

October 13, 2024 – Thanksgiving Sunday

**“A Reflection on Trust & Thanksgiving” by Pastor Julio Romero**

**Gospel: Matthew 6:24-34**

A psychology professor walked around on a stage while teaching stress management principles to an auditorium filled with students. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected the typical “glass half empty or glass half full” question. Instead, with a smile, the professor asked, “How heavy is this glass of water I’m holding?”

Students shouted out answers ranging from eight ounces to a couple of pounds.

She replied, “From my perspective, the absolute weight of this glass doesn’t matter. It all depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute or two, it feels fairly light. If I hold it for an hour straight, its weight might start to ache my arm a little. If I hold it for an entire day, my arm will likely cramp and feel completely numb, forcing me to drop the glass.

In each case, the weight of the glass doesn’t change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it feels.” As the class nodded in agreement, she continued, “Your stresses and worries in life are very much like this glass of water.

Think about them for a while, and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer, and you begin to ache.

Think about them all day long, and you will feel completely numb and paralyzed, incapable of doing anything else until you let them go.”

John Jay Chapman once said, “People get so in the habit of worry that if you save them from drowning and put them on a bank to dry in the sun with hot chocolate and muffins, they wonder whether they are catching a cold.”

This quote may not make everyone smile, especially those of us who worry about almost everything. It’s unhealthy and stressful, but we still find ourselves caught in a cycle of worry. Various reasons contribute to this habit, including past traumas and the anxieties and fears of today that we often project into the future. In today’s Gospel, the Lord Jesus asks us to not worry about tomorrow, as such thoughts rob us of the joy of today.

This idea is well illustrated in the story of the glass of water. Instead, Jesus reminds us to look at the lilies of the field and the birds in the sky, saying that our heavenly Father takes care of them.

He clothes and feeds them, and we, who are of much more value than lilies and birds, can trust that God will do even more for us.

Worries are negative distractions; they prevent us from being present and distract us from recognizing what God is doing in our lives.

The more we worry, the more we take our eyes off God. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, urges the church to stay in the moment, to live in the present, and to be thankful rather than anxious. In Philippians 4:4-7, he writes: *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Sometimes, I wonder what kind of faith it takes to be free from worry, anxiety, and fear to have complete trust in our Lord Jesus.

Jesus teaches us about faith, saying, *“If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you”* (Luke 17:6).

The comparison of faith to a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds (as mentioned in Matthew 13:31-32), illustrates that there is no such thing as small faith. Even the tiniest faith can move trees and mountains, enabling us to trust God and alleviate our fears and anxieties.

There is an antidote to our worries and fears. Jesus tells us to strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, assuring us that all these things will be given to us as well.

In other words, He encourages us to focus on loving others, serving others, and cultivating a thankful heart. We should not waste our time on thoughts that cause anxiety or become paralyzed by fear.

We should trust the words of Jesus found in Matthew 11:28-30: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”*.

Remember, as Christians, we have something that no one else has: the ability to trust God. We can turn our burdens, worries, and anxieties over to our Lord Jesus and say,

“Dear Jesus, please take care of this for me because I can’t. I put it in your hands; help me.”

These are indeed some of the most liberating words, perhaps one of the most powerful prayers we can offer when worries and anxiety threaten to overwhelm us and take control over our willpower and ability to manage matters beyond our control, because the longer we hold onto these burdens, the heavier they become.

Today, as we celebrate Thanksgiving, many of us may still find ourselves burdened by personal worries, anxieties, and concerns of various sorts.

Some may not know if they will have enough food, be able to pay their rent, or find healing from their illnesses. Yet, despite these challenges, we still thank God for His goodness and blessings.

Our faith tells us that somehow, someday, God still cares for us. St. Paul reminds us to be thankful in all circumstances. So today and every day, we give thanks to God for all the mysterious ways in which He blesses us.

In conclusion, let us take a moment to reflect on the glass of water. Just as the professor demonstrated, the weight of our worries may not change, but our response to them can. By trusting in God and focusing on gratitude, we can lighten our burdens and embrace the present moment. This Thanksgiving, let us remember to release our worries into His hands and rejoice in the blessings we have. *Amen.*