



*Deep Faith. Courageous Spirit. Action for Justice.*

## **Homily for Monday, January 19, 2026**

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Previous stories in Mark's gospel show Jesus as the healer of all the needy who come to him from everywhere. His religious practices don't follow tradition. This causes tension, resistance and anger among his own religious leaders who begin to scrutinize him more closely.

They are blind and do not see that Jesus is offering something radically new. They remain locked in their old perspective of how things should be. To them, Jesus is a rule breaker, and disrespects understood religious boundaries, like fasting.

Traditionally, loyalty to God was expressed through strict observance of laws and external practices. Fasting was seen as a sign of deeper commitment to the service of God and preparation for God's coming.

In continuity with the tradition, Jesus is questioned about his disciples not fasting. The disciples of the pharisees and of John fast, why don't yours? the practices of disciples reflect those of their teacher.

Jesus' responds with wedding imagery which in the Hebrew Scripture was often referred to as God's presence with the people. He says, you're still thinking from the old perspective. What I am telling you is the bridegroom you await is already here, I am he. A change of spirit and attitude is called for.

The kingdom of God is among you. God's reign is being lived out in Me, so why would my disciples fast? It's a time for joy and celebration. When the bridegroom is taken away then fasting will be appropriate.

The new reality Jesus initiates cannot be confined to the limits of the old religion. The two parables at the end of today's gospel illustrate the contrast between the new spirit and the old. The new is not like a piece of new cloth grafted onto an old fraying garment or new wine poured into old wineskins. Something very different and radical is abroad.

This new reality reorients our attitudes and behaviors to those expressed in the Sermon on the Mount and the beatitudes. Jesus is calling for a new way of thinking and seeing. He has brought a fundamental shift in the ways we are to relate to God and to others.

Our relationships are to be based on love that lets go of our own lives to always seek the well-being of the other. Jesus' life shows us the extent and depth of those relationships of love. His disciples are to have the same mind.



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Martin Luther King Jr and the activists of the civil rights movement understood Jesus' message. They saw with new eyes that things would change, and freedom would only come if they stood up together and did something new.

To foster the well-being of the black community, and ultimately that of their oppressors, they became the beloved community that Jesus proclaimed. They understood that we are all tied together and that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Affirming and respecting the dignity of each person, they engaged in non-violent protests to secure justice and widen the circle of who belonged.

They acted to see whether they would live to see what they fought to attain. So, must we.

To paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr., who wrote, above all, we must be reminded anew that God is at work in this universe; not outside the world, looking on with a cold indifference. As we struggle to defeat the forces of evil, the God of the universe struggles with us. Evil dies...not merely because of our endless struggle against it, but because of God's power to defeat it.

May we, like all those who have gone before us, see with new eyes that the bridegroom is with us. May we have the moral courage to stand for the truth and love one another into that beloved community-the kingdom of God. What we are about is God's work, not our own, and we are not alone.