

(P. 20 -)(03)

“To fast means to open up to the Lord”

Fasting is compulsory for us all according to the Gospel, the same as prayer. Jesus said that his disciples used to fast. When the Pharisees went to Jesus and said, 'why is it that John's disciples fast and yours do not ?' Jesus replied, "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."

Jesus has been taken away, but has Risen and we live 'already and not yet' in this tension of the Kingdom of God. We are in expectation, we are waiting. The Church prays for the coming of the Lord and fasting, amongst other things, has an eschatological dimension. I await : for one day I do not want to eat; I am waiting for my Lord. This is an eschatological dimension and the Lord has spoken for his disciples.

There is a particular manner of evil which can only be driven out by prayer and fasting. The disciples were unable to act because they had not fasted.

I have said this as a general principle. I do not know anyone in the Church who can forbid a Christian to pray and to fast. If the practice of the Church is reduced to a minimum, this is according to the situation : as, for example, eating one hour before taking Communion.

Many wanted to take Communion before going to work, but had first to eat. Otherwise they would have to go without anything for the whole day. So the Church said : we will do it in this way.

Jesus had eaten and immediately after the Supper He had Communion with the Apostles; the Church has made a practice now, She has introduced another and can introduce yet another ... Fasting is the same thing.

There has been a boom in these last years. Many people could not fast and the practice has become somewhat superficial. Our Lady now says : 'fast'. She wants to put into practice once more the general principle of the Gospel, of all prophets, of all the Saints who have fasted. Without doubt Our Lady used to fast, I believe, twice a week because they used to fast for two days in the primitive Church. And if Our Lady says : 'you should fast', She is not saying anything new. She is inviting us to the renewal of a practice.

Fasting is connected with faith. To fast does not mean to be hungry. To fast means to be open to the Lord. He who fasts opens up; someone who fasts is open, he becomes poor in spirit like Our Lady.

And someone poor can never say to another ; 'I do not need you', because he has a need of the other. I have nothing. He has something, in a material sense. I cannot say ; 'I have no need of you. Why do I have to ask every day ?'

Somebody poor in spirit cannot become an atheist because he sees he needs the Lord, so then if Our Lady now begins a new school of faith, in this world so full of atheism, She must invite us to fasting because fasting helps us to open up, to become transparent, to leave a distinct place, also in our body, for the Word.

The Holy Fathers of the Church fasted and used to say that fasting is the prayer of the body. So the body prepares itself, also by fasting, to accept the Lord. And this is to assist our faith.

So, generally speaking, if I see a person genuinely fasting and that it is resulting on no good one must look for another means. But to say that this tradition has disappeared or that one does not fast any more, this is not true. To say that only taking bread and water for a day is harmful, I do not believe it.

Ask your doctor ; a doctor will tell you that to abstain from eating for a day is good for your system. It gives a rest to your stomach ... Do we not fear remaining without vitamins only in religious practices ? There are so many of us who have an abundance of vitamins and do not know really what to do with them.

If we Christians are afraid of feeling a little hungry for one day, what must we think of all those who are dying every day of hunger in the world ? By feeling a little hungry for a day : we will be better conscious of their cry.

Our Lady does not want us to be lacking in vitamins but wishes for harmony in our lives. In fasting we experience also a new sense of time to discern the important things from those less important. Many, after having started fasting have realised that it was not necessary to sit in front of the television every evening. If for an evening nobody eats, smokes or drinks in a household this often means a healthy home.

From statistics: people watch television in France for 18 hours a week, that is three hours a day : but if you begin fasting you will not do this any more.

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