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 unshrunken 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
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Today we notice how new times began with Jesus, a new doctrine, taught with authority, and how all these new things clashed with the prevailing practice and environment. Thus, in the pages preceding the Gospel we are contemplating, we see Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic and healing his illness, while the scribes are scandalized; Jesus calling Matthew, the tax collector, and eating with him and other tax collectors and sinners; and the Pharisees "climbing the walls". And in today's Gospel, it is John's disciples who approach Jesus because they do not understand why He and his disciples do not fast.

Jesus, who never leaves anyone without an answer, will say to 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" (Mt 9:15). Fasting was, and is, a penitential practice that will "help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart" (Catechism of the Church, no. 2043) and to implore divine mercy. But in those moments, the mercy and infinite love of God was among them in the presence of Jesus, the Incarnate Word. How could they fast? There was only one possible attitude: joy, rejoicing in the presence of God made man. How could they fast if Jesus had revealed to them a new way of relating to God, a new spirit that broke with all those old ways of acting?

Today Jesus is here: "I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:20), and He is no longer here because He has returned to the Father, and so we cry out: Come, Lord Jesus!

We are in times of expectation. Therefore, we should renew ourselves every day with the new spirit of Jesus, break away from routines, fast from everything that prevents us from advancing toward a full

identification with Christ, toward holiness. "Our weeping—our fasting—is just if we burn with desire to see him" (Saint Augustine).

We implore Saint Mary to grant us the graces we need to live the joy of knowing ourselves to be 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, № 905)