



Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Gospel Matthew 9:14-17.

The disciples of John approached Jesus and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered 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. No one patches an old cloak with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for its fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse. People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, I come to you in this meditation ready to do whatever it is you ask. Left to myself, I often take the easy and convenient path; yet I know the way of a Christian is through the narrow gate. In you I find the reason to abandon the easy path for a more perfect mission of love. I'm ready to learn the meaning of your command: "Follow me."

Petition:

Lord, help me to value the place of fasting in my life.

1. Creating Hunger for God:

Fasting has its place in the life of holiness. Like the precept of poverty, fasting is the purposeful privation of a natural good to make the soul more sensitive to the supernatural goods of the Spirit. It is the silencing of the flesh in order to feel more intensely a spiritual hunger for God. Just as the Israelites had to grow hungry in the desert before they could worthily receive the bread from heaven in the gift of manna, so in our life there is place to put aside the distractions of what is good for that which is holy. In the practice of self-denial, we will find the spiritual receptivity of a new wineskin that will not burst when, through prayer, God pours in the new wine of the Kingdom.

2. Respecting the End:

The practice of piety is not an end in itself. Rather, it is oriented to the ultimate end of the spiritual life: union with Christ. Christ must unweave John's disciples from an excessive

rigor in their spiritual life, one that has lost God as its proper object. Spiritual pride can grow subtly in persons who take upon themselves forms of devotion or asceticism for their own sakes. In all things, even in the spiritual, we have to look at the end. If some spiritual practice does not lead us to live God's will and his presence in a more loving manner, then it is of no use to us.

3. Fasting and the Passion Lead to Spiritual Feasting:

The moment of the Passion will come; the days of mourning will arrive. The fasting that the disciples lived and that the Church lives is one of uniting ourselves to the suffering Christ. Self-denial in order to do God's will becomes a participation in Christ's Redemption. Christ's closest friends will want to share his sorrow, suffer his privations and make his holocaust visible to others through their sacrificial way of life. May I be ready to live union with Christ, embracing periodic acts of self-denial and the ongoing crosses of my duty for love of souls and his Kingdom.

Conversation with Christ:

Lord, help me practice true devotion and sacrifice. Renew in me a holy desire to seek you above all things, so that all I possess in my life is ordered to serving you better and glorifying your name.

Resolution:

I will make a special sacrifice to fulfill a duty of my state in life, uniting myself more to the suffering Christ.