



-The table of a man who continually perseveres in prayer is sweeter than the scent of musk and the fragrance of perfumes, and the lover of God yearns for this as for a priceless treasure. Take for yourself the remedy of life from the table of those who fast, keep vigil, and labor in the Lord, and so raise up the dead man in your soul. For the Beloved reclines in their midst bestowing sanctification and he transforms the bitterness of their hardship into his ineffable sweetness. His spiritual and heavenly ministers overshadow both them and their holy foods. I know one of the brethren who has seen this with his own eyes.

-There can be no knowledge of the mysteries of God on a full stomach.

-Fasting, vigils...are God's holy pathway and the foundation of every virtue.

-Fasting is the champion of every virtue, the beginning of the struggle, the crown of the abstinent, the beauty of virginity and sanctity, the resplendence of chastity, the commencement of path of Christianity, the mother of prayer, the well-spring of sobriety and prudence, the teacher of stillness, and the precursor of all good works.

- When a man begins to fast, he straightway yearns in his mind to enter into converse with God.

-Fasting was the commandment that was given to our nature in the beginning to protect it with respect to the tasting of food, and in this point the progenitor of our substance fell. There, however, where the first defeat was suffered, the ascetic struggles make their beginning in the fear of God as they start to keep his laws. And the Savior also, when he manifested himself to the world in the Jordan, began at this point. For after his baptism the Spirit led him into the wilderness and he fasted for forty days and forty nights. Likewise all who set to follow in his footsteps make the beginning of their struggle upon this foundation. For this is a weapon forged by God, and who

shall escape blame if he neglects it? And if the Lawgiver himself fasts, who among those who keep the law has no need of fasting?

-What weapon is more powerful and gives more boldness to the heart in the time of battle against the spirits of wickedness, than hunger endured for Christ's sake?...He who has armed himself with the weapon of fasting is afire with zeal at all times.

-It is said concerning many of the martyrs, that when they foreknew, either by revelation or by information received from one of their friends, the day on which they were to receive the crown of martyrdom, they did not taste anything the preceding night, but from evening till morning they stood keeping vigil in prayer, glorifying God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual odes, and they looked forward to that hour with joy and exultation, waiting to meet the sword in their fast as ones prepared for the nuptials.

*Excerpts taken from the Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian.*