

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Letting Go of Anxiety Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, June 20, 2015
8:15 AM **2 Cor 12:1-10; Mt 6:24-34** (BVM) (Life is really an opportunity God gives us to grow into him and to learn how to rely on him.)

“Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.”

Today the gospel reading is about practical wisdom, and **in practical wisdom there is no room for anxiety or worry.** This does not mean that we should be completely free of anxiety either. Everything is a matter of balance. If we had absolutely no anxiety, we wouldn't even get up in the morning. **We need something to move us, but not oppress us; so everything is a matter of balance.** We need to be motivated, energized, but not too much. Anxiety is good when it's care, when it's concern. It's bad when it becomes worry and fear.

People worry and are afraid of things they don't understand and they don't control, but life is that way. **Life is not supposed to be something we can control.** We are not supposed to be able to control it. **Life is really an opportunity God gives us to grow into him and to learn how to rely on him.** That's why Jesus uses these examples of the flowers and the birds. They are instinctively dependent upon God. We are not instinctively dependent on God. We are instinctively dependent on ourselves, and we have to willingly move to be dependent on God—and that's quite a move! In St. Paul's terminology it's a **move away from the flesh into the Spirit.**

Today St. Paul in the Second Letter to the Corinthians is talking about this man. He doesn't define who the man is. He says, “I will boast about this man. I don't know if he is in the body or out of the body, but he was taken to Paradise into the third heaven.” Who is he talking about? Himself, but he doesn't call that himself. Why? Because that's the new self. It's the new Paul. It's not Saul. In the Bible often there are two names for people. Why?

Because there are two realities. **There is the person I am born and the person God wants me to become.** In Paul's case the person he was born was Saul, *Shaul*, but the person he became was Paul. He says, "I will boast of the second, but not of the first."

So we have to see these two in ourselves as well. **The first is all concerned about this world.** What am I going to do? How am I going to make a living? What am I going to eat? What am I going to drink? What am I going to wear? And Jesus says, well, "That's what the pagans worry about." Now of course that doesn't mean that we are supposed to just forget about working, but it means **we don't worry about it. We do our best every day. We make our contribution.** There is something to contribute. But then we let go—then we let go—and **we let God take care of us leading us beyond this life, even in this life,** even in this world, beyond what the pagans care about. Why? Because God is willing to share abundantly of his heart, of his life, of his grace, even now while we live in the body.

That is the basis of what St Paul would talk about living in the Spirit. It is in the body, but it is knowing God and experiencing God's love and Providence, which is also what Jesus is talking about in this gospel, **sensing God's Providence** as he provides for the birds, as he provides for the flowers. "Are you not more important?" This is not encouraging self-importance, which is self-motivated and self-contained and enclosed. It's about another kind of importance. It's about **an importance to God, in which we are the beloved.** That's what Jesus wants us to feel, that we are the beloved.