

**Fasting:
Bishop Barron: Matthew: 9:14-15**

People ask Jesus why his disciples do not fast. He says that as wedding guests they will not fast while he, the Bridegroom, is with them. But “the days will come,” he says, “when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Why do we fast? Because we have a hunger for God, which is the deepest hunger. We’re meant to get access to that hunger. We’re meant to feel it so that it can direct us toward God. Every spiritual master recognizes the danger that if we allow the superficial hunger of our lives to dominate, we never reach deepest hunger.

Thomas Merton once observed that our desires for food and drink are something like little children in their persistence and tendency to dominate. Unless and until they are disciplined, they will skew the functions of the soul according to their purposes.

And fasting is a way of disciplining the hunger for food and drink. It is a way of quieting those desires by not responding to them immediately, so that the deepest desires emerge. Unless you fast you might never realize how hungry you are for God.

As Bishop Barron has provided us a picture of one of the spiritual benefits of fasting, and there are numerous benefits; there are also numerous healthy benefits resulting from decreased food intake (fasting).

From your pastor: Over the last year I have started fasting year around. I am cutting back on portion sizes and on Fridays have reduced my food intake to basically one meal consumed for that day. When this is done properly the body is purged and cleansed and happy and healthier.

As someone who works out, I believed the false narrative that fasting is counter-productive to working out. Dr. Jay Richards, on the Drew Mariani Show, disputes this false claim in his book and interview with Drew Mariani. And I can personally confirm that it is not true.

**For more information:
Doctor Jay Richards Book: [Eat, Fast, Feast: Heal Your Body While Feeding Your Soul - A Christian Guide to Fasting.](#)**

**Or to hear the interview with Drew Mariani: use the Relevant Radio App:
-Go to the menu and scroll down to Shows (On Demand):
-Then find the Drew Mariani Show and click:
-Scroll down to Fasting During Lent (hour 3, 2-21-23.**

**For a brief summary of Dr. Jay Richards book:
<https://prodigalcatholic.com/2022/04/04/summary-of-eat-fast-feast-heal-your-body-while-feeding-your-soul-by-dr-jay-richards/>**

Vivat Jesus - Father Vic Gournas

-Genesis: [(Our 1st parents were created for relationship / satan wants to tempt us to reject God / Jesus wants to restore us / Sin keeps us from fully participating in Divine Life / The consequences resulted in the fall (original sin). They doubted & didn't trust / Adam and Eve believed the serpent and fell.

Today Jesus was tempted: what can we learn? Know and trust the Father.

**-Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect".
(This used to trouble me). How in the world am I supposed to be perfect?**

We will all be tempted: Jesus shows us the antidote to temptation:

**-The "one righteous act": Romans (The Cross) Jesus' fidelity to the Father's will / Never doubting the Fr. / To be perfect is Turning towards and trusting His Fr.
LOVE FOR US!**

**-Jesus when tempted: never has a prolonged dialogue / cuts it off!
Sensual, Pleasure, Power, Separates us from God (We doubt then think that we don't need God).**

-1.Bodily needs / Physical Hunger - (Jesus answers quoting Scripture - He trust in His Father) / 2.satan quotes scripture back (Jesus knows & trust the Fr) / 3.satan offers power ((Jesus sees right through this (satan cannot give Him this.

Jesus sees right through the lies because He trusts His Father / & Never doubts His Father.

Perfection is found in "the emptying of ego - of self / To give our weaknesses to God / Perfection comes when we put aside our ego and trust God, not ourselves, and certainly not the things of the world.

**-Want to be perfect / To see through the lies in the desert / REPENT! Naked
-Trust the Fr / Empty thyself / To see the temptation and sin for what it truly is.
(Trust your faith and not the world). MY SHIFT!**

**The antidote to temptation: Fidelity to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.
Eve believed the serpent / Jesus believes in His Father (origin of all things).
-We need to trust the church and her teaching not the world.**

-The world is saying that humanity is changing: thus we need to update church teachings to reflect these changes (essentially: no sin or cross) / No, Our humanity is unchanged since the fall / change occurs when Jesus says I have come to elevate, heal, and restore this broken humanity / I love you this much - To come to you where you are in your sin and brokenness, but I love so much as not to leave you there but to heal and bring pardon.

-When tempted: I'm not trusting the world or the prince of this world / My fidelity is trust in the Father, the Son, & the church He founded.

