

Today is Forgiveness Sunday, today's Gospel reading is part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. This Sunday is also called 'The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise'.

Three points are discussed in the gospel reading;

First: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Second; Fast not like the Pharisees, to the letter.

Third; Do not collect treasures on earth, but collect your treasures in heaven.

The first point ; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. As I read it here, it comes from yesterday's Gospel reading, in which Christ gives the Lord's Prayer. Today we read ; If you forgive men their sins, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. Yesterday it was a supplication of the faithful, today it is a promise of Christ. It touches on a great mystery, so important in the Christian life. We worship God in the way we treat our fellowmen. And that is because God became man and He is present in every person . Hidden presence. It is mentioned in the same breath; Love God and love your fellow man. These two are closely linked, no, even more so, one is not possible without the other. You cannot love God if you do not love people. And here it is especially about judging; If you forgive men their sins, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.

The Church Fathers often speak that the way to Christ consists of purification, enlightenment, deification. Forgiveness is the most direct way to purify our hearts. Mind you, right after the fall Adam and Eve start accusing each other, the opposite of forgiving. And Christ's last words on the cross were those of forgiveness for the murderer next to him on the cross. If we don't forgive, we harden our hearts and we cannot accept forgiveness. Often we see only evil in the person we do not forgive and we forget that he or she is also a man created by God. If that would penetrate to us, then forgiveness would come naturally.

Love your enemies it is written. We do not love the evil they do to us, but we love God's created man, even though he has become our enemy. Love your neighbor as yourself. We do not love ourselves with all our troubles and limitations, all our sins, but we love ourselves as we were created by God, as children of God, who look up to their father in awe and respect. Well, forgiving is often too much for us. It's impossible, it's too much to ask. It's too much for us mortal humans. But through the Holy Spirit we can forgive and we can pray. Not in the way of ; Lord I cannot forgive, grant me not to forgive, but; Lord I cannot forgive, let me forgive by Your Holy Spirit. When You truly forgive, the memory of evil will melt away like snow in the sun. Real forgiveness comes through the Holy Spirit. For that we will have to purify our hearts so that we can receive the Holy Spirit . For He is ' omnipresent ' but our impure hearts cannot receive Him . Therefore, not like the Pharisees, we fast according to the rules, but according to the spirit, so that we obtain humility and we can see our impurities. Like the prodigal son, it was in want that he came to himself, he could see himself again as he really was and in that humility he could return to the Father. And the Father

forgives him.

The second point ; do not vast like the Pharisees, to the letter. It is the Church's job to lead you to the Kingdom of Heaven. With that in mind, the Church instituted Great Lent. Fasting is a means of purifying your heart. For with Lent we voluntarily suffer. And like the Prodigal Son, we then have the opportunity to 'come to ourselves'. To see ourselves as we are. The miserable state we are in. If you fast and deny yourself all those things with which you normally cover your dissatisfaction, then you will start to feel that dissatisfaction. That unspeakable dis-ease , that stress then starts to speak. When there are no more chips, no cheese and wine, no computer games, no youtube, even no iPhone, omit all those things with which we bury our unrest, then you will only see the true state you are in. That is called 'coming to yourself'. Then you can go back to the Father and you do that by praying; Lord have mercy on me, sinner. Lord, my impure heart cries out for my iphone, have mercy on me. Let that heart cry out and throw yourself into the arms of the Lord , crying out to Him in prayer ; have mercy on me. Now you still have the chance to do that , to pray to Him in humility but eventually we will all end up in the Kingdom of Heaven, but in that place there are no chips, no cheese and wine, no computer games, no iphones, and because of your addiction to all these things , the lack of them will be unbearable and the Kingdom of Heaven will turn into an unbearable hell. The Church has only one goal; to lead you in peace into the Kingdom of Heaven and that is why it has instituted Great Lent so that you can now become aware of your attachment to these earthly things and get rid of that attachment.

The third and final point follows almost naturally from this; Do not lay up treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in Heaven. You can take love for God and your neighbor with you to heaven. All works of love and self-sacrifice you can take with you to heaven. Everything on this earth has been given to you to reach that heaven, but if it takes the place of heaven, then you will be cheated out of it. Great Lent is the time to see where you stand, don't let it pass by unused. Use Lent to face your attachment to earthly pleasures and to plead with God to be released from that attachment, addiction, for good.