

Homily: 27th Sunday Cycle A: 2023: Is. 5:1-7; Ps. 80; Phil. 4: 6-9; Mt. 21:33-43

“Overcoming Anxiety by Daily Embracing the Lord’s Grace and Holy Providence

1. Today’s readings call us to bear a rich harvest of spiritual fruit in the Lord’s vineyard. How can this happen? Only if we make God first in our lives. The question we need to ask ourselves today: **is God 1st in my life**, or have I substituted another person: spouse, children, friends, etc., or a thing: work, studies, money, etc. for God – which is a violation of the 1st Commandment? If we have, then we need to get things back in order, for “*our hearts were made by God and are restless until they rest in Him*” (St. Augustine in his *Confessions*), and only if our lives are rooted in God and we live for Him, will we bear spiritual fruit.
2. There is something that in a particular way prevents us from bearing spiritual fruit, that is, being consumed by anxiety and worry in our lives. We all face difficulties, trials, temptations, even evils in our lives. The question is: ***how do we respond?*** With impatience? Do we get agitated at the people around us? Do we lash out at God, and get angry with our family, friends, co-workers, and ourselves because things aren’t going well in our estimation? This is all **a fruit of pride**: wanting to be in control of everything! Anxiety taps into that weakness that we all suffer from to a greater or lesser degree because of original sin: pride. **What is anxiety?** It is the inordinate desire to be delivered from some problem besetting our lives immediately. We want instant results. When we do this, we are not trusting in God’s wisdom, in His providential care for us. If we experience the Cross, the umbrella of which all difficulties in life fall under, do we realize God is allowing or ordaining this or that Cross for our eternal good, or for the spiritual good of other people if we offer it for them? If only we would unite it with Jesus, in trust, instead of becoming anxious and worried. **The ordinary means to deliver one’s soul from some problem: is to first pray and resign ourselves to God’s care, and only then to do our part:** e.g., if we are sick go to the doctor, but then if we are still sick after treatment we should entrust it to God, and not fret, but be at peace - trusting in the Lord. Don’t we often try to do our part, but forget to abandon ourselves to God’s will first, and then only invoke God as a last resort

when things don't work out from our own efforts? God should be our first recourse! That is hard for us to do, so every day we must pray for the grace to turn everything over to God, instead of getting anxious and upset about many things.

3. Jesus spoke about this whole dynamic in the Gospel when he said: *which of you by worrying can add a moment to his lifespan?* (Luke 12:25; see the whole teaching of holy abandonment to **Divine Providence** in Luke 12:22-34). We worry about so many things: *our work, our studies, our family, our friends, what people think of us, our health, etc.* And in the end what good does worry and anxiety do for us on any level? In reality it doesn't help at all! In fact, when we look back over difficulties in our lives from the past that were resolved, and think about it, anxiety didn't make the situation any better but only worst! This is why **Jesus tells us the solution to worry and anxiety: seek first your Heavenly Father's kingship over you, His way of holiness, and everything else will be given you besides** (Luke 12:31). **We do this when we set apart time every day just for God and to work on our personal relationship with Him in prayer.** Daily pray the **Chaplet of Divine Mercy**, the whole devotion which is based on the premise "*Jesus I trust in You.*" During this month of October as we honor Our Blessed Mother, if you don't already do so, pray a set of the mysteries of the **Rosary** daily. Praying the Rosary with your family, esp. if you have children, is a source of tremendous blessings for the family and a great help in dealing with stress, anxiety and worry; and it also teaches children from an early age to seek out the Lord in prayer in company with our Lady, esp. during times of difficulty – a great habit of virtue. **Coming to Eucharistic adoration** can lift your worries in an amazing way, as well as **making a good honest Confession** in the Sacrament – with the fruit of inner peace/healing and assurance of God's ongoing help. Finally giving of ourselves in **acts of charity**, when we are anxious and worried, can help lift the burden from our souls of wanting to control things. **Giving alms** too (Luke 12: 32-34) is a healing balm for the soul - the saints tell us. It's all so true. Let us ask the Lord today to help us unite all our worries and anxieties with Jesus on the Cross, so that the wound of anxiety can be lifted from our souls. God bless you.