**MONDAY JANUARY 16 – II WEEK O.T. [A]**

**Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.**

**The fasting the Lord wants is the perfect obedience both to the Law that manifests what is the perfect righteousness to live both toward God and toward every other man and also to the Law of the love that everyone owes to God and to his brothers. This obedience is thus revealed by the prophet Isaiah: “Cry out full-throated and unsparingly, lift up your voice like a trumpet blast; Tell my people their wickedness, and the house of Jacob their sins. They seek me day after day, and desire to know my ways, Like a nation that has done what is just and not abandoned the law of their God; They ask me to declare what is due them, pleased to gain access to God. "Why do we fast, and you do not see it? afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it?" Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits, and drive all your laborers. Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting, striking with wicked claw. Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!**

**If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday; Then the LORD will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land. He will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails. The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up; "Repairer of the breach," they shall call you, "Restorer of ruined homesteads." If you hold back your foot on the sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; If you call the sabbath a delight, and the LORD'S holy day honorable; If you honor it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice -  Then you shall delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Is 58,1-14). This is the Law of the Lord regarding fasting. This Law has been substituted by the refraining from food on the established days. Instead, Jesus does not let himself be ensnared by the traditions of men. He has one only fasting to live: the perfect obedience to what is written for Him in the Law, in the Prophets, in the Psalms. Besides, neither in the Law of the perfect righteousness nor in the Law of love or of the perfect mercy does one never deal with fasting.**

**Let us read the text of Mk 2,18-22**

**The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to him and objected, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"** **Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunken cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."**

**Jesus cannot say that his disciples do not fast, because they observe the fast prescribed by the prophet Isaiah. He would have been stoned immediately. Here is then that the wisdom of the Holy Spirit comes to his rescue and suggests the right answer to give. Thus the hearts calm down and He can continue the mission of true Prophet of his Father. As true Prophet, He adds a very brief parable about the future fasting of his disciples. As a piece of cloth does not suit an old cloth and as the new wine cannot be put in old wineskins, thus is of his Gospel. It cannot be sewed on the old cloth of the Old Testament and neither the new wine of his Word and of his sacrifice can be poured in the old wineskin of the Old Testament. New Gospel, new cloth. New wine, fresh wineskin. This truth reveals to us that when the Holy Spirit traces a way to the body of Christ so that he walks in history, He has always created a fresh wineskin in which to pour it. When then the wineskin has been so made absolute to even suffocate the beauty of the perennial news of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit has always intervened and has created other fresh wineskins. This is a warning for us. One must never sacrifice the Gospel to keep the wineskin. Instead, one must sacrifice the wineskin to give fullness of life to the Gospel. May the Mother of Jesus help us enter the mystery of this most high truth.**