Names in the book of life: Enrollment of those to be Baptized.

St. Faustina: You have great and incomprehensible rights over My Heart, for you are a daughter of complete trust. You would not have been able to bear the magnitude of the love which I have for you if I had revealed it to you fully here on earth (*Diary*, 718).

And if I fall: immediately shall I turn to God in Repentance, who loves and comes to me right where I am at that moment. May His angels minister to me. Psalm 91:

Names in the book of life: Enrollment of those to be Baptized.

Notes:

“The love God has for us is what we most need to recognize in order to confidently offer Him our weakness.” Chris Padgett - I'm not ok, you're not ok. But it's ok.

-Adam: Temptations of self-will and self-love.

-NEVER ENTER INTO DIALOGUE

-Hunger, Power, Rebellion (Catechism).

-The Gospel shows how Jesus emphatically distinguished himself from the many self-proclaimed messiahs, false prophets, and political zealots so common in first-century Palestine.

Turning stones into loaves of bread would have not only satisfied his hunger, but been evidence of magical powers—a most attractive quality for anyone seeking worldly attention. And commanding God to keep him from harm if he threw himself from the temple parapet would have marked him as a powerful prophet or visionary able to control the will of God.

The third temptation was the most direct and blatant. If Jesus had given up everything for political power, he would have shown himself to be a political revolutionary intent only on earthly glory and temporal power.

Today I read about Lazarus: With Lazarus and at the Cross Jesus confronts death / He offers the perfect Sacrifice for each of us who trust in Him.

Ashes have become popular. We are wired for this longing of union / reunion / Deeper understanding of our origins & purpose.

Ash Wednesday connects us to mortality / We can also confront Death / Funeral should connect us to both loss BUT ALSO / To Life, Hope, Love, Healing, Eternity.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return: Death reminds us we need a Savior / We need God! Our lives have meaning / Not a cosmic Accident.

-To ask: what do I believe / where am I going? /

-Our God is a saving God; he, the Lord, holds the keys of death.

-St. Paul: Romans- Cross shows how much God loves us (Catherine).

-We offer this Mass to give Catherine to Jesus / May no torment touch her.

-We offer "Mass for the repose of the soul of X" because the Eucharist makes present Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, an offering of the Most Precious Gift that Jesus Christ, *true God and true man*, offered / THE Mass / His one great offering of Himself "for us and for our salvation."

-While on this journey we need assistance: until we enter heaven we are assisted by the prayers of others / We join Catherine right now to Jesus as He confronted death / This should fill us with much hope for a future that is eternal.

You are giving Catherine the greatest gift by offering this Mass for her.

Notes:

-John Paul II spoke of the "fundamental questions" that "have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart." The answers people give to these questions, he says, will "decide the direction they seek to give to their lives."

-Our culture fears mortality and goes to absurd lengths to keep that fear at bay. Our attempts to avoid death are the stuff of science fiction, such as uploading their consciousness to a computer.

We are ignoring / denying death (Celebration of life / Compost burial).

-How to live this life? / Family visit and the joy / Paul's joy.

-Live in the moment but know we are passing through (Bootcamp).

-Know thyself." These were the words written above the temple doors of the oracle at Delphi (Greece: 1400 bc) They are words that have remained a counsel of wisdom through the ages. They were the words with which Pope St. John Paul II began his great encyclical Fides et Ratio ("Faith and Reason").

**-GOD IS HOLDING YOU IN EXISTENCE RIGHT NOW / THIS CONVERSATION!
GOD LOVES YOU THIS MUCH / TO HOLD YOUR EVERY BREATH / HEARTBEAT.**

LENT IS ABOUT REPENTANCE: JOEL: RETURNING / RENEWING OUR FAITH

As for Almsgiving / Prayer / Fasting: They only have meaning when done from a heart in Love with Jesus / A heart immersed in a deep Faith.

As for this Faith...THE GIFT OF LIFE AND WORSHIP / CREATION

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that since the Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity have as their goal the end of life, and the Virtue of Perseverance (a derivative of Fortitude), allows us to hold on to these Theological Virtues. And “Perseverance” as a virtue cannot succeed with human effort alone. It also requires the help of God sustaining us until the end of life.”

This explanation of Perseverance reminds us not only that Faith is a gift that we did not deserve, but that remaining in God’s love is also an unmerited gift. We work out our salvation in fear and trembling in part because any day we are capable of turning away from God.

