



Fasting in the Slums

“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1).

I want to tell you a fictional story about a girl named Amy. Amy lives in a slum filled with poverty, drugs, prostitution, and daily violence. She has no hope of ever getting out. She knows she will live there all her life and be used and abused by it. She knows it will kill her, inside and out. One day, a prince from another country tours the slum. To her infinite surprise, the prince tells her that he came there for her, he loves her, and wants to marry her. He tells her they will be married and she will leave the slum forever with him. Though she is in rags now, he will cloth her with his family’s royal garments. Amy will enter the Palace as royalty, and they will live together on the most beautiful estate in the kingdom. First, however, he must be crowned king, prepare an estate, and plan the wedding. It may be six months or years before they can be married.

When the prince leaves, where do you think the girl’s mind is set? Does she soon forget the promise he made? Does she spend her time learning the ways of the slum and experiencing what it offers, OR are her thoughts about the life she will have when he returns for her and takes her away? Yes, she must live in the slum for a while, but she is LIVING for the day she will be taken out of the slum by her prince. She is dead to its ways and has no interest in them.

When the drug peddlers down the street slander her prince and say he will never rule them, she stands up for him and defends him. When the prostitutes make fun of her for waiting for him, and they tell her he couldn’t possi-

bly love her, she holds onto his promise to her. Just as she is dead to the life they are living, she sees those around her as dead to the kind of life she will be living. They cannot enter it with her, and they will die in the slum that they love so much.

Just like Amy’s prince, Jesus told us, *“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:1-3). Jesus said of Himself that *“when the bridegroom [Christ] is taken away,”* the Church *“will fast in those days”* (Luke 5:35). We fast from the joys and pleasures the world wants us to participate in because we do not hunger for them. We seek the things above where Jesus is. We are dead to the world’s splendor because we set our minds *“on the things above, not on the things that are on earth”* (Colossians 3:2) and *“the members of [our] earthly body [are] dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry”* (Colossians 3:5), for *“you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (Colossians 3:3) and we wait until *“Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4). Just as Amy looked at the life she was living in the slum as a short time to be endured until she could leave it and begin her real life, so we too are to set our minds on the Life that is in Jesus and the promise of living with Him forever. We long to hear the angels cry, *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to [Jesus], for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready”* (Revelation 19:7). Amen.