

Isaiah 58; 1-9

Matthew 9: 14-15

“Is this not the sort of fast that pleases me.....To break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke, to share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor, to clothe the man you see to be naked and not turn from your own kin.” Thus speaks Isaiah to the people who ‘ask for laws that are just and long for the Lord to draw near: who ask why they should fast and others never see it. Do penance if it is never taken notice of?’

Which type of fast is the one that bears fruit? The one centred on me and lauded before others? Or the one that I do with humility and integrity to serve those in need? These are the questions answered by Isaiah in the Reading and by Jesus in the Gospel passage.

Jesus suggests that his disciples will fast later, when they have gained from being in the presence of the bridegroom (Jesus). Later they will indeed fast, in serving the needs of others as their master did before them. Service to which we are also called. Our fasting is in all that contributes to those ends.