

REFLECTIONS FOR FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isaiah 58:1-9 Matthew 9:14-15

Fasting is the common theme in today's readings.

Fasting has always been associated with Lent. However, when we hear the word 'fast' we automatically think of fasting from food. But there is another kind of fasting – fasting from anything that keep us from God.

At the time Isaiah was writing, fasting in the ordinary sense was taken seriously by God's people. Fasting is meant to be an outward sign of something that is happening inside a person.

Unfortunately, their fasting was just an outward show of religiosity. In reality, their hearts were turned away from God.

Even so, they complained that God took no notice of their fasting. Isaiah told them why God took no notice of their fasting. It was because even as they fasted, they went on oppressing their workers and exploiting the poor.

That kind of fasting was totally ineffective from a spiritual point of view.

Then he went on to tell them the kind of fasting that was pleasing to God. He told them to fast from any form of wrongdoing against their neighbour. For instance, they should stop exploiting their workers and oppressing the poor.

Fasting is always in the service of our love of the Lord and our love of others. If fasting is a saying 'no' to something, it is always with a view to our making a more generous 'yes' to the Lord and his people.

True repentance also involves doing good – living what is at the heart of religion: love, compassion, and justice.

Let us strive to act with integrity, treat people fairly, share with the needy.

May the Lord touch our hearts with your grace, so that we may rid ourselves of sin and devote ourselves to the works of love.

Fr. Patrick