

# **OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH**

## **HOMILY FOR THE 8<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)**

### **26<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2017**

“Does a mother forget her baby she has fed at her breast?” Isaiah asks. Of course not! Even more so does God promise he will never forget us. If we believe this, we are in a good position to learn and believe that response to the psalm – in God alone is my soul at rest. Have any of us really come to know this, to truly experience this?

Think about it. How much energy do we put into occupying ourselves, working, playing; perhaps using business as a distraction against what is happening in our lives? Keeping busy so we don't have to face our reality? David in this psalm gives us a key to being at rest, to be at peace with ourselves.

And Jesus does the same in today's Gospel. Do not worry about tomorrow, it will take care of itself. This may, superficially, sound rather naïve. But from a pure psychological health perspective, when Jesus tells us to consider the birds and how God feeds them, the flowers and how God dresses them more regally than Solomon, he's simply trying to change our focus. In many ways this is the original version of mindfulness – it is trying to make us focus on the here and now. How many of us, at some point, suffer from worry and anxiety? Jesus just gives a couple of examples of what we worry about, but makes the point that as God looks after the birds and the flowers he will look after us so much more, us people (as he says) of so little faith! What we have to do is direct our focus onto him, and away from our material desires.

Jesus isn't saying don't work, don't prepare for things, don't do what we have to do; but he is saying look at what drives us.

And the passage seems especially directed at those who are weak in faith; certainly me, perhaps also you. Many times our faith in the risen Lord is assaulted by the situations of our daily lives. Yet we are called to faith not just in times of great spiritual experiences or times of trial, but to have faith in the face of our typical day. Jesus is giving us a key to move on. Trust in him.

You see, this passage builds on the Lord's Prayer – which was about 20 verses earlier in Matthew's Gospel. There we are told to pray to our Father in heaven; here we are told he already knows our needs! There we are told to pray thy kingdom come thy will be done; that will happen when it's his kingdom that we work for and so here we are told to set our hearts on his kingdom and righteousness first, i.e. these must be our focus, our driving

force. In the Lord's Prayer we pray give us our daily needs, our daily bread; here we are told if we seek his kingdom first all these things will be given us. Hence, don't worry about tomorrow!

We are being challenged to live out the Lord's Prayer! Trust in God, not in our stuff!

I have such a long way to go; deep down I know that if my full focus and drive of my life was simply for God then my soul would be at rest. But as with many of you, I have family and responsibilities and I confuse my focus.....maybe we can all use this Lent to look inside ourselves, explore what really drives us, explore how far we trust God – for everything we need. A simple, easy start is to come to one of the Masses on Ash Wednesday and plan our Lent. Really, this isn't much to ask as part of our journey to learn to trust God and learn to put his kingdom first.

Yes, we must work to provide for our needs. Whether we have jobs or not, our call is to seek God's kingdom in the particular circumstances of our own lives. (It's eye opening to me how the guys in prison are trying to work this out, in a strange way they can be more open to trust than us!) To put God first and have faith in Him is the radical call of Christianity! When we do this, then our happiness isn't dependent on what is in our wardrobe, what's on our bookshelves, what car we drive, what house we live in.....dare I say it but not even on the people that move in and out of our lives. When we put God first, I mean really do this, then our happiness and joy come from the experience of God in our lives.

When we put God first we become able to live in the now. We have the time, no more than that we have the ability, to look at the birds in the sky and the flowers and grasses in the fields and say "God, how beautiful they are. How good you are".

It's time to start. Come on Wednesday to begin your Lent. Be prepared to walk out of here with ashes on our foreheads! When we approach this altar let's examine the choices we make daily. Work at putting God's kingdom first. Then you know what may happen, rather than worrying about tomorrow when the events of our lives seem too much we can call upon our Lord to share our burdens, who tells us "My yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matt 11.30)

May our Lord give us the faith to trust in the power of his life in our lives.

**Rev Jonathan de Kretser**