February 28, 2016

Fasting has a long history in our faith. Indeed, it is rooted in the tradition of all the great religions of the world. The notion of self-denial and eating cuts across all the major faiths. A spiritual practice that reflects the wisdom of diverse peoples is worth pondering.

Food and drink are, obviously, essential to life. Since we all eat, a deliberate change touches on perhaps the most primal experience we all share. It makes sense, therefore, that it be connected to the life of faith. Something so vital can also become taken for granted. The gifts of God are easily forgotten. Fasting heightens our awareness and makes us more sensitive to the gratuity of what we have. It enables us to focus on something very basic.

The particulars of fasting have varied greatly over the history of the Church. What has not changed, however, is the recognition of its value. This spiritual tool sharpens our appreciation, and reminds us of those who go without. Fasting draws us closer to God and our neighbor.

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