

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Gospel text (Mt 9:14-15): Then the disciples of John approached him and said, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast (much), but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast”

Fr. Xavier PAGÉS i Castañer
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today the first Friday of Lent, having experienced the fasting and abstinence of Ash Wednesday, we have attempted to offer our fasting and the prayer of the Holy Rosary, for the Peace, that our World needs so badly. We are willing to take care of this Lenten exercise, our Church, Mother and Teacher, is asking us to abide by, and to remember it was the same Lord who said: “The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast” (Mt 9:15). We have the desire to experience it, not just as the fulfillment of an obligation which is mandatory for us, but —most of all— as the possibility to find the spirit which will let us live this Lenten practice while helping us in our spiritual improvement.

By seeking this deep feeling, we can ask ourselves: which is the true fasting? Already, prophet Isaiah, in today's first reading, tells us which is the fasting God appreciates: « Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard” (Is 58:7-8). God likes and expects from us whatever is taking us towards a true love for all our brothers.

Every year, Saint John Paul II wrote us a message for Lent. One of these messages, under the motto “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35); helped us

to discover the very same charitable dimension of our fasting, which, from the bottom of our heart, allows us to prepare for Easter Time, in an effort to identify ourselves, more and more, with Christ's love which took him to die in the Cross for us. As Saint Leo the Great said: “What every Christian ought to do all the time, he ought to do it now more carefully and more devotedly.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“There are three things by which faith stands firm. They are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. If you have only one of them, you have nothing.” (Saint Peter Chrysologus)

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“The Sacred Scriptures and the entire Christian tradition teach that fasting is a great help to avoid sin and all that leads to it. True fasting, as the divine Master repeats, is rather to do the will of the Heavenly Father.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Jesus' call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, "sackcloth and ashes," fasting and mortification, but at the conversion of the heart, interior conversion. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false (...).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 1430)