



Lenten Reflections

The Divine Intervention

February 12, 2016

Scripture

Matthew 9:14-15

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.”

Our Scripture Reflection

I often wonder why John's disciples asked Jesus their question regarding fasting -
jealousy or simple curiosity?

Jesus' response hearkens back to Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8.

¹ There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heavens.

² A time to give birth, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.

³ A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to tear down, and a time to build.

⁴ A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

⁵ A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;
a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.

⁶ A time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away.

⁷ A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to be silent, and a time to speak.

⁸ A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

The day did, indeed, come when Jesus was taken away and there was not only fasting but also great sorrow. But then came Easter!

Food for your Journey

Our culture does not know what to do with Ash Wednesday. We do a pretty good job with the feasting right before Ash Wednesday, mind you – more and more people even outside of New Orleans celebrate Mardi Gras with beads and floats, and more and more people devour pancakes and waffles at Shrove Tuesday celebrations. Any excuse for a feast is welcome! But what to do with the depressingly titled Ash Wednesday? A few years ago I saw a restaurant sign that summed up our cultural uncertainty about this date on the Christian calendar: “Ash Wednesday Seafood Buffet: All You Can Eat!”

The paradox of Ash Wednesday, and of Lent, is that we take on particular disciplines – fasting, prayer, service – in order to repent and conform ourselves more closely to the life and death of Christ, all the while recognizing that Christ has already come to us before we sought him. This is the paradox of the baptized life. We have been joined to Christ once, but we spend the rest of our lives trying to live into that union.

Turning to Christ means turning also to all our neighbors who suffer. According to Isaiah, fasting and praying that brings us to act on behalf of these neighbors is the fast that is acceptable to God.

–Martha Moore-Keish, “Ash Wednesday”.

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, during these Lenten days of fasting and prayer, help me to realize that the hunger pangs I experience are an indication of my profound hunger and longing for Your love. Not by bread alone can I live, Lord. With Your love, I can do all things. Amen.

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