

SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS

ON FASTING AND SINS

'The devil presents minor sins as insignificant in our eyes, because otherwise he would not be able to lead us into major ones.' St Mark the Ascetic

'It is through victories in small things that the fathers won their great battles.' Saint Peter of Damaskos

'It is not a sin to eat; it is a sin to eat without gratitude'. St Anthony the Great

This is the instructive fast, it teaches the athlete the ways of the contest.

Draw near to it, study, learn to struggle shrewdly.

Behold he instructed us to fast with our mouths and hearts,

Let us not fast from bread and think thoughts

In which the hidden poison of death is hidden.

From FIRST HYMN ON FASTING BY St Ephraim the Syrian.

'Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works. If you see a poor man, take pity on him. If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him. Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye and the ear and the feet and the hands and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast, by being free of greed. Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin. Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful. Let the ear fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip. Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism. For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fish, but bite and devour our brothers?' John Chrysostom