

A small step back (about abstinence)

Today Lent (quadregesima) started. We follow Jesus on his martyrdom to Jerusalem. At the same time we look forward to the celebration of his resurrection.

It is a good habit, followed by many Christians, to abstain in some way or another during this time. Fasting is not just eating less. It can also be less consuming in general: less abundance, less alcohol, less television. It is also a good habit to take a small step back; lessening in order to make room for the essential. That can be a token of atonement, repentance and contemplation, but also of solidarity.

This year we do this in a time that here is worldwide a lot of discussion about economical crisis. Economies shrink, jobs get lost. Governments are trying to take appropriate measures in order to get the economy back on track; we need to reinvest, we need to sell and buy; the consumer has to get back his confidence again and consume.

We all understand that. We are children of our prosperity. And if your job is on the line, you hope for employment. And yet we see that we ruin a lot with our economic system. As western people we show the inclination of the bad tenants, who sidetracked the owner of the vineyard and his representative. Ultimately it is not good to stay in such a vineyard, in spite of the large production.

If we abstain, if we make room for a while, we do that in order to regain sight on God. We give something up in order to make ourselves spiritually free – from what binds us, from what distracts us. And thus we want to make room for God. We want to live as the disciples of Jesus. He led us on the way of generosity. He taught us to step outside our familiar frame works and look for more. 'First look for the Kingdom of God'.

But how can we express that in our life?

Gods Kingdom is rectangular on the destructive influence of consumerism and self-enrichment. It is rectangular on a life that evolves around bread and games, around just consuming and just pleasure. Human is meant for more. That may express itself in everyday life.

Would we be able to find means for that?

Would we, as a Church, as Christians, be able to develop a challenging lifestyle for that?

Make room for more. For the essential!

Dr. Arjan Plaisier, February 25, 2009
