

32nd Ordinary Sunday
November 7, 2021
“Anxiety or Surrender”

1 Kgs 17:10-16
Heb 9:24-28
Mk 12:38-44

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Sad to say, we have become an anxious people in America. Of course, anxiety can be brought on by any number of things. These days, people are anxious about the state of the world, our nation – perhaps, even our Church. Moreover, any anxiety we have is exacerbated by the Covid Virus in its many forms – and all the ensuing protocols.

Yet, even if all these problems were resolved, it’s still easy to become anxious about other things – These can include our economic security, our children, our family members, and our work or profession. And as we grow older, we can become anxious about arriving in the kingdom of heaven in the afterlife after our death. Fortunately, the scriptures for today provide us with much encouragement regarding these concerns.

The passage about Elijah and the widow teaches us that God can work things out for us if we surrender to Him in trust. The widow was a pagan. She lived in a pagan town whose people offered child sacrifice to the Baals. These were the very pagan gods that Elijah condemned and fought against.

Nevertheless, the starving woman trusted Elijah and the true God whom he served. She surrendered her plans to what Elijah asked and went without her last meal. And a miracle happened. She, her son, and Elijah were able to eat for a year during the drought and famine that ravaged the land!

In this account from the Book of Kings, we learn that God cares for all people, whoever they are. God has a special plan and providence for even our worst enemies – if they open themselves to it.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus teaches that wealth, position, power, and privilege mean nothing if we use them to exploit others. If we do not surrender our gifts to God to be used as He intended – we jeopardize our souls.

Then Jesus calls our attention to the poor widow. She gave her last two coins to God. She surrendered what she needed to buy food for that day and for the future. Moreover, she did this in complete trust – without any anxiety or plan for the future.

Then, Jesus tells us that her pittance, surrendered in trust and love, was far more than the total large amount that all the others gave. The others surrendered nothing. They “hedged their bet”. They made sure they had plenty in reserve for the future. No doubt, they were anxious about many things. For, truly, the more we have, the more anxious we can become about preserving them, whatever they happen to be!

There is a way to deal with all the challenges we face with family, children, finances, occupation, and our health – anything about which we can become anxious. We must surrender ourselves and every aspect of our life to God – to Jesus – in trust. And we must let Jesus, our Savior, take care of everything. Certainly, we still have to work at living and do our best. But we can do so with a different spirit – a spirit of freedom and peace – without anxiety and fear.

There is a special novena created to enable us to do this. It was developed by a very holy priest several years ago. This novena changed my life when I began it daily, three years ago. The priest’s name is Father Dolindo Ruotolo, who died in 1970. His novena, called “Novena of Surrender to the Will of God”, can be found through Google on the internet. I highly recommend it!

Brothers and Sisters, we have a loving, merciful and provident God. The Father sent His Son, Jesus, to redeem us from our sins – and to open the way for us to the Kingdom of God. Jesus, himself, taught us how to live and die with complete surrender and trust.

No one knows the future of our world, our nation – or our personal lives. We can face them alone with anxiety, fear, and doubt – Or we can walk with Jesus in surrender and trust.

Let us pray that we can do so with Jesus –
and draw ever closer to the true Reign of God,
in our hearts, in our lives, and in the world itself!

Amen.

November 7, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra