

Anxiety and Gratitude (3rd Sunday of Advent, Year C)

Philippians 4:4-7—Have No Anxiety about Anything

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always*; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let all men know your forbearance. *The Lord is at hand.* ⁶ *Have no anxiety about anything*, but in everything by *prayer and supplication with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ *And the peace of God, which passes all understanding*, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

1. Joy: “rejoice in the Lord *always*” (4:4)
2. Second Coming: reason for joy, “the Lord is at hand” (4:5)
3. Anxiety: have no “anxiety” (Greek *merimnaō*) about “anything” (4:6)

“Therefore I tell you, *do not be anxious* (Greek *merimnaō*) *about your life*, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?... ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, *O you of little faith?* ³¹ Therefore *do not be anxious* (Greek *mē merimnēsēte*), *saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* ³² For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness... ³⁴ “Therefore *do not be anxious* (Greek *merimnaō*) *about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious* (Greek *merimnaō*) *for itself*. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day. (Matt 6:25-34)

But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, *you are anxious* (Greek *merimnaō*) *and troubled about many things*; one thing is needful.” (Luke 10:41-42)

4. Prayer: “prayer and supplication” (4:6)
5. Gratitude: prayer with “thanksgiving” (Greek *eucharistia*) (4:6)
6. Supernatural Peace: “peace” of God that “passes all understanding” (4:7)

The Living Tradition

John Chrysostom: It is comforting to know that the Lord is at hand... *Here is a medicine to relieve grief and every bad circumstance and every pain. What is it? To pray and to give thanks in everything.* He does not wish that a prayer be merely a petition but a thanksgiving for what we have received.... How can one make petitions for the future without a thankful acknowledgement of past things?... *So one ought to give thanks for everything, even what seems grievous.* That is the mark of one who is truly thankful. (John Chrysostom, *Homily on Philippians* 15.4.4-7; trans. Mark J. Edwards)

Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you /Everything passes /God never changes / Patience/ Obtains all / Whoever has God / Wants for nothing / God alone is enough. (St. Teresa of Jesus, *Poesías* 30, in CCC 227)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3rd Sunday of Advent, Year C)

1. Do you struggle with anxiety? Do you desire the “peace that passes understanding”? What practical advice does St. Paul give that might help you grow in freedom from anxiety?

For Further Reading

1. Dennis Hamm, SJ. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013.