

## **Synopsis of OT VIII [A] Sunday (Feb 26) Homily on Mt 6:24-34**

Introduction: Today's readings give us an invitation to avoid unnecessary worries by putting our trust in the love and providential care of a loving and merciful God, and by living each day's life as it comes, doing His will and realizing His presence within us, within others and in all events of our lives.

Scripture lessons: Today's first reading is one of the most touching expressions of God's love in the Bible. Through the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord God asks the rhetorical question: "Can a mother forget her infant?" and gives His solemn pledge "I will never forget you!" The Lord God reminds Israel that even the best of human love is only a shadow of God's eternal, life-giving love for His people. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 62) also invites us to hope and rest in the strength and providence of a loving God. In the second reading, St. Paul instructs the Corinthians that instead of worrying about who baptized them and judging him or other preachers, they are to bear witness to Christ and his Gospel by their lives. In the first part of today's Gospel, Jesus emphasizes the impossibility of serving two opposed masters, namely God and riches. Man's ultimate goal and Master is God and not material possessions. Material possessions help us reach our ultimate goal, God, only when we share them with the needy. Hence, Jesus calls us to a detachment from material goods and a life of simplicity and dependence on God. Then Jesus exhorts his disciples to avoid unnecessary worries. Worry is a pagan or an irreligious attitude of those who do not believe in a loving and providing God. In nature, other creatures, like birds, work hard for their daily food, but they don't worry about tomorrows. Worry is useless because we cannot increase even an inch of height by days of worrying. Worry is also injurious to the health causing physical and mental problems and illnesses.

Life messages:

1) We need to avoid worry: a) By trusting in the providing care of a loving God. b) By acquiring the art of living one day at a time in God's presence. c) By seeking God's kingdom and doing His will every day, living a righteous life and serving others as best as we can.

2) We need to live one day at a time: Here are the three simple steps. First, we start the day with God by offering Him the day's work for His glory, thus transforming all our work into prayers. Then we ask for a 24-hour full-activation of the Holy Spirit, so that we may do good for others and avoid evil. In the second step, we live realizing God's presence in every one we meet and renewing our awareness of God's presence by saying some small prayers. Taking the third step, we end each day with God. Before we go to sleep, we say, "Thank you, Lord, for walking through this day with me. I have wounded my soul today by my sins. Please

pardon me. With your grace, I shall be more faithful tomorrow. Good night, Lord. Into your hands, I give my soul and my sleep."

O. T. VIII (A) (Feb 26): Is 49:14-15; I Cor 4:1-5; Mt 6:24-34 (L-17)

Anecdotes: 1) Worries and anxiety: In a recent survey reported in Reuters via MSNBC, 90% of the respondents said that they were worried about how well prepared they were for retirement. Between 20 and 30 percent of all Americans will live today under significant stress. Thirteen million will worry intensely for at least 90 minutes. It may be about their marriages, children, jobs, mortgages, health, grades, friends or a host of other issues. Whatever the source, worry is an emotion with which all of us are familiar and which 27 percent of us experience virtually on a daily basis. (Statistics taken from American Demographics and MD Magazine, p 28). But a University of Michigan study determined that 60% of our worries are unwarranted; 20% have already become past activities and are completely out of our control, and 10% are so petty that they don't make any difference at all. Of the remaining 10% only 4% to 5% are real and justifiable, and we can't do anything about half of those. So only 2% of our worries are real.

2) "If this happens, what will they think?" Thomas Borkovec, a professor of Psychology at Penn State University, is (like many of us), an expert in the field of worry. The key difference is that Dr. Borkovec makes his living by diagnosing what other folks are worried about. He has determined that 15 percent of us are "chronic worriers" (i.e., to some extent we worry virtually all the time). He has also determined that the single most common source of worry is not the fear of war, financial disaster, holes in the ozone layer, AIDS, cancer, loss of a job, divorce or any of those other topics that one might place atop a traditional worry list. Instead, Dr. Borkovec claims that the single most frequent source of worry is other people's opinions of our lives. "If this happens, what will they think? What will people say? Will I be laughed at? Will I be excluded?"

