

How To Keep What You Gained

DURING HOLY WEEK

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The day we've been dreading has finally arrived. It's here and we don't know what to do with it. Do we run and hide? Or do we succumb to its pressure and surrender? What to do, what to do, what to do... What day is it?

It's the day when **LIFE GOES BACK TO NORMAL AFTER HOLY WEEK!**

Life is back in full swing. Back to work... back to meetings... back to traffic... back to posting pictures of your breakfast on Facebook and Twitter... you know, the normal routine.

If you're not Orthodox, you might not fully get this but if you are, you know what I'm talking about. We spend a lot of time in church during Holy Week... A LOT! And while to the casual observer it may seem painful and slightly torturous to attend services in both the morning AND evening of every day during a week, those who've tasted the depth and beauty of Pascha week will tell you that it's the best week of the year!

But is that it? Is it all done now? Was it just a "Holy Week thing" and that's it? Or is there a way we can keep what we gained... and not only keep it but GROW it and continue to add to it and continue this path of experiencing God's beauty and richness even past Easter?

Let me ask a different question: assume that in one week, you lost 10 pounds. During that week, you ran 5 miles and did 100 sit-ups every single day. You took the stairs instead of the elevator and parked in the furthest spot in the parking garage at work. You cut out all carbs from your diet and you didn't even sneak into the candy drawer once all week!

And the net result was that you lost 10 pounds.

Now you want to keep it off for the rest of the year: what would you do? Is there anything you even CAN do? Or are you doomed to regain the weight?

The answer is simple: if you want to maintain the results, you must maintain the habits that got you there. In other words, **whatever it takes to GET results is also what it takes to KEEP them.**



Same is true for Holy Week. If we want to keep the spiritual growth (and continue to grow even more), then we need to do the same things that helped us get there to begin with. What specifically?

I came up with three things that I/we did during Holy Week:

1. We challenged ourselves

The biggest problem that we face today is not the world we live in, but rather it's the world that lives in us in the form of COMPLACENCY. We've accepted complacency as a given and assumed that it is just part of life.

We make excuses why we can't make it to church on time, we look for any reason to avoid reading our Bibles, and we treat prayer like a fire extinguisher - to be used only in case of emergencies.

But for one week (Holy Week), that all changed. We pushed ourselves spiritually. We challenged ourselves to go beyond our comfort zones. We stretched ourselves past what's easy and convenient.

And it worked! It worked in the same way that challenging your muscles makes you stronger. We challenged ourselves to pray more than we have all year... to read parts of the Bible that we didn't even know existed... and to spend more time in church than we thought humanly possible.

And it worked! We benefited in ways that we would have never imagined. Why? Because we were willing to push ourselves past what's easy and comfortable.

2. We were busy with God vs busy with people

It's easy to go an entire day without once thinking about God and instead filling our mind with others. From the moment we get out of bed, we talk/think/follow others and other people are constantly on our minds.

But for one week, we put others on hold for the sake of focusing on God. We spent less time socializing and going out. We didn't waste time talking about people at work or at school. And as difficult as it was, we disconnected from social media and went an entire week without seeing pictures of what our friends ate for breakfast.

And again it worked! We occupied our minds with God instead of people and it worked.



3. We didn't think about ourselves

We'd never say it but if you studied our actions and more importantly our prayers, you'd think that the world revolves solely around "me and my happiness."

Please God help me solve this problem...

God, when are you going to solve this problem?

Didn't you hear me God? I told you that it's time to solve my problem!

Don't you care about me God???

Me me me.... it's all about me. For many of us, that's how we're living our spiritual lives. It's all about us.

But not during Holy Week. During Holy Week, it's all about Him. Our eyes are solely lifted up. We're focused on HIS suffering...on HIS sacrifice... and on HIS love that was displayed on the cross.

We didn't walk into Good Friday asking for a promotion at work. We didn't show up thinking about our exams in school. Who can stand in front of the cross of Christ and think about anything other than Him and His sacrifice for us?
We didn't think about ourselves and once again, IT WORKED!

The bottom line is this: whatever it takes to GET results is also what it takes to KEEP them.

Are you willing to challenge yourself?

Are you willing to stay busy with God vs busy with people?

And are you willing to let go of yourself and your problems and focus on Christ?

The decision is yours.

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