



Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke 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.'"

Luke 5: 33-39.

Introductory Prayer:

Lord God, I come from dust and to dust I shall return. You, on the other hand, existed before all time, and every creature takes its being from you. You formed me in my mother's womb with infinite care, you watch over me tenderly. I hope at my dearth you will embrace my soul to carry me home to heaven to be with you forever. Thank you for looking upon me and blessing me with your love. Take mine in return. I humbly offer you all that I am.

Petition:

Rejuvenate my spiritual life, Lord.

1. Judging by the Wrong Standards:

Once again, we have Jesus at a meal, this time with Levi (Matthew) and his friends. The scribes and Pharisees have come along to scrutinize Jesus and his followers, as they were wary of his teachings which were not in accord with the legalism and formalism to which they were accustomed. Their statement here about fasting contains an implicit judgment: You and your followers are not following our traditions of fasting; therefore, you cannot be truly holy. They present it not as a question, but as a statement, an

accusation. They are not open to looking at things in a new way. We, too, can be guilty of rash judgment, even with other people in the Church who do not do things the way we do. Our reference point has to be not what we are used to, but what the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, teaches and approves, be it ancient traditions or new manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

2. For Everything There Is a Season:

Jesus' answer is simple: there is a time and place for both fasting and feasting. Some people have a special vocation to a life of unusual abnegation, but for most of us, the liturgical year provides us with a natural cycle of rejoicing and penance. At times we rejoice with the "bridegroom" – like Christmas and Easter when we celebrate the coming of Christ and his resurrection. At other times we practice more penance – as in Lent when we focus more on making reparation for the separation from the Lord caused by sin in our lives, or in Advent when we purify our hearts to receive the Lord at Christmas. Ordinary Time has its own feasts and occasions of particular significance one way or the other. The question we have to ask ourselves is this: Are we living these liturgical realities, or are we neglecting them? Do the feasts and fasts of the Church affect my life, or are the liturgical seasons at best curiosities that I hardly notice?

3. The New You:

Then, Jesus offers all those present a challenge in the form of the parable. Both images – the cloth and the wineskins – emphasize the idea that in order to embrace his message we need to think "outside the box". We easily get settled into a routine, becoming complacent and tepid in our faith. It's even worse if we have habits of sin. To follow Christ and his "Good News" truly, we need to leave behind what St. Paul called the "old self" in order to be new creatures in Christ (Colossians 3:9-10). For the Pharisees, that would have meant leaving behind their strict formalism and judgmental attitude. For Levi and his friends it meant abandoning their worldliness and sinful lifestyle. Making a break with our old self is difficult – the "old wine" is what we're used to – but we have to take the step of recognizing in what our old self consists and deciding to leave that behind to embrace Christ's message, which is always challenging, ever new.

Conversation with Christ:

Lord Jesus, help me to focus more on following you than on judging others. Show me who I am, and whom you want me to be. Grant me the grace to live the life of the Church feasts and fasts with enthusiasm, so you can transform me into a new creature.

Resolution:

I will make it a point to live today, Friday, as a memorial of the death of Our Lord by offering a small sacrifice as a penance for my sins, and I will live this coming Sunday with real joy as the celebration of his resurrection.