



# Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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## WHY AREN'T YOUR DISCIPLES FASTING?

By Sister Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

### Today's Gospel

*The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to Jesus and objected, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."*

**MARK 2:18-22**

## Reflection

A question arose among the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees, and they came to Jesus asking why it is, that his disciples are not fasting; the custom of fasting was strong in Jewish religious practice. Jesus answered them calling himself *the bridegroom: the disciples cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them*. In the Hebrew scriptures, the concept of marriage or wedding feast conveyed the idea of **God's close presence** with the people of Israel, a metaphor of the love relationship between God and the Chosen people. Jesus, identifying himself as the bridegroom, indicates that the kingdom is present now, in his person. This is a new time...the Bridegroom is here, a time of rejoicing.

Let us reflect for a moment on the description of Jesus' early ministry in the previous chapter which indicated the closeness of God to the people (Mark 1:1-45):

*Jesus was baptized in the Jordan and the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove. A voice proclaimed, "You are my Son, the Beloved..."* (vs. 11)

*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near...* (vs. 15)

*Jesus said to the fisherfolk, "Come, follow me." So immediate their response.* (vs. 17)

*Everywhere, people were spellbound by his teaching. News of this Jesus streaked through the community like a flash of lightening, piercing the dark cold.* (vs. 27)

*After sunset, the town crowded at the door to be healed, to be touched, to be set free, and made whole.* (vs. 32)

*Rising early in the morning, Jesus went off to a lonely place to pray.* (vs. 35)

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## For Pondering & Prayer

As we consider the beginnings of Jesus' early ministry in Galilee, we sense the immediacy and dynamic energy pulsating in the first chapters of Mark's Gospel. This was a unique time for rejoicing in the presence of Jesus, the Bridegroom. Later, there would be a time for fasting when the bridegroom would be taken away, hinting that he would suffer death. The parables about sewing a new patch on an old cloak and pouring new wine into an old wineskin give us a sense that there is something new and amazing here in the presence of Jesus, and we are invited to welcome the Good News that he brings.

Perhaps this is a time to read Mark 1 again and notice how Christ speaks to you today. Try to listen with the ears of your heart. What new way of knowing, new way of perceiving does Christ want to awaken in you? The Wedding Feast is now. How do you want to respond?

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