

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Feasting on God** Friday after Ash Wednesday March 7, 2014 8:15 AM Is 58:1-9a;  
**Mt 9:14-15** (Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs) (There were many different currents  
alive in what is called “Judaism.”)

**“Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?”**

What we see at the time of Jesus is that **there were many different currents alive in what is called “Judaism.”** Most of those currents are no longer identified with Judaism. What people today call Judaism is the **teaching of the rabbis, much of what is in the Talmud**, a very large nineteen volume work. But there were other movements, other currents, in Judaism: **Messianism**, for example; **apocalypticism**, which means a focus on end-times, on the end of the world, on the breaking in of something totally new and different. There was **temple mysticism**. That focused on God’s mystical presence, at least in certain persons, such as Isaiah for example. And then there is the whole current of **prophecy**, which we read from in the first reading. Not all of this is centered on the Torah. It receives life from other sources and it has other kinds of expressions.

And this was noted very early on by the disciples of John the Baptist, because although he had a very prophetic emphasis, he also was very traditional in many ways. So they come to Jesus and they say how come you are not practicing the Torah? He says, well, true. **To Jesus many practices were not important in themselves, fasting being one of them.**

But then there is this other issue of **the bridegroom**. What is that all about? **That’s temple mysticism**. That has to do with the sense that God is in love with his people and is trying to come together with them, and **Jesus embodies that, that sense of intimate love and relationship to God**. Jesus says in this situation how can you be talking about fasting, because what God wants is feasting, not feasting on food, mind you, **feasting on God**. All this of course is **symbolized by** the feeding of the five thousand, the feeding of the four

thousand, **the various times when Jesus feed the multitudes.** This is symbolizing this abundance that God wants, this feasting on God that God desires, and of course **it is also symbolized in the Eucharist.**

**So it's a matter of emphasis. Is fasting good? Well, it can be very good.** It can be a discipline that helps us control ourselves better. It can be an aid to self-control, all very good, **but not the goal**—not the goal of life. That's the point here. Then Jesus mentions: he said, **“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”** As a matter of discipline? No, **because they will be so sad and bereft and in pain that they won't feel like eating.**