3) "One Day At A Time." <https://youtu.be/fzU5jdbKOUk> Several years ago a country gospel singer named Christy Lane scored an international hit with a record titled "One Day At A Time." "One day at a time--this is enough. Do not look back and grieve over the past for it is gone; and do not be troubled about the future, for it has not yet come. Live in the present, and make it so beautiful it will be worth remembering." The record's popularity probably had little to do with the tune, which was ordinary at best. Nor could you explain its appeal by referring to Ms. Lane's voice. She has a nice voice, but were it the reason for the success of her song then each of her recordings would have gone gold. The bottom line is this: it

was the words of the song that appealed to millions the world around, the words which deep down we all know are true and wish we had the Faith to live up to. The best we can reasonably do in this world is to live one day at a time and leave the rest up to God. Too often, too many of us become trapped in the past or seduced by the future, to the point that we miss out on the present -- which is actually all any of us ever has.

4) "I thank God I never had a bad day." One day the German mystic Johann Tauler met a beggar. "God give you a good day, my friend," he said. The beggar answered, "I thank God I never had a bad one." Then Tauler said, "God give you a happy life, my friend." "I thank God," said the beggar, "I am never unhappy." Tauler then said in amazement, "What do you mean?" "Well," said the beggar, "when it is fine, I thank God. When it rains, I thank God. When I have plenty I thank God. When I am hungry I thank God. And since God's will is my will, and whatever pleases Him pleases me, why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?" Tauler looked at the man in astonishment, "Who are you?" he asked. "I am a king," said the beggar. "Where, then, is your kingdom?" asked Tauler. The beggar replied quietly, "In my heart." [Quoted in Michael Green, *Matthew* (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), p. 86]

Introduction: Today's readings give us an invitation to avoid unnecessary worries by putting our trust in the love and providence of a merciful God, and then living each day's life as it comes, doing His will and realizing His presence within us and others.

First reading: Today's first reading, taken from the prophet Isaiah, begins with the Lord God's rhetorical question "Can a mother forget her infant?" and His solemn pledge, "Even should she forget, I will never forget you!" This is one of the most touching expressions of God's love in the Bible. Through the prophet, God assures Israel of His unfailing love when the people of Israel cry out in despair, believing that they have been forgotten by God. The Prophet Hosea's message from the Lord God also speaks about a loving God Who holds Israel to his cheek and teaches Ephraim to walk (Hosea 11:3-4). Through Isaiah, the Lord God reminds Israel that even the best of human love is only a shadow of God's eternal, life-giving love for His people. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 62) also invites us to hope and rest in the strength and providence of a loving God.

Second reading: Responding to criticisms by at least some of the Corinthians, Paul explicitly defends himself and reasserts his Apostolic authority. As God's "servant" he is charged with important administrative responsibility by the

authority of God. He also warns the Corinthians not to worry about who brought them to the Christian faith and not to judge him or other preachers. It is only God who has the right to judge.

Exegesis: This section of the Sermon on the Mount deals with the disciples' attitude toward material possessions. Impossibility of serving two opposed masters: Our "master" is whatever governs our thought-life, shapes our ideals, and controls the desires of our heart and the values we choose to live by. Love of money and possessions, the power of position and prestige, the glamour of wealth and fame, or the driving force of unruly passions and addictions can become our master and rule our lives. God is easily forgotten and pushed into the background. "Mammon," in today's Gospel passage, stands for "material wealth or possessions" or whatever tends to "control our appetites and desires." But man's ultimate goal and Master is God and not material possessions. We cannot serve both at the same time. Material possessions become a means to reach our ultimate goal, God, only when we share them with others. God is our only Master, and only He has the power to set us free from our greed. The search for holiness or righteousness should be our primary purpose in life. Hence, Jesus calls for a detachment from material goods and invites us to live a life of simplicity and dependence on God.

Jesus' arguments against unnecessary worries: Poor people worry that they have no money and rich people worry that they don't have enough money. Sick people worry about their premature death, and healthy people worry about getting sick. Some people worry about their past blunders, and others worry about their future. Everyone one, it seems, worries about something all the time. Only trust and faith in God can take us beyond the immediacy of worries and an inordinate focus on ourselves. The tragedy of most of our lives is that we worry so much about tomorrow that we never claim the resources God has for our living today. Hence, Jesus gives us some reasons why we should not worry.