This “turning away” rarely occurs as a sudden act of rebellion; it typically happens slowly – we skip prayers, yield to small temptations, elevate something worldly over the “Things of Faith.” This negative momentum can gradually turn us away from God and put the emphasis on ourselves. Eventually the gift of Faith that God has given us becomes stale, brittle, insipid. **HAD WE CALLED UPON THE LORD DAILY, He would have answered.**

I believe the gift of Faith, which includes Fortitude/Perseverance, is the daily antidote against this slow selfish turning away from the things of God that sustain us, even during the difficult times. The antidote: We simply ask for it everyday.

A simple way to do this: As I start a Rosary: On one of the 1st 3 rosary beads for the 3 “Hail Mary Prayers (After the Creed, and Our Father Bead) ” I simply say “For an increase of the Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity,” and then I pray the Hail Mary for that particular Rosary Bead. If we ask for an increase in Faith (a gift from God); then certainly we can receive the gift of Fortitude/Perseverance (the fruit) of Faith.

This Lent may we receive a deepened Faith steeped in Fortitude/Perseverance that will sustain us to endure our earthly trials until we “One Day” enter into the fullness of our existence in the Embrace of Divine Love Itself - GOD!...As we enter the gates of Heaven; our final destination and home.

Vivat Jesus - Father Vic Gournas

“Being perfect as our Heavenly Father involves humility, trust and an openess.to give our weaknesses to God which opens us to renewed Faith, whose end is Happiness found in God and Heaven.

-(Matthew 5:17-37)

The Beatitudes are given by our Lord at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. The Gospel for the 6th Sunday records Jesus (Continuing the Sermon) discussing the law and how we are to live out this interior disposition of the Beatitudes.

I preached recently on the Beatitude: “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit” as an interior disposition of (humility and openess to be filled by God). This interior emptying out (see Philippians 2:7) leads to an exterior devotion and love of God. This interior disposition helps us to participate more fully in the exchange of the Divine Love and Life of God (From the Father, Through the Son, In the Holy Spirit).

This 6th Sunday Jesus says (Mt 5:17): “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.”

Pope Emeritus Benedict writes in Jesus of Nazareth: This fulfillment, demands a surplus, not a deficit, of righteousness.” In other words, Jesus did not come to do

away with a Law that was impossible to keep, but to provide the way and means for the Law to be radically fulfilled and lived (Carl Olson).

This Sunday Jesus is showing how this deeper interior disposition (Of Beatitude) can transform us to slowly conform to the law. He gives us the exterior pattern given by the law to bring freedom, and some rest, from the sin and vice that can consume us and harm our relationship with God and our neighbor.

Thank goodness the law (for those who believe, repent, and confess) leads not only to God's Mercy and Forgiveness, but to a freedom ultimately from those frustrating vices that consume and enslave. And for the deep seated sin and vice, a Grace that allows us to live in moderation, which again brings us closer to the love and mercy Jesus desires to give and share with us.

I am personally thankful for the law, because when I fall, the law leads me to desire God's Mercy, and to know how much more I desire and need Jesus at the center of my life.

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Notes:

Benedict notes in his book "Jesus of Nazareth", "...this statement never ceases to surprise us." In part, because we often hear or assume a simple, but incorrect, contrast: The Law is bad, but Jesus is good. This often comes about through a misunderstanding of Paul's writings about the Law. But neither Jesus nor Paul said the Law was bad, but that bad things happen when people try to make the Law into something it isn't.

Growing up as a fundamentalist Protestant, I recall hearing many times that Jesus had "done away" with the Law, having supposedly shown that it was no longer of any value or purpose. But that doesn't make sense at all of Jesus' strong statement: "Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place."

As promised at Mass here is a simple reflection on the first sentence of Sunday's Gospel:

-We read: "Jesus withdrew to Galilee" And elsewhere in scripture we read "Jesus withdrew because he knew they wanted to make Him a king."

A few things for deeper reflection:

1. This withdrawal from the people shows a Humility: Jesus empties Himself / Jesus desires detachment from worldly power, and concerns of the ego. It leads to a freedom to focus on the will of the Father and His whole Life's purpose to give it to the Father. What a model for us. The more we detach from material things and concerns, the more free we become.

2. This withdrawal shows us Jesus' ministry and life are directed to the sacrifice of the cross, so we are freed from sin and death / Jesus will allow Nothing to get in the way of this.

