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?”

Fr. Frederic RÀFOLS i Vidal
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Today, in our reflection on the Gospel, we see the trap set by the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law when they distort an important issue: quite simply, they contrast the fasting and prayer of John’s disciples and the Pharisees with the eating and drinking of Jesus’ disciples.

Jesus Christ tells us that in life there is a time to fast and pray, and a time to eat and drink. That is: the same person who prays and fasts is the one who eats and drinks. We see this in everyday life: we observe the simple joy of a family, perhaps our own. And we see that, at another time, tribulation visits that same family. The people are the same, but everything has its time: "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come..." (Lk 5:34,35).

There is a time for everything; and a time for every affair under the heavens: “A time to rend, and a time to sew” (Ecl 3:7). These words, spoken by a wise man of the Old Testament, not exactly one of the most optimistic, almost coincide with the simple parable of the mended garment. And they surely coincide in some way with our own experience. The mistake is that during the time of sewing, we rend; and during the time of rending, we sew. That's when nothing goes right.

We know that, just as Jesus Christ did through his passion and death, we will attain the glory of the Resurrection, and any other path is not God’s path. Indeed, Simon Peter is admonished when he tries to lead the Lord astray 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's make the most of them. There will surely be times of strict fasting ahead. The only difference is that, thankfully, we will always have the bridegroom with us. And this is what the Pharisees didn't know, and perhaps that's why the Gospel almost always portrays them as ill-tempered people. As we admire the gentle irony of the Lord that shines through in today’s Gospel, let us, above all, strive not to be ill-tempered people.

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, nº 1.116)