



*February 5, 2009*

**HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS` REFLECTIONS ON THE TRIODION**

We are about to enter a unique ecclesiastical period, a time taken out of the ordinary calendar, a time set aside to be dedicated to a special way of life - fasting and prayer, reading the Holy Gospel and the prophecies and Psalms of Scripture that refer to the last days of our Lord.

This special period is divided into three parts:

1. The Triodion - three weeks of preparation for Lent.
2. Lent - five weeks of preparation that will assist us in celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord
3. Holy Week - intense prayer and fasting leading up to Pascha

In our faith, fasting is a very important part of our spiritual practice, and which we practice all year round, every Wednesday and Friday. This is a tradition and a practice that comes to us from the Old Testament, but also from the practices of saints and spiritual people themselves, who isolated themselves from the distractions of the world by prayer and fasting, in order to find the inner life with God.

As we all know from going to the doctor, in any diagnosis, one must know the symptoms in order to treat the disease. So it is with the spiritual life also. It is important that we discover our weaknesses and shortcomings. Fasting and prayer bring us into communion with God and ourselves. This kind of spiritual discipline is not something we find in other disciplines such as yoga or a "guru", or other systems that attempt to discipline the mind and body.

In Orthodox Christianity, we work to discipline the mind and body with the ultimate goal of purifying our hearts, enabling us to reach theosis, union with God.