



A leader of a community asked Abba Poemen:
“How can I gain the fear of God?” Abba Poemen replied:
“How indeed can we gain the fear of God when we have
bellies full of cheese and jars of salted fish?”

— from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Hunger is a feeling we are all familiar with, whether we busily work through the lunch hour or spend time fasting as a spiritual practice. In any case, those of us with sufficient resources can reach into a pantry or open a fridge and feed ourselves once our hunger has prompted us to eat. Often times it isn't our hunger that prompts us to eat, but rather the availability of food close at hand—candy bowls, snack cupboards, and drive-throughs—or cravings that urge us to eat even when we aren't hungry. But what happens when we never feel true hunger, the kind of hunger that stirs our longing for replenishment, that looks beyond being satisfied to simply wanting to be fed?

Do we really know what it means to feel hunger? This is a question we can ask of our bodies and of our spirits. If we are always full of easy and good-tasting things, will we ever know the deep spiritual hunger that only God can satisfy? Can we hunger for God when our bellies are always full?

How might our hunger remind us of the needs of others and of our deep dependence on God during this season of fasting and praying?

— **Brin Bon**