

GOSPEL

MATTHEW 6:25-34

Jesus said to his disciples: I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and what you are to wear. Surely life is more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are?

Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your span of life?

And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin: yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you have so little faith?

So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What are we to wear?" It is the gentiles who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

**A REFLECTION BY
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So much of our lives, especially in our modern Western society marked by extremes of both affluence and poverty, is directed by the questions: What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed? Most of us spend our todays worrying about and organising our tomorrows, and most of our tomorrows trying to sort out the mess because things did not turn out the way we had planned yesterday! Of course, we have a responsibility to act creatively and caringly in the world which God the creator gives into our hands. But it is ultimately God who is the Master of our tomorrow.

Profound truths can be expressed in simple proverbs because they arise from a genuine experience of the most important things in life. Today's Gospel begins with one of those proverbs which may well have been in use at the time of Jesus. Arising out of his own experience of the human situation, Jesus has recourse to a proverb: "No one can be the slave of two masters' (Mt 6:24). No matter what one's religious persuasions might be, this affirmation is true. One's heart and service can only be given to one Master. In any situation of divided loyalties the human heart is so made that one will suffer, as the other is pursued.

Having made this more general point, Jesus teaches what he means through a series of two very beautiful images: the birds in the sky, the flowers growing in the fields. Birds 'do not sow or reap', but God feeds them. Flowers, more beautifully arrayed than 'Solomon in all his regalia' neither work nor spin but are clothed by God.

The undeniable beauty of the birds of the air and the flowers of the fields flows from their total dependence upon God. Jesus' sensitivity to the beautiful things of this world was very much a part of his life-style, but he did not stop at a simple admiration of the world. He was moved by them, but he looked beyond and through them, to see the creative and caring presence of God, whom he called Father, and whom he taught us to call Father (see also Mt 6:9-13). Jesus believed passionately that this is where human beings will find beauty and peace.

This is an important principle for the Christian life. There comes a time in everybody's story when there are no more tomorrows. It is a strange thing that the every day encounters which we have with the reality of death, and even the dramatic experience of the death of our loved ones, seldom teaches us that we cannot ultimately determine our future. Yet, as Christians, we confess that at the moment of death we fall into the merciful and loving hands of our God. Then we will know that he is the Master of our tomorrows.

But why wait for death to learn this lesson? In the midst of our many and necessary concerns we must develop a trust in that good God who is the ultimate end of all our history. God is the great and good creator of our Bible and Christian tradition; God is the Master of our tomorrows. Our tomorrows will be much better left in his hands than anything we can arrange. Tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Reflection Questions

- What are your great worries in life?
- What does it look like to you to "cast your cares on the Lord" (1 Peter 5:7)?
- If you didn't worry about tomorrow, how would your life change?

PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.