

8th Sunday Ordinary Time A
February 25-26, 2017

Do Not Worry about Tomorrow

Readings: Isaiah 49: 14-15; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; Matthew 6:24-34

I imagine it was bound to happen sometime. Someone saw me a news report that featured the Cathedral in early January and said to me “You look younger in person than you did on TV.” “Thanks... I think.” A family member shared that one photo in the newspaper was not flattering, and when I pressed for a reason, the reply centered upon the lines that were all too visible in my face! Sorry I asked! It has been said that worriers may be identified by the lines that form on our foreheads. If so, I am in trouble!

Now that I wear reading glasses, I do indeed find myself massaging the skin in between the eyebrows, above the bridge of the nose after I have been wearing the glasses for some time. And yet, though I have worried about many things in my life...I have never worried about whether I have a line between my eyebrows.

Botox was introduced to the world in the late 1980s by ophthalmologists, who began using it to treat optic muscle disorders. Later, FDA approval was extended to use the injection to correct moderate to severe frown lines. Eventually it became a treatment for purely cosmetic reasons...people wanted to look younger. People spend hundreds of dollars to cover their wrinkles.

I have no idea if worrying causes such wrinkles, or if stress gives rise to grey hair. We see this happen to every U.S. president, almost without fail, but others attribute it more to genetics. Regardless, worrying is a fact of life that we must confront honestly and forthrightly. We would not worry if we did not care, so perhaps we begin with this acknowledgement. Part of the problem lies in the fact that worry is often consumed with things beyond our control.

We begin by acknowledging those things that cause us to worry and identify them. How many of these are beyond our control?

Whether it is the ever-present threat of Islamic terrorism or the growing secularization of society, these all contribute to many feeling increasingly helpless, largely because these issues are out of our control.

Many parents are concerned for their children, and what they will experience as they grow up in an obviously polarized nation. Yet, to a larger extent, there **is** something that you can do about this; though at some point, each person needs to interiorize his faith and engage the world. A powerful and positive witness today will have an impact upon the good of your children for the future.

The prophet Isaiah compares the actions of the Lord to that of a loving mother and her child. The loving mother would never forsake her child; the Lord God will never forget His own. When we worry excessively, in effect we are questioning the place of God's Providence in our lives. It is precisely this image that so many find comforting. No matter how low we may feel we are sinking, God's hand is underneath us, ready to lift us up.

Still, we may indeed, even if unintentionally, doubt His presence in the midst of trial. "Only in God is my soul at rest." The comforting words of the Psalmist confirm that God is the rock of our salvation; He is the source of all of our strength.

Periods of brilliant light may seem altogether too few and far between; and yet, our encounter with God's grace in our souls takes some time to mature, and we may for a time only see a glimmer of the power and awe that belongs to Him. Our natural default position is to trust in ourselves, and therein lays a spiritually fatal mistake.

No, we are not alone. In fact, we are in good company.

St. Paul, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians wrote about all that he endured for the sake of the Gospel: “in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fastings, through cold and exposure. And apart from these things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches.” (2 Cor. 11:27-28)

Pope John XXIII was known to pray at the end of a long day, with so many things on his mind and in his heart:

“It's your Church, Lord. I'm going to bed.”

We may not be able to stop all worrying, but with God's grace, we can keep it in check. If you toss and turn in bed, keep a Rosary under the pillow, within easy reach. It is a profitable way to re-direct your worrying. Ask God to calm your soul, and trust that He is there.