

Proper 3
May 25, 2008

Isn't it nice to see green again? After three months of Lenten purple, Holy Week red and Easter white, three months of other seasons, it feels good to be back in ordinary time. At least it does to me, although, since this is a particularly long Pentecost season, I'll probably be chomping at the bit when Advent blue rolls around.

Ordinary time. For us that means warmer weather, gardening, vacation time, a hopefully less busy time--a time to enjoy Mother Nature's gifts of sun and rain. A time to let worries go and simply enjoy life. How appropriate then, that we hear that well-known passage about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field as the gospel lesson on this first day of returning to ordinary time.

"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." I read somewhere that most birds have to eat twelve times their weight every day in order to live. That's a lot of birdseed, berries or insects and if you are a bird watcher, you know that birds work hard for their meals. They don't rest much during daylight hours. But do they worry about it? Not that anyone has discovered. It's just part of their daily routine. Admittedly, they don't have the capacity to look ahead which is what causes humans to plan for the future.

But too much planning for the future is certainly the root of worry about the future and that is what Jesus is telling us. Sensible planning for the future is necessary, of course, but worrying about the future is futile and displays a definite lack of trust in God's providence.

Then Jesus goes on to say, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon

in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you?" The flowers mentioned in this lesson are the wild poppies and anemones which bloom for only a day and when dried were used to heat baking ovens. Seeing them covering hillsides would be a beautiful sight, I'm sure. And Jesus, by comparing them with the glitz of Solomon's oriental grandeur, is creating a vivid picture in the minds of his listeners.

Worry. Something all of us do on occasion and some of us do with great frequency, and I suspect, some even do with enjoyment. Yet Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms that worry is something a good Christian shouldn't indulge in. Worry is indicative of a heathen who doesn't know what God is like, someone who doesn't know and understand that God is love. So in order to overcome worry we must always keep God foremost in our thinking and living, and essentially live life one day at a time.

How many times have we said or heard that statement about living life one day at a time? And how often have we totally disregarded that advice? What is it about human beings that makes us forget that and go off on our various tangents so that we find ourselves worrying about things over which we have absolutely no control. It's truly astonishing what people find to worry about. Worry can't affect the past because the past is over and done with. Worry can't affect the future because what will happen will happen, and in any case, it's usually less awful than what we feared. Worry can have an adverse affect on one's health and well being. Worry is often at the root of headaches, ulcers and heart attacks. Worry can make life miserable for everyone, including the worrier. Worry is a terrible waste of valuable time and energy. Worry cannot solve a thing.

So why do we engage in worrying, tossing and turning as we lie

awake at night or fretting about stuff during the day? Because we forget that we have promised to turn to God to see us through whatever life holds for us. We have promised in our baptismal vows to put our whole trust in God's grace and love. But it's very easy to forget that when something troubling looms up in front of us. We think that we are the only one who can take care of whatever that trouble may be. Well, yes, sure we do have a certain responsibility to respond in a reasonable manner. But, we don't have to do it alone. God is there to ease the burden and help us over the rough spots. We are not left out on a limb to fend for ourselves.

What a wonderful gift! What more could we possibly ask for and yet we go on in our usual stubborn ways attempting to manage life all on our own. What is it about human nature that makes us persist in sounding like that old commercial, saying, "Mother, I'd rather do it myself!"?

Well, there's that old demon hubris, of course. We're just too proud to think that we can't go it alone. But I'd like to think that it's more forgetfulness. We simply forget that we can lean on God. That God is always available. That things really do feel better, work better when God is part of the equation. That is not to say that we won't ever have bad times or difficult situations, but when God is present with us at those times, we can endure.

There is an anthem which the choir here has sung . The words are words from Isaiah, "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusts in thee." In modern English that translates as, "Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace--in peace because they trust in you." That's the answer. That's all it is. Trust. Trust in God's providence and love. Trust that God is with us all the time, even when we think he isn't. Maybe we need to renew our baptismal promises much more regularly than we ordinarily do so that those promises become part

and parcel of our lives .

Jesus isn't advocating a shiftless, reckless thoughtless attitude toward life. However he is forbidding an anxious, worried fear which takes all the joy out of life. God created us and gave us life. God sent Jesus to us to show us how to live and how to rely on God. God gave us the Holy Spirit to be with us always.

There is an old rabbinic saying, " He who has a loaf in his basket, and who says, 'What will I eat tomorrow?', is a man of little faith. Let us pray that our lives will reflect the deepness of our faith as we discard our senseless worries for the serenity of trust in our Creator. AMEN