

Friday's Gospel: A New Life, a New Fast

Gospel for Friday after Ash Wednesday, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 9:14-15*)

Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said 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.”

Commentary

The bridegroom has now been taken from us. The time has come when Christians, like the disciples of John and the Pharisees, must also undertake penance and fasting.

Of course, the New Law (which is a law for God's children, for women and men renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit) is not subject to the letter and complications of the old casuistry. Nothing will ever be the same as before because Christ has changed everything. Christ has taken away our hearts of stone, dying out of love for us and letting his own heart be pierced by a spear. He has given every last drop of his Blood for us. And in place of a heart of stone, he has given us a heart of flesh and transfused into us his own Blood poured out in love for us.

Christians fast and mortify our redeemed body, as children of God.

We do not act like soldiers who obediently carry out orders (although, in fact, we do belong to Christ's "militia"). And even less like slaves, who meekly and submissively obey their master's will (although it is very true that, with the humility of Mary, we want to be and feel ourselves to be "slaves" of the Lord). The Church invites us today to abstain from eating meat. And the new heart we have been given will prompt us to undertake other acts of penance during this time of Lent.

The new impetus for Christian fasting can only be love, identification with Christ Jesus, who was crucified, died and was buried. During Lent we prepare with penance and fasting to celebrate these mysteries during Holy Week. But we do it all for Christ, with Him and in Him. Let us never forget that we are brothers and sisters of the Risen Lord. Easter will soon arrive,

when we will celebrate with the joy of the Risen Christ. But every celebration has its proper time. And now it is time to fast.

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