

27th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—CYCLE A
October 5, 2008 • Christ the King

After watching the markets this past week, and worrying about many things, the words of St. Paul invite our reflection today.

Paul almost quotes our Lord from the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus said, “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you drink, or about your body, what you will wear.” Paul put it in even fewer words: “Do not worry about anything.”

Worry is the most futile, defeating activity we do. Worry never solves a problem, lessens a burden or lightens a demand. Worry drains us of energy, robs us of joy, and always leaves us weaker. In fact, the more we worry about our health, our family, our job, our friends – anything you can name – the less good we are to anyone or anything.

A well-known bishop of the Church in England several centuries back was awakened one night, his mind reeling from worry, his heart burdened by the demands of the diocese. After what seemed like hours of fitful fretting, tossing back and forth in his bed unable to sleep, he heard the voice of God say to him: “Bishop, go back to sleep. I’ll take your worries and handle them the rest of the night!” Here is a good and nourishing word to all of us. “Do not worry about anything.”

Paul goes on, “But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Rather than needlessly worrying, open your mind and heart to God in prayer and, with generous amounts of thanksgiving, give every concern, every burden, every unsolvable problem to God.

Many people find it helpful in prayer to physically open their hands, palms up, and imagine releasing everything that burdens them into God’s unfailing, loving presence. They have learned that the more they open their hands, the more they can open their heart. The more we can release our cares, the more we can receive

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God's grace. Why? Because with clenched hands, we are far **more** likely to hold on to worry, grip difficulty, grasp trouble, than if our hands are open, giving to God the great struggles of our lives. The more we are able to let go, the more God is able to love and bless us with grace.

Then what? If we refuse to worry, if we open our lives to God in prayer, giving to God all our concerns with generous thanksgiving for his grace, then “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” stands “guard” over our hearts and minds in our Lord Jesus Christ. Imagine that! Imagine God guarding our lives with the blessed, restful gift of peace.

How would our lives individually and collectively change if we threw worry in the garbage can, opened the palms of our hearts to God, and chose to think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable? How would our lives change for the better if gave up needless worry?

You may ask: How in God's name can anyone live such a life? In all honesty, this worry-free, prayerful, and pleasing lifestyle is impossible without God's life-giving grace. On our own, looking at the resources available at hand, such positive, vibrant living is wishful thinking. Sounds good in a Sunday homily, but there is little to commend it tomorrow morning.

Unless . . . unless we make the radically freeing, counter-intuitive decision to place our lives in God's care, living empowered by God's life.

So, Right now, in the quiet of your own heart, or even in the restlessness of your anxious mind, open your hands and give God every worry and care, and receive God's renewing and saving grace.