

## Finding Peace Amidst Life's Anxieties

One of the things I would struggle with as a kid was thinking about things a little too much, in particular the potential negative outcomes.

For instance, I remember getting a new blue bike from Sears, and enjoying it, but when the time came for the training wheels to come off, it seemed less enjoyable. I'd try to balance but would topple over. It was never a big deal really, as I just fell into the grass, but part of me wanted to go back to cling to the safety of the training wheels. Of course, my parents who were there to encourage me, kept spurring me on knowing that I would not have nearly as much fun with training wheels as I would without them. And, sure enough, I eventually figured it out and would then ride a little bit further with dad over the coming years.

Then there was swimming about the same time. How big the pool seemed. Yet while the shallow end was fine, as was the local wading pool, it would be more fun to swim a bit further out. There were lifeguards, a teacher, other kids. It took a bit of an effort to let go of the side of the pool, but it led to many days in the 80s in the summer at the pool having a great time.

In life though, sometimes we can be so overwhelmed by the "what if" potential of negative outcomes that we never spread our wings, or try new things. Or we may have a hard time living life to its fullest. Worry can be such a big downfall.

This week's Gospel has an echo of worry.

In the familiar Gospel from John 14, taken from the "Last Supper Discourses" where Jesus speaks before the Passion. He knows they are worried, and has that beautiful line "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places." That verse in particular was used quite a bit by Saint John Paul II who often said "Be not afraid." So how can we make this part of our spirituality?

For one, we remember God is with us. We are not orphans. Jesus has given us the gift of the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit - something we'll be reflecting on in coming weeks as we celebrate Pentecost and Corpus Christi. God is involved in our lives, and is always with us in the trenches. And when we leave this earth, we indeed have a wonderful place prepared for us as Jesus says.

Second, it's important to remember as we go forward that, as my favorite seminary professor would say "things will work out." On Good Friday the worst possible thing in the world happened - Jesus dies; His mission seemingly ends. But it does not end. There is the resurrection. At the time it might seem there is nothing but storm clouds over us. But often when we go through trying times, we look back and see how we emerge stronger, or that while it was difficult, the world did not in fact end.

Third, we need to avoid playing the “what if?” game. There are bad things that will inevitably happen when we spread our wings or take a chance. We will fail, often more than once. But we must remember God put us here for a reason, to make this world a better place, and we can’t be afraid to find our gifts and then learn how to use them.

Fourth, we have one another. The Church is a community of believers, and the apostles support one another. Sometimes it can be difficult to ask for help, but we can’t fear reaching out to people and in turn helping others.

And lastly, we can’t forget we have a job to do. We are sent. This weekend is the rite of sending for our confirmation candidates who will celebrate confirmation in a couple of weeks. The gifts of the Spirit are given to us at baptism, and confirmation is meant to stir them up. We are all sent into the world; Jesus has shown the others the way to heaven through His ministry, and we follow Him by putting into action all that He has shown us. Each of us has the power to make this world better through our words and actions, which is why we end Mass with that reminder to go and announce the Gospel and glorify God with our lives.

Life is such a blessing, and at times as we all know it can be so challenging. We can take comfort though knowing that we are never alone, and as Jesus said before His ascension He would be with us always, something we also know to be true every time we gaze upon the Eucharist. When the anxieties and worries begin to creep in, may we remember we are not orphans, and also realize we have one another and such power to bring light and hope into this world. Jesus shows us the way, let us do the same for one another.

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Paul