

STOP WORRYING, START TRUSTING: 8TH SUNDAY A

Brian Gleeson CP

I can sing with John Denver, *'Thank God I'm a country boy! Woo hoo!'* My childhood was spent in the districts of Terang Victoria and Colac Victoria. In both places my father was a farmer and my mother the home-carer and heart of the home. Dad as a farmer kept a few cows and pigs, and grew onions, potatoes and peas. Humanly speaking, life was a gamble. In some years he grew bumper crops. But so did other farmers, and then the price of produce dropped. In other years, drought or disease ruined the crops. There was nothing much to sell. Things got so bad one year that Mum had to sell her most precious and useful wedding present, an electric Singer sewing machine, on which she used to make most of the family clothes.

What amazed me more than what happened was their failure to worry about the future. Why didn't they worry? How did they stay so calm and happy, cheerful and funny, no matter what? Because they kept trusting in God's goodness and care for them and their family of eight children! They lived the gospel words of Jesus: *'Your heavenly father knows all you need. ...So do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.'* And it did!

But if my parents were not, as the saying goes, *'worry warts'*, like many other people I tend to worry. By disposition and by temperament many of us seem to be natural worriers, even when there's nothing much to worry about. How and why do we become anxious? And how can we stop worrying?

Survey after survey show that most worries people have are about their relationships with others, about money and possessions, about health, exams, and job security. But life and living are much more than any of these. It seems that anxious people are not thankful enough for the gift of life itself and for all the good things that have come their way. They have also become too preoccupied and at times almost obsessed about what might happen in the future.

When one is anxious it's hard to pay attention to anything other than one's anxiety. But worry is unproductive and useless. It gets us nowhere, and may even harm and injure our health. While it may be next to impossible to live a life without any fear and anxiety at all, we can reduce their hold over us.

How can we do this? Jesus tells us how. Concentrate on doing all that God wants and on trusting God completely and we will rid our minds of worry and anxiety or at least reduce them. The other way is to live one day at a time, without worrying about the unknown future and what in fact may never happen.

At its heart, worry is actually failure to trust in God, to trust in God's everlasting and unconditional goodness and care as both our Father and our Mother. When, as Jesus did himself, we place our lives and future in God's hands and ask for what we need just for now, we can be like the birds of the air and the lilies of the field.

We can then live every new moment of life just as it happens, and experience the strength that comes from trust in God as our King, Leader, Guide and Protector, at all times and in all situations. This is to follow the example of the one praying our Psalm today. God alone, he/she prays, is my rock, the rock of my strength, my stronghold, my fortress, my safety and my glory. So, *'rest in God alone, my soul.'*

St Augustine makes a wise suggestion about all this: *'Entrust the past to God's mercy,'* he says, *'the present to his love and the future to his providence.'* That, surely, is the way to peace.