canon until 9:30p
Thursday	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	Friday	7:00 am 12:30pm 6:30pm	Orthros Noon Hours Presanctified Liturgy, Silent Meal, Vigil until midnight with confessions
Saturday	10:00am	Morning Prayer	Sunday	7:00am 8:30am	Orthros Divine Liturgy



St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission
 155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9
 T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmmission.org W: stjohnsmmission.org

St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission
 193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3
 T: 647-358-4105



We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
 the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa