

Lent Meditation 2



Is.58,1-12

In these verses we are being made aware that a relationship exists, a connection or correspondence, between a practice of using another for one's own end and a faith which does the same with regard to God. As the will acts towards the other person, so it acts in the matter of faith, towards God. As I must have my own way here, so I must have my own way there. As my will is disposed in one case, so in the other.

And God's Word lays bare the toxicity of such religion (manifest here in the exercise of fasting) – a religion (a faith!) at the heart of which is the will and desire to have God at one's disposal, to make faith count by way of serving one's own needs and ends: What, after all, is God good for, and faith, if not for me to have the way I will, for us to have the way we will?

In reasoning with his people God points out that a faith which is ruled by the will to have him at one's disposal (carrying on in religions and non-religious ways and habits of the heart and mind) is soil not for the growth of good but of evil. What ought to result in starving evil of oxygen and cutting off its blood supply, becomes a means of its prevailing.

Let us reflect on this and search ourselves. In the light of God's Word the sins of the heart are uncovered. Let them be for confessing, not for keeping. Faith proper is not mastery over God, but is service of the true and living God (1Thess.1,9), is expressing itself through love (Gal.5,6), is the freedom to put oneself at the disposal of the other in love and truth.

Let us reflect on Scripture's proclamation that Christ is the way, that he suffered for our freedom, and that true fasting has the form which appears in Christ's word Mt.25,34-40:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you have me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will

answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."