

ABBOT ELIAS DIETZ, O.C.S.O.
Homily - Mass of the 8th Sunday of the Year
Sunday, February 26, 2017

*Golden Jubilee Celebration of Br. William Leone's Anniversary of Monastic
Profession*

Jesus seems to take it for granted that human beings are worriers. No doubt, worry can become crippling for some, but for most people, daily life is full of worries big and small. It would be a mistake to conclude that Jesus is proposing a kind of blind optimism: no need to worry about anything. What he's after are the deep essentials of life, because, as we heard from the prophet Isaiah, we sometimes wonder: "has the Lord forsaken me; has the Lord forgotten me." The worries Jesus mentions are along these same lines: "will the Lord sustain me; will the Lord provide what I need; what will happen tomorrow"?

And Saint Paul points out the fact that these deep worries include the question of whether we deserve blame or praise. In other words, the headquarters of worry is our conscience.

Moreover, the worst kind of worry comes from judging ourselves or others too soon—in which case we are attempting to take God's place. God alone judges well. As Jesus says: "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," that is, what God considers good and just. Paul is saying basically the same thing: "the one who judges me is the Lord."

The opposite of being a worrier, then, is not carefree nonchalance. The opposite

of worry is Paul's attitude: "I do not even pass judgment on myself." Only when we stop judging others and stop judging even ourselves do we discover real reliance on God, who alone judges well. Only in this freedom from judgment can we stop worrying about tomorrow and pray with the psalmist, "Only in God is my soul at rest."

Today we celebrate, Br. William, your fifty years as a vowed religious. As we will hear in the prayer for the jubilee, the main notes of this occasion are gratitude and mercy: gratitude for God's loving-kindness over so many years, and the recognition of the need for pardon for failures and infidelities along the way.

These are the great lessons our elders can teach us: their gratitude is an implicit recognition of God's care all along; they show us that gratitude is the best remedy for worry.

And they teach us in person Saint Paul's lesson: "do not make any judgment before the appointed time." They are living reminders for us to be honest with ourselves and to leave judgment to God alone. They are living reminders for us of God's mercy and of our need to be merciful in turn.

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