Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast” (Matt 9:15).

Is 58:1-9a; *Mt 9:14-15*

The question of fasting in the Lectionary readings is raised because of Lent. When the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus why they and the Pharisees were

observing the ordinary fast but his own disciples were not, he replied with the image of a wedding feast. During weddings, which often lasted many days, people were exempt from the obligation to fast.

Jesus' message was that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The great covenant of love was being fulfilled. It was a time of joy, like that of a wedding, a sign of the union of God with his people. The bridegroom was here, so his disciples were not fasting.

For Matthew, the heart of the image was that Jesus himself was the bridegroom whose presence had changed the time of longing and expectation represented by the fast. He was proclaiming the fulfillment of the nuptial covenant between God and Israel. His presence invited everyone to feast, not fast. The "Good News" was cause for joy and celebration.

The image, of course, also anticipated the time when the bridegroom would be taken away. Jesus' death on the cross and return to the Father began a period of intense longing in the early church. The Book of Revelation ends with the prayer, "Maranatha," or "Come, Lord Jesus," which expressed the expectation of Christians for the second coming. This prayer characterizes the celebration of Easter. Our belief in the resurrection of Jesus and his continued presence among us is a faith still in progress, a reality we believe and experience in the Spirit, but still await.

So, the Eucharist is both fast and feast, longing and celebration. The simplicity of our Communion, a small wafer of bread and a sip of wine, is the "pledge of future glory" that St. Thomas Aquinas described as we await the full banquet in the Kingdom. For now we still live hidden lives in Christ, even as we grow to maturity in his likeness as members of his body. But we have tasted the glory to come, and it fills us with hope and joy.

Lent repeats the ancient pilgrimage in the desert that defines God's Pilgrim People. As a church, we are not there yet, but always going forward, nourished by the manna that is Christ, our Daily Bread, both fast and feast.