

Friday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 5:33-39): The scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, “The disciples of John the Baptist fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink.” Jesus answered them, “Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.”

And he also told them a parable. “No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins. And no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’”

“Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?”

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Today, while pondering over the Gospel, we can detect the trap prepared by the Pharisees and masters of the Law, when they twist an important question: they simply oppose how the fasting and praying of the Pharisees and John’s disciples compares to the eating and drinking of Jesus’ disciples.

Jesus Christ tells us there is a time to pray and fast and a time to eat and drink. Which means the same person that prays and fasts is who eats and drinks. We can appreciate that in our daily life: let us watch the simple joy of a family, maybe our own family. But, later on, tribulations may visit them. The people are the same, but circumstances differ: “Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come...” (Lk 5:34).

Timing is everything; there is a time under the sky for everything: “A time to rend, and a time to sew” (Eccles 3:7). These words uttered by a learned man of the Old Testament, certainly not the most optimistic one, almost coincide with the simple parable of the torn coat. And, to a certain extent, they probably coincide with our own experience. Our mistake appears when at the time of sewing, we tear and at the time of tearing, we sew. Then, everything goes wrong.

We are aware that, along with Jesus Christ, we shall reach the glory of Resurrection through His passion and death, and that no other way is God's way. Precisely, Simon Peter is scolded when he tries to lead the Lord away from the only way: "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do" (Mt 16:23). If we can enjoy a few moments of peace and joy, let us make the most out of it. There will probably come other moments when we shall have to fast for good. The only difference is that, thank God, we shall always have the bridegroom beside us. And this is what the Pharisees did not know and, maybe, this is why in the Gospel they always appear as such bad-tempered persons. Therefore, and as far as we are concerned, let us avoid being bad-tempered, while admiring the Lord's soft irony, which can be gathered from today's Gospel.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Do you want to placate God? Know what you have to do with yourself so that God will be favorable to you. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; a broken and humiliated heart, you do not despise it. This is the sacrifice you have to offer" (Saint Augustine)
- "The Gospel is a celebration! And you can only live fully in a joyful and renewed heart. May the Lord give us the grace not to remain prisoners, the grace of joy and freedom that the newness of the Gospel brings us" (Benedict XVI)
- "Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n^o 1.116)