

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time A

There is no need to worry.

Of all today's readings, I am most drawn to the second reading from St Paul's letter to the Philippians.

He begins by saying: There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will fill your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

How beautiful are those words. This letter of Paul exudes joy and peace and trust in God. The amazing thing is that Paul is writing this letter from prison and he doesn't know what will happen, whether he will be executed or set free. So, he really has a lot to worry about but none of that is apparent in this letter.

The next thing Paul says is also very significant. He says, 'Finally, brothers and sisters, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, and everything that can be thought virtuous and worthy of praise.'

This is a wonderful sentence and a key to why Paul could communicate the Good News of Jesus in the ancient Greco-Roman world. This sentence is pure Greek. He is talking about the virtues and the importance of a virtuous life, which was something the Greek philosophers taught, and Paul's listeners would have understood as well. Paul is stressing that there is nothing that the philosophers teach about a virtuous life that is inconsistent with Christianity.

Paul is also making the point that proclaiming the Good News is about more than speaking solely about Jesus Christ. That is important, but we must also speak about what is good and true and noble and lovable etc. We speak not only of Christian things but of all things in a Christian way.

And I just want to highlight the wisdom of these words – that we constantly seek to fill our minds, to nourish them, with good and noble and positive thoughts. Unfortunately, with the rise of social media, podcasts, etc. we can spend a lot of time listening to material that is very negative that can make us depressed about the world and so many things. If we like podcasts, we need to listen to positive podcasts as well, that talk about the spiritual life, positive human values, or listen to music that uplifts and so on.

Finally, Paul says: 'Keep doing the things you have learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do.' Oh, that we could all say those words to others about ourselves!

"Then the God of peace will be with you."

May we all experience this peace of God, this week.

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