1) Worry is a pagan or an irreligious attitude of those who don't believe in a loving and providing God. Worry is the ultimate act of rebellion against the rule of God in a believer's life. How? Worry says that God is dead; and if He is alive, then He is incapable of doing anything about my situation! It is a deficiency of faith that causes us to worry over health or food, past or future. 2) Only humans worry: In nature, other creatures, like birds, work hard for their daily food, but they don't worry about tomorrows. 3) Worry is useless because we cannot increase even an inch of height by days of worrying. 4) Worry is injurious to the health because it causes physical and mental problems and illnesses. One recent study has discovered that almost two out of three persons who present themselves at a hospital emergency room have worry and anxiety issues at the foundation of their

complaint. Over 100 diseases have been directly attributed to worry! Worry will not only take away your physical energy, it will also rob the soul of its stamina as well. 4) Worry robs us of Faith and confidence in God's help, and it saps our energy for doing good. 5) Worry takes all the joy from life and wears out our mind and body. Doctors agree that emotional stress can bring actual changes in the organs, glands, and tissues of the body. It's not so much "what I'm eating" as "what's eating me" that's getting me down. Hence, Jesus exhorts us to do our daily tasks serenely and not to worry uselessly about what happened yesterday or what may happen tomorrow. Here, Jesus is not advocating a shiftless, reckless, thoughtless attitude to life. Rather, He is forbidding a care-worn, worried fear, which takes the joy out of life. But He wants us to make good use of our human resourcefulness and to plan our lives in a responsible manner. Jesus also teaches that we should strive first for the kingdom of God in our life, for God to rule our life, and then all these things shall be given us. Jesus is not teaching us to be careless, but to center our care in the right place—on the kingdom of God. What is important is to live well today, doing God's will, realizing His presence with us, within us and within every one we meet.

Life messages: 1) We need to avoid worry: 1) By trusting in the providence of a loving God. 2) By acquiring the art of living one day at a time in God's presence without worrying over the dead past, living present or unknown future. 3) By seeking God's kingdom which means doing His will every day and living a righteous life obeying God's laws. Let us try to answer the following and find antidotes for our worries: "Why are you anxious ...?" (1) What good will it do? (2) What does it say about our priorities? (3) Why are we in such a hurry to deal with tomorrow when we haven't even dealt with today yet? And (5) Do we really have trusting Faith in a caring and providing God?

2) We need to live one day at a time: Here are the three simple steps. First, we start the day with God. We set aside for prayer at least fifteen minutes early in the day, and begin by repeating Psalm 118, verse 24: "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Then we thank God for the day and dedicate it to His glory, ask for a 24-hour full-activation of the Holy Spirit so that He may provide the resources we don't have for living victoriously that day. Secondly, we touch base with God periodically throughout the day. This could take the form of what saints call "red-light prayers," little prayers that we can whisper with eyes wide open, perhaps when we're about to talk with a customer or just before boarding a plane or when we have a tough decision to make. This is what St. Paul meant when he advised us to "pray continually" (I Thess. 5:17). It is amazing what peace this God-consciousness can bring. In the third step, we end

each day with God. Before we go to sleep, we say, "Thank You, Lord, for walking through this day with me. Thanks for helping me at critical points. I have wounded my soul today by my sins. Please pardon me. With Your grace I shall be more faithful tomorrow. Now, I ask for a restful night of sleep, and if You see fit to give me another day tomorrow, I will receive it gladly. I love you, Lord. Amen."

#### Joke of the week

1) "Don't worry, be happy. Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style? Ain't got no gal to make you smile? Don't worry. Be happy. 'Cause when you worry your face will frown, and that will bring everybody down. Don't worry, be happy"

So go the lyrics of a once-popular song you'll sometimes hear on the radio, even today.

2) There is a story about a lady who was struggling with a decision as to whether or not to have cosmetic surgery. She was thinking about having a facelift. But it was very expensive. Hence, she was totally confused. While she was discussing its high cost with her husband she said, "But what if I drop dead three months after I have this surgery? Then what would you do?" He thought for a moment and said, "Well, I guess we'd have an open casket for your funeral."

3) Two business executives meet for lunch. Gene asks Ed: "How's your health?" Ed said, "I feel great! My ulcers are gone. I feel great!" Gene says, "How did that happen? Ed says, "Well, you know my doctor told me my ulcers were caused from worrying. So, I hired myself a professional worrier. Whenever something worrisome comes up, I turn it over to him, and he does all my worrying for me!" Gene says, "Wow, I'd like to hire someone like that! How much does he charge?" Ed says, "One hundred thousand dollars!" Gene asked, "How in the world can you afford \$100,000? Ed says, "I don't know. I let him worry about that!"

#### Websites of the week

1) General Instruction of the Roman Missal- Revised third edition  
<http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/revmissalisromanien.shtml>

2) Catholic Liturgy Library: <http://www.catholicliturgy.com/>

3) How to participate more fully in the Mass:  
<http://www.kcgolddome.org/page.php?ID=194>

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