

4 July 2026 - Saturday of the 13th ordinary week (even-numbered year)

[Am 9:11-15; Matthew 9:14-17](#)

Homily

The first chapters of Matthew's Gospel describe the beginnings of Jesus' missionary activity. Very early on, the young rabbi and his disciples began to amaze everyone. Of course, people began to realise that Jesus had come to bring something new. His miracles, his teaching, the power he claimed to have to forgive sins - all these things were causing a stir throughout Galilee. Everyone wanted to see and hear him.

At the same time, the behaviour of Jesus and his disciples was intriguing. It was not the behaviour we would expect from men of God, from "perfect" men. Not only did Jesus choose a tax collector from among his disciples (cf. yesterday's Gospel), but the tax collector even invited him and his tax collector friends to his home. In fact, Jesus easily fellowshiped with sinners. His disciples ate without the ritual washing of hands, and they did not observe fasts as the disciples of John the Baptist did. It is always disturbing to see people who present themselves as witnesses of God behaving differently from what is expected of such witnesses.

So Jesus is asked: "*Why don't your disciples fast, like John's disciples and those of the Pharisees?*" -- To understand Jesus' answer, we need to remember that fasting in the Old Testament was linked to the expectation of the Messiah. It expressed dissatisfaction with the present time and impatience for the coming of the Saviour. The meaning of Jesus' response is very clear: the Messiah has arrived. This type of fast no longer makes sense. It's the time for festive clothes, the time for new wine.

The temptation of the disciple is to want to accept the challenge of the new while keeping the security of the past. Such an attitude, says Jesus, is like trying to sew a new piece onto an old garment, or putting new wine into old wineskins. It exposes us to contradictions and inner tears. Jesus invites his disciples to take a stand and to avoid such compromises.

Saint Paul had to deal with this problem. His life was marked by a moment of choice, a moment of rupture with his past. This choice and this break were necessary to avoid once and for all the inner tears that would result from a compromise between the demands of the Old Law and Christ's Law of Love.

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

Don't we face the same problem? We want to be faithful to God, but we don't want to get rid of all our idols. We want to practise justice, but we want to succeed in business. We want to be good monks and nuns whose lives are all about seeking prayer in solitude, but it's hard to give up the joy of meetings and distractions.

When, instead of choosing, we allow ourselves to be torn inwardly like the fabric on which a new piece of cloth has been sewn, we are forgetting part of this morning's Gospel -- the part where Jesus says: "*The Bridegroom will be taken away from them, so they will fast*". We are living in this period of history. From now on, the meaning of fasting is to show faithfulness and constancy in love, even though we are no longer filled with the presence of the bridegroom. Fasting is the joyful celebration of the presence of an absence, not the nostalgia of the absence of a presence.

Armand Veilleux