

## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

**(Mt. 6:16-21)**

*[Poem Vol.2, pp.153, 157-8; Gospel Vol.3, pp.109, 114-5]*

**(Jesus says:)** 'What I said with regard to prayers, I say with regard to fasting. When you fast, do not look sad, as hypocrites do, who on purpose disfigure their faces that the world may know and believe that they are fasting, even if it is not true. They also have received their reward with the praise of the world, and will not receive another one. Instead, when you fast, look happy, wash your faces thoroughly so that they may look fresh and smooth, put oil on your heads and scents on your hair and smile like one who has been well fed. Oh! Truly there is no food that nourishes as much as love does! And who fasts with a loving spirit, feeds on love! I solemnly tell you that even if the world calls you "vain" and "publicans", the Father will see your heroic secret and will give you a double reward. One for your fasting and the other for the sacrifice of not being praised for it.

The first thing I will speak to you of is the right use of riches, changed into as many treasures in Heaven by the good will of the faithful servant. The treasures of the earth do not last. But the treasures of Heaven are eternal. Are you fond of what is yours? Are you sorry to die because you will no longer be able to look after your property and you will have to leave it? In that case transfer them to Heaven. You may say: "What is of the earth will not enter Heaven and You have taught us that money is the filthiest thing on earth. How can we transpose them to Heaven?" No. You cannot take money, material as it is, into the Kingdom where everything is spiritual. But you can take the fruit of money.'

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**(Jesus says:)** 'Do not accumulate your treasures on the earth, living for them, being cruel for them, cursed by your neighbour and by God on account of them. It is not worth it. They are never safe in this world. Thieves can always rob you. Fire can always destroy your houses. Diseases of plants and animals can exterminate herds and orchards. How many things undermine your property! Whether it is real estate and unassailable, such as houses and gold; whether its nature is liable to be damaged, such as all living things, vegetables and animals, or precious cloths, they can be ruined. Thunderbolts, fire and floods can destroy houses; thieves, blight, dry weather, rodents and insects can damage fields; catching diseases, fever, crippling, murrain can destroy cattle; moths and mice can ruin valuable pieces of cloth and precious pieces of furniture; oxidization can corrode vases, chandeliers and artistic gates; everything is subject to destruction.

But if you turn earthly welfare into supernatural good, then it becomes free from all damage by time, men and calamities. Store up your treasure in Heaven, where thieves cannot break in, and where no calamities occur. Work with merciful love for all the miseries of the earth. You may caress your money and kiss it if you wish so, you may rejoice at the plentiful crops, at the vineyards laden with grapes, at the countless number of olives which bend the branches of the olive-trees, and at your prolific sheep with turgid udders. You may rejoice at all that, but not in a sterile or human way. Rejoice with love and admiration, with supernatural delight and foresight.'