

Saturday of the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 9,14-17): John's disciples came to Jesus and said, «How is it that we and the Pharisees fast on many occasions, but not your disciples?». Jesus answered them, «How can you expect wedding guests to mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? Time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, then they will fast. No one patches an old coat with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for the patch will shrink and tear an even bigger hole in the coat. Besides you don't put new wine in old wineskins. If you do, the wineskins will burst and the wine be spilt. No, you put new wine in fresh skins; then both are preserved».

«Time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them»

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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: «How can you expect wedding guests to mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? Time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, then they will fast» (Mt 9:15). Fasting was, and still is, a penitential practice «which prepares us for the liturgical feasts and 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 discovered for 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 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.