

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Spirit of Fasting

Speech by
His Eminence
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله، والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله، وعلى آله وصحبه ومن والاه

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The Spirit of Fasting

I welcome our dear friends from parliament, our dear friends who lead different faith communities, distinguished guests, respected parents, teachers, our principal, board members, and dear students:

It is a pleasure and an honour to be with you today. I warmly thank you for your presence, your openness, and the spirit of shared experience that brings us together.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

To the believer, **Ramadan** is a month of renewal, Ramadan is a time to strengthen our connection with Allah, discipline our souls, soften our hearts, and awaken compassion for others. Fasting Ramadan is not just about abstaining from food and drink; it is an active and conscious training of the inner self.

Allah reminds us that fasting is not unique to the Muslim community, but a shared legacy of faith throughout human history:

بِأَيِّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الِ صِيَامٌ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may attain taqwa — God-consciousness.” (Qur’an 2:183)

This verse captures the heart of Ramadan: **fasting cultivates taqwa** — awareness of Allah in private and in public. This Taqwa means self-control and eventually self-mastery, it means that we go through life with a constant awareness that we are travelling with God, that we live Through the blessing of God and that we’re living in the full view of God (فإنك بأعيننا).

Fasting, then, connects us to a continuous chain of prophets and seekers who embodied patience and restraint to draw closer to God.

One of the greatest lessons of fasting is **sincerity**. It is an act known only to Allah. In a famous ḥadīth qudsī, the Prophet ﷺ said that Allah declares:

“Every deed of the son of Adam is for him except fasting; it is for Me, and I alone reward for it.”

Beyond its spiritual meaning, fasting also brings recognised **physical and mental benefits** — rest for the body, improved self-control, and clarity of mind. Islam teaches that the body is an **amānah**, a trust, and Ramadan teaches a balanced life.

This wisdom echoes across faith traditions:

- In **Christianity**, fasting — especially during Lent — is practiced with prayer and charity to cultivate humility and closeness to God.
- In **Judaism**, fasts like Yom Kippur focus on repentance, remembrance, and communal renewal.
- In **Hinduism and Buddhism**, fasting and regulated restraint foster discipline, mindfulness, and detachment from harmful desires.
- In **Jainism**, fasting reaches its highest expression as a path of non-violence, self-purification, and ethical refinement.

Across cultures, great thinkers recognised the deeper meaning of fasting. Rumi called fasting “the first principle of medicine.” Gandhi described it as sincere prayer and self-restraint. Even Benjamin Franklin noted that rest and fasting are among the greatest remedies.

Islam also teaches **mercy and realism**. Allah explicitly exempts those who are ill or travelling and provides compassionate alternatives, reminding us:

“Allah intends for you ease and does not intend hardship for you.” (Qur’an 2:185)

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمْ الْعُسْرَ

My dear friends, Ramadan is a month of physical and spiritual healing.

Across religion, philosophy, and medicine, fasting consistently emerges as a path of **discipline, clarity, and transformation**.

In **Ramadan**, Islam brings all this together: faith and action, discipline and mercy, personal growth and social compassion.

As we fast, pray, and give, we are reminded that true strength lies in restraint; in patience, in balance; and in care for one another.

May this blessed month purify our hearts, heal our communities, strengthen mutual understanding, and draw us closer to Allah — and closer to what is best in deeds and words.

Ramadan Mubārak.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

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Sheikh Abdul Quddoos Azhari