He loves you and me this much

But without Him / By Whom we were created / Nothing would have purpose or make sense.

When we follow this model of sacrifice: our lives have purpose and make sense.

-"Sacrifice is usually difficult and irksome. Only love can make it easy, and perfect love can make it a joy." The whole story of God's plan for marriage, like the whole story of His creation and redemption, ends with joy.

AND THE SUNDAY HOMILY NOTES:

1st Reading - Isaiah: (Background on Zebulun and Naphtali):

-The two cities are to the north of the Sea of Galilee (Zebulun and Naphtali). They were laid to waste by Syria and, then later, by the Assyrians during Isaiah's time / The people were mistreated and then led away into slavery.

-Capernaum is on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is now Jesus' home base / This area became a mixture of Gentiles and (1/3 Jews) - Those Jews not earlier taken away into slavery and captivity. There are hostilities between the ethnic groups but Jesus comes to restore, to unite, and bring light to a people in darkness.

-The Isaiah and Matthew connection: These people in darkness shall be brought into the light.” is One of the many 300+ Messianic Prophecies that Jesus fulfills.

The Sunday Mass Readings show Jesus beginning His Ministry / To bring Light, Order, Healing, and Restoration to these people, and through His Church, us today / Jesus calls the Apostles and then the Disciples / He calls Peter, Andrew, James and John / And today He calls you and me through His Church, the new Israel.

-The Church continues this healing ministry.

-Peter is given the keys thus; given the authority to Govern.

-(The apostles and their successors continue the work of Jesus).

2nd Reading - 1 Corinthians Governing:

Listening to the Catechism in a Year: from the very beginning of the podcasts / We See how God, through His teachings (Oral and Written Traditions), wants to bring order and unity to His Body / His Church / To our lives / He wants to put us back together again. When you hear people speaking for the church, but what they say doesn't conform to Catholic teaching found in our 2000 years of oral and written tradition, then don't follow them. Follow Jesus and His teachings given through the unity of His Church as found in the Catechism.

Thursday's Mass Gospel:

-“He had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him.”

JESUS WAS THAT POPULAR / SOMETHING AMAZING WAS DRAWING THE PEOPLE TO HIM / So much so, at times, Jesus withdrew from them (see above).

Many of us have experienced all types of healing / Where we have lived in darkness but now we are experiencing the light / And acknowledging our sins and Repentance have led many of us to more Freedom from our vices.

-Converts and Adult Reverts (From Darkness to Light / From futility to Hope).

-Converts to the faith bring (fire and zeal) / But Cradle Catholics (Teach us converts the ancient prayers, saints, and the many Devotions and Traditions of our deep and rich faith.

In closing:

Imagine if Jesus physically walked in right now into our parish.

-We forget He is with us (Through the Sacraments and in the hands of the priests).

Stay close to the Sacraments / Mass, Eucharist, Confession: Jesus wants to one day make us whole / to Heal and put us back together again.

-People seek meaning/ But when we seek happiness and fulfillment through material things and human ideologies / Without Jesus / They, by themselves, will leave us restless.

We were created for God / Until we seek meaning by Him who created us for Him / Seek the one who gives us meaning / The One who fulfills our existence ...

We will remain unfulfilled and restless

St. Augustine: "The soul is restless until it rest in God."

For those who can be hard on themselves / Think they are hypocrites:

First: All of us fall / We all sin / We are all a work in progress / Jesus knows this so He gave us the Sacraments.

I am paraphrasing a quote I saw: "We walk into the Confessional with the sins of Adam, and we walk out (as Jesus) cleansed through the power of Jesus."

Jesus mentions Repentance: This is another good quote:

"Repentance stems from a firm hope that we are not defined by our failures. "God willingly forgets that we have done wrong; God is ready to count our repentance as innocence. There is a reality present before us that is greater than our sinfulness. This reality, this kingdom, is Jesus himself: God with us. "We enter into heaven to the extent that we go to Jesus Christ and enter into him" (Pope Benedict XVI).

As an aside: From an article I read:

Notes: If you doubt that miracles of physical healing still take place in the life of the Church, I invite you to read Craig Keener's book *Miracles*. The Bible knows that sin has done tremendous damage to us, and anyone involved in pastoral ministry knows what this looks like: broken minds, divided hearts, addicted passions.

Blessing in the not "Ordinary Time" of Jesus' ministry for the Salvation of our souls. Father Vic Gournas