

Freedom from Anxiety (27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Philippians 4:6-9—Freedom from Anxiety and the Peace that Passes Understanding

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.* ⁸ *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* ⁹ *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:6-9)*

1. **Anxiety**: have no “anxiety” (Greek *merimnaō*) about “anything” (Phil 4:6)

“Therefore *do not be anxious* (Greek *merimnaō*) about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day. (Matthew 6:34)

2. **Gratitude**: prayer and supplication with “thanksgiving” (Greek *eucharistia*) (Phil 4:6)

3. **Peace**: “peace of God that passes all understanding” (Phil 4:7)

a. **Heart**: seat of the will/decision, not just emotions

b. **Mind**: seat of the intellect, thoughts

4. **Thoughts**: “think (Greek *logizomai*) about these things” (Phil 4:8)

a. True

b. Honorable

c. Just

d. Pure

e. Lovely

f. Gracious

g. Excellence

h. Worthy of Praise

The Living Tradition

John Chrysostom: Behold another consolation, *a medicine which heals grief, and distress, and all that is painful. And what is this? Prayer, thanksgiving in all things. And so He wills that our prayers should not simply be requests, but thanksgivings too for what we have. For how should he ask for future things, who is not thankful for the past?... Wherefore we ought to give thanks for all things, even for those which seem to be grievous, for this is the part of the truly thankful man...* “And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.” What does this mean? “The peace of God” which He has wrought toward men, surpasses all understanding. For who could have expected, who could have hoped, that such good

things would have come? They exceed all man’s understanding, not his speech alone. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Philipians* 14, in *NPNF1* 13.246-47)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (27th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Compare Paul’s teaching against anxiety with Jesus’ teaching against anxiety (Matthew 6:25-34)? How are they similar? How are they different?

2. Paul says to practice “thanksgiving” in *everything*—not just in good times? Have you ever given thanks to God for the sufferings, trials, and difficulties in your life? If not, why not?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Philipians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. Mark J. Edwards, ed. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philipians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VIII; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1999).
3. Dennis Hamm, S.J., *Philipians, Colossians, Philemon* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).