

Do not worry

Ireland had a general election in 2009. In one of its TV current affairs programmes people in the street were asked for their comments about the gloomy economic future for the country regardless of the election outcome. They trotted out their worries about jobs, their children's future, small rural communities becoming ghost towns, unemployment and the return of the haunting spectre of emigration – you name it, they mentioned it.

Well, maybe they have good reason to worry but the gospel today explicitly tells us not to go down that road. Someone once said that worrying is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but gets you nowhere.

If we look around or ponder the world situation there are always going to be people in a far worse predicament than ourselves. Think about the terrible quake that hit Christchurch with hundreds of lives lost and homes and livelihoods in tatters. And what about the poor people of Libya where thousands were shot. Don't our day to day worries pale into insignificance compared to these? And what about the funeral I attended last week where my friends Peggy and Pat from Denaby buried their second daughter in the space of a few short years - both in their 30's.

The problem with most people is that they mostly worry about what might happen rather than focussing on the present. We often try to grasp too much of life at once; since we think of it as a whole, instead of living one day at a time.

Jesus says: Do not worry about tomorrow – each day has enough trouble of its own. "He grieves", says Seneca, "more than is necessary, who grieves before it is necessary". It's not the troubles of today, but those of tomorrow and next week and next year that whiten our heads, wrinkle our faces, and bring us to a standstill. Mental exhaustion comes to those who look ahead, and climb mountains before reaching them. Our advice to those people is to resolutely build a wall about today, and live within its enclosure. The past may have been hard, sad, or even wrong – but it is over.

That may sound a rather stoical way of looking at reality, but the scriptures tell us that if we entrust our cares and worries to the Lord, he will support us. It really works. Why don't you try it out? The future is in His hands because He knows what is best for us. For Him even our present sorrow, if we entrust it to Him, can turn out to be a blessing.

A believer in Jesus, despite present woes, has no choice but to be an optimist. As we heard from Isaiah today God's love for us is akin to how a mother's loves her child. He will never disown us regardless of how much we choose to distance ourselves from Him. That should go a long way to see the back of our debilitating worries.

On your way into this church I have posted a laminated sheet on the window which is written the words of the Great St Theresa of Avila:

"Let nothing make you afraid. All things pass away. God never changes. Patience obtains everything. God alone is enough".

QUESTIONS

1. *Is there a difference between 'worry' and being 'concerned'?*

Discuss

2. *Is 'taking it a day at a time Sweet Jesus just a sentimental lyric and nothing more, whereas it is not applicable in the 'real world'? Discuss*

3. *Does worrying do harm to our health both physical and mental? Discuss*

4. *Jesus tells us not to worry about the passing things of this world but set our hearts on his Kingdom and everything will be fine. Discuss*