

Saturday of the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 9:14-17): The disciples of John approached Jesus 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. No one patches an old cloak with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for its fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse. People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”

"Time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them"

Fr. Joaquim FORTUNY i Vizcarro
(Cunit, Tarragona, Spain)

Today, we see how Jesus brought new times with him and a new doctrine, which He taught with authority; and we also realize how, as usual with new things, they clash with prevailing praxis and environment. Thus, in the pages preceding today's Gospel, we see Jesus forgiving the paralytic of his sins and healing his disease while the scribes are shocked; or, Jesus telling Matthew, a tax collector, to follow him, and eating with him and other publicans and sinners, while the Pharisees were “going up the walls”; and, in today's Gospel, John's disciples are the ones to approach Jesus, because they do not understand that He and his disciples do not fast.

Jesus, who never leaves anyone without an answer, replies: “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” (Mt 9:15). Fasting was, and still is, a penitential practice “which prepare us for the liturgical feasts; they help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2043) and requests the Divine Mercy. But in those moments, God's infinite mercy and love was amidst them with Jesus' presence, the Incarnated

Verb. How could they fast? There was only one possible attitude: joy, while enjoying the presence of God made man. How could they fast when Jesus had revealed to them a new way to relate to God, a new spirit that was breaking all those old manners and customs?

Today Jesus is here: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20), and He is not because He went back to his Father, and thus, we cry out: Come, O Lord Jesus!

We are living in times of expectation. This is why it is convenient to renew ourselves every day with the new spirit of Jesus, to give up our old routines, to abstain from what may prevent us from advancing towards a full identification of Christ, towards sanctity. “Fair is our crying —our fasting— if we have a burning desire to see him” (St. Augustine).

We pray the Virgin Mother to grant us the grace we need to live the joy of knowing we are her beloved children.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

-

“Fasting is the helm of human life and governs the whole ship of our body.” (Saint Peter Chrysologus)

-

“To new wine, new wineskins. This is why the Church asks us, all of us, for a few changes. She asks us to leave aside fleeting structures; they aren’t necessary! And get new wineskins, those of the Gospel.” (Francis)

-

“Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, ‘that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life’. For lay people, ‘this evangelization acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.’ (Vatican II).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N° 905)