**FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 03 – XXII WEEK O.T. [B]**

**"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."**

**Jesus is often tested with very insidious questions. What is He being accused now? They accuse Him not to fast or not to have taught his disciples to fast. The disciples of John fast and they make prayers. The disciples of the Pharisees fast. Instead, your disciples eat and drink. If you are a true Master, as John and the Pharisees are true Masters, you should teach your disciples how to fast. Better, you should show them how to fast, yourself. Since you do not do this, surely you are not a true Master. How can one be a true Master without teaching the most elementary things every disciple needs? The fast the Lord wants from his people is a true fast of sin, of selfishness, of every other vice. His people must not be nourished of sin, vices, selfishness, arrogance, greed. For this reason, it must live of words and of works orientated to the greatest charity toward brothers. The people of God fast when it nourishes itself of the great justice and charity toward the brothers. Instead, when it nourishes itself of sin and of selfishness, surely one cannot say that it fasts. In the New Testament, the fast is lived by exercising in the four great virtues of justice, of fortitude, of temperance, of prudence. These four virtues are the sound and holy modality to live the virtues of faith, of hope, of charity to the perfection.**

**The disciple of Jesus must daily nourish himself of the highest and most exquisite charity. He must live to love the others, even renouncing to his same life. If he takes off the bread of his mouth, he must take it off to give it to his brothers. He must always deprive himself for love, for the greatest love. This is the fast the Lord asks each man and He asks it every day. This is the rule of charity, of beneficence, of alms. But Jesus cannot say these things to those who are denigrators of his teaching. They would have accused him of subverting the traditions of the fathers. For this entire world, the traditions of the fathers had the value of Law. They had more value than the Law of the Lord, more than the Commandments themselves. But now it is not the moment to speak to them in fullness of truth and for this Jesus recurs to his methodology of the image that is simple, immediate. With this methodology, He calms the hearts and postpones to better times in which it will be possible to speak with greater clarity.**

**Once again, Jesus lets us borrow an image of everyday life. No one goes to a wedding feast to fast. It would be a serious offence to the bridegroom. One goes to the wedding feast to rejoice and be happy eating and drinking. The bridegroom is with them and it is compulsory that one celebrates. The fast in a wedding feast is the non-sense. Ended the wedding feast, the bridegroom is no longer with the wedding guests, these ones come back to their daily life and then the time of fast comes. There is the day when one can eat since one has a piece of bread and there is a day when one cannot even eat straw, as not even this is possible to find. In these days one will fast and he will certainly fast! This image of Jesus is excellent. It teaches us that life has happy moments and less happy moments. One needs to live the happy moments in the greatest delight, but also the less happy moments in their non-delight, accepting them as they are, but always remaining in the purest observance of the Law of the Lord. These less happy days must be lived with that little that providence lets us find, without complain, without transgressing the commandments, being content with that little one has.**

**Now Jesus enters the mystery of the New Testament with a parable that the denigrators did not surely understood and we cannot even understand in his infinite beauty of truth and of wisdom. We may depict the piece torn from a new cloak to patch an old one as a beatitude of the New Testament to apply to the Old Testament thinking that with a Beatitude applied to the Old Testament this might make it New. This is a true incongruence. A Beatitude is poorly suited to the Old Testament in which one lives with an entirely different mind. The Old Testament is Old Testament and it will always have to remain Old Testament. No seam of some piece of Gospel will make it New Testament. There, other hearts live, other minds, other spirits, other feelings. Everything is different in the Old Testament. It is compared to an old cloak by Jesus.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 5,33-39**

**And they said to him, "The disciples of John 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.'"**

**Here is another image giving more vigour to that of the old cloak and of the piece of new cloth. There are old wineskins and new wineskins. No one puts the old wine in old wineskins. The new wine is full of vigour and pierces the old wineskins. Therefore, both wine and wineskins are lost. What will a wise man do? He will avoid this operation. He will avoid it since he does not want to lose the wine and the wineskins at the same time. The same applies to the container of the Old Testament, of its institutions, of its religious structures. All these things cannot contain the new wine of the new truth and of the new wisdom pouring from the New Testament. It would be a true loss, both of the Old Testament that must always remain Old Testament, and of the New that must always remain New Testament. And to think that we poured out many structures of the Old Testament in the New.**

**Jesus is the new wine and He, too, is the new wineskin. Made new by Him, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we must always be poured out in Him to keep the freshness of our news. Our temptation is always the same: transferring all the structures of the Old Testament in the New, as if the New Testament were an updated form of the Old. Between Old and New there is rupture, there is an infilling gap, there is the fullness of truth and of grace, there is fulfilment, but not for continuation but for compliance of all promises of God. The Old Testament is only figure. The reality is the New. Christ Jesus is the New Testament and with Christ, everything is new. Before Jesus, the Old Testament is only pale figure. For this reason, Jesus cannot take a habit of the Old Testament, like fast, and insert it as it is in the New Testament. The New Testament has a new fast, a new habit of living the virtue, a new way of relating to things and one must live according to this news. The New Testament is the essence and the form of Christ Jesus that is the crucified charity, entirely given for the salvation of humankind.**

**This is the reason why the new wine, Christ, must be poured in new wineskins, in the forms and in the modalities of Christ Jesus, the Crucified and the Risen. If the new wine is Christ, the new form is only the modality of Christ. The modality of Christ is only one: his crucifixion. The new wine is Christ and the new wineskin is the Crucified. Only the one who manages to pour himself in Christ and in his crucifixion might be said to be a person who lives in the New Testament. The transfer from the New to the Old, or from the Old to the New is loss both of the Old and the New Testament. Its daily updating to the time of the Spirit of the Lord is precisely of the Christian spirituality. Either one updates himself to the current time of the Holy Spirit or one fossilizes himself in old things that do not give salvation. Mother of God, come to our rescue. Grant that we understand every Word of your Son. Amen.**