

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 8, 2017

Have no anxiety at all! Yeah, easy to say. It sounds like somebody talking that doesn't care about anything, or, simply doesn't understand the seriousness of the situation. Have no anxiety at all seems to be rather naïve. This surely doesn't sound like St. Paul who always shows himself to be streetwise. Having been a Roman soldier, and then a militant missionary for Christ, I doubt that St. Paul is preaching a smug optimism or Pollyanna, irresponsible, pie in the sky philosophy. He's not like the guy who fell out of the 15th story window and as he was going by the 10th floor yells out, so far so good.

Life is filled with preoccupations of every kind. We have problems at school or in the workplace or at home that need special care and attention. Worries and concerns are often very urgent and it is necessary that we attend to them. St. Paul, in the second reading, I am sure, is not ignoring or minimizing the serious concerns that come with everyday life. And I'm sure that St. Paul is not indifferent, or frivolous or unaware of the seriousness of our anxieties and concerns.

Having said that, let us read that first sentence again. He means what he says. "Brothers and sisters have no anxiety at all." He says this knowing full well the depth of our pain and the problems that life dishes out to us. "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God."

Paul is writing this while he is imprisoned and facing almost certain death. Paul's prayer is not induced anesthesia or euphoria. Nevertheless, prayer in the midst of the fray, gives us an astonishing peace that surpasses all understanding.

This war worn Saint continues with his advice. He tells us, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

In other words, emphasize the positive and beauty in your life. Associate yourself with people and projects that are good and uplifting. Enjoy the Great Giant Nekoosa Pumpkifest, for example. Resist the dysfunctional and negative. Turn to prayer and the powerful Energizer that it is.

With the shootings, and hurricanes, and devastation all around us, it can be easy, in the beauty of a Wisconsin autumn to blithely go on our merry way. Frankly, it is good to have anxiety about these things. We also have cancer and drug problems and family strife. The pain in Puerto Rico is our pain, and the languish in Las Vegas is ours.

Nevertheless, it is prayer that gives us hope, and strength, and proper perspective in order to live a life filled with joy and promise. This is what we were created to be. Through our own life of prayer may bring new vision and confidence to all whom we meet. "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God."