

That last line of the Gospel reading; "then they shall go to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life" is what many of us think of when hearing about the Last Judgment. But isn't God a loving God who wants all to be saved? How then can he throw some into hell? God is not some kind of dictator that we fear and who just decides who goes to hell and who goes to heaven. God has given us free will and it is us who decide by the way we live .

This is about reaching the Kingdom of God or not, where God's will is law and where that law is indeed enforced. That law is: Love God and love your neighbor. Those two are tightly connected. Only by loving God can we truly love our neighbor. Can we have perfect love. And we are promised that perfect love, in which we can endure all suffering, not because we are so strong and disciplined, but because we love God and from Him we gain the strength to continue to love. And just imagine how it will be that no matter what happens , you will always continue to love , never again feelings of jealousy , never again fear of lack or pain or powerlessness . No more fear of death ! A Transformed Life! The Saints have preceded us in it.

Back to the text ; "For I was hungry, and You gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and You clothed me" etc. This is not about whether we have eradicated poverty and provided everyone with good clothes , it is about whether we have learned to love , so much that it has become our nature , that the pain of the other has become our pain . When we put the welfare of others above our own . Like the Good Samaritan, who, seeing the man who was robbed and beaten , only thought of how to help this man. He forgot his own goals , his own safety , his own needs . It was in his nature to love. His heart was filled with God . If we are like this, and we come to the gate, the Heavenly Gate, then we naturally belong to God and He will say; "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

But what we fill our lives with is the burying of our conscience. We bury it under mountains of relaxation because we are so stressed , under mountains of snacks , beers , vacations to far lands , internet and television , fascinating careers or the hope of a fascinating career. Sometimes also the worries we have. Not for nothing the priest calls out in the liturgy ; Let us put all worries aside". When we stand at that gate all that falls away , our true self , our true nature , what our heart really looks like , then becomes clear , to everyone , to God , to the angels , to the demons , to yourself . There 's no hiding anymore . The life of St. Mary of Egypt is such a beautiful illustration when she stands in front of the church door in Jerusalem, but we will talk about that later in the Great Lent. We ourselves make our own choice between heaven and hell. We choose ourselves, at every moment in our lives. Also today . Do we intend to fast because it purifies our hearts and brings us closer to God or is it too much to ask and do we think of ways to sail through those seven weeks in a more or less comfortable way. For some of us, fasting is something pleasant, because

curbing your eating needs increases the spirit. For most of us it's a struggle and we don't really want to. But by voluntarily suffering a little bit, we join Christ, be it on a very limited scale, who also did not long for his crucifixion and asked the Father Himself, "Let this cup pass from me". We suffer together with Christ by fasting. That suffering is blessed. That sacrifice will change our heart, purify it of unwanted impulses, it will bring us closer to the Kingdom of Heaven.

As with the Prodigal Son, the Father is waiting for us in the hope that we will turn to Him and follow His Law, the law to love God and to love our fellow man. By purifying our lives from all things that do not belong to God, by carrying the Cross of Christ through which our hearts are purified and through which we can love unconditionally, as e.g. The Good Samaritan. Then when we come face to face with God, He will recognise us and we will be told, Enter into my kingdom, where you belong.