

Homily – Together in Holiness Conference

February 17, 2018

In life we often have to make a basic choice. Today's readings prompt us to consider fasting and feasting. Both are good. A husband may want to feast while a wife may want to fast. How do you achieve a balance in married life? Christian wisdom comes from knowing when it is time to fast and when it is time to feast. By listening attentively – and lovingly – to one another, you will come to know what time it is – with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Fasting is a traditional Lenten practice. Fasting makes us aware of the deeper hungers of our hearts. Fasting makes us conscious of our utter dependence on God, not on ourselves. Fasting makes us more sensitive to the needs of those who are hungry – in our community and around the world. True religion prompts us to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, satisfy the afflicted. If we do this, God will respond with light where there is darkness, with springs of refreshing water where the land – and its people – are parched, lifeless, thirsty for justice. Yes, there are times for, and great value in, fasting.

The gospel tells us there are also times for **feasting**. We are so familiar with the story of Levi's call that we may not appreciate the transformation that takes place in him. Tax collectors in Palestine were greedy, unscrupulous, unjust, and despised because they worked for a hated Roman occupation army. Tax collectors had no love for God or neighbor. We might expect Jesus – who came to proclaim the kingdom of God – to call down a lightning strike on such a person. Instead, he says something incredible: Follow me! And Levi immediately leaves his former profession to be Jesus' disciple!

This is a time for feasting – a time for celebration, friendship, and joy. The prophets of Israel described heaven as a wonderful banquet – everyone at peace with one another and with God. The Eucharist is a foretaste of the eschatological banquet. There are times when feasting is important in married life – wedding anniversaries, birthdays, occasions to celebrate with family and friends. Above all, we celebrate our conversion, the transformation of our lives to bring them into accord with the gospel of justice and peace. May the Holy Spirit teach us wisdom – to know when to fast and when to feast! *Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*