

6. September 2019 “New ways on a secure path”

Lk 5, 33-39

They then said to him, 'John's disciples are always fasting and saying prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees, too, but yours go on eating and drinking.' Jesus replied, 'Surely you cannot make the bridegroom's attendants fast while the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them; then, in those days, they will fast.' He also told them a parable, 'No one tears a piece from a new cloak to put it on an old cloak; otherwise, not only will the new one be torn, but the piece taken from the new will not match the old. And nobody puts new wine in old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and run to waste, and the skins will be ruined. No; new wine must be put in fresh skins. And nobody who has been drinking old wine wants new. "The old is good," he says.'

"Fasting reduces selfishness in us and opens the heart to the poor." Thus it is said in a very beautiful passage in St. Mass during Lent.

Fasting is a very laudable and recommended ascetic exercise, which helps with the development of spiritual life and unfortunately today - like so many important spiritual exercises - is forgotten. Frequent prayer is also of course of great benefit. The Lord doesn't question this.

Jesus merely points out that with His coming the fullness of times has dawned.

Fasting belongs in our time when we are still on the way to enter the eternal kingdom of the Lord. But when the Lord is on the ground and proclaims the kingdom of God with his disciples, the bridegroom is with them. You don't have to wait any more. He's there! It's wedding.

But the bridegroom does not remain on the earth. He returns home to the Father - not to leave us, but to prepare our dwellings in eternity.

The time for completion has not yet come, nor is it a time of eternal joy, it is still a time of suffering and temptation, a time of struggle, the devil is still allowed to afflict men, the kingdom of God is not realized on earth, we have to prove ourselves.

That is why the time of fasting reminds us of the sufferings of the Lord, fasting trains us in the spiritual struggle that teaches us to rein our senses, and to open our hearts to the poor!

But in the Lord the light of eternity is already shining upon us.

The work of redemption needs new ways. The old ways have served until the coming of the Messiah. The law was a master of education for us. But now, with the Messiah and the redemption given to us, comes the new wine that needs appropriate skins.

The Gospel has to come to all peoples. The skins must not be too tight so that they do not burst and the wine seeps into the ground. But the skins must not be porous either, but they must hold.

The Church is entrusted with the great work of the Lord. Loyalty to the entrusted good goes hand in hand with openness to new ways in which the gospel can be proclaimed today. But it is a wrong way to believe that the gospel must be adapted to today's times and to today's feelings. It is not the spirit of the world that is allowed to enter the Church - it would poison wine - but the Holy Spirit must penetrate this world. This is the great transformation that must take place if the kingdom of God is to spread.

Adapting the Church to the world would spread the kingdom of the fallen world - it is the kingdom of which the devil spoke when he tempted Jesus - and change her thinking. The danger would be that one no longer sees and judges reality from God's point of view, but takes the world and its standard as a starting point. Confusion would increase, and it is unfortunately to note that the Church of today often uses too little of the spirit of discernment to distinguish light from darkness.