

31. January 2023

Carelessness as a gift

St. Don Bosco

Phil 4:4-9

Always be joyful, then, in the Lord; I repeat, be joyful. Let your good sense be obvious to everybody. The Lord is near. Never worry about anything; but tell God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with gratitude, and the peace of God which is beyond our understanding will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, let your minds be filled with everything that is true, everything that is honourable, everything that is upright and pure, everything that we love and admire - with whatever is good and praiseworthy. Keep doing everything you learnt from me and were told by me and have heard or seen me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

St. John Bosco, the holy priest and founder whom the Church commemorates on this day, dedicated his life in a special way to the neglected youth of Turin. He tried to help them through positive and preventive education, based on faith. Don Bosco was a man who had great trust in Divine Providence, and so he put into practice in his life the words of today's reading: *"Never worry about anything; but tell God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with gratitude"*.

This verse in today's text brings to mind that passage in the Gospel, when Jesus says to His disciples:

"That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Think how the flowers grow; they never have to spin or weave; yet, I assure you, not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of them. Now if that is how God clothes a flower which is growing wild today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he look after you, who have so little faith" (Lk 12:22-23,27-28).

Personally, these words of the Lord have been with me from the moment of my conversion, and I can testify that they are true and that they really come true when you abandon yourself completely to the Lord. Our Father knows what we need!

This word is the key to our whole life and gives us great security, based on trust in God. But this is not the decisive point; what is even more important is the fact that God wants to take care of us in this way. For Him it is a joy to take care of His children, and in this way He can express His love to us and assure us that He is always with us. This is what He wants! Jesus came into the world to make the Father known to us, to show us what He really is: a loving Father.

Carelessness, not to be confused with human optimism, is linked to concern for the Kingdom of God. We could put it that way: We care about the great concerns of God and He equips us with everything we need for our life and ministry. We know a similar word from an ecclesiastically recognized apparition of Our Lady in Banneux, Belgium. There Mary said: *"Believe in me and I will believe in you!"*

The Lord wants to bring us into an intimate communion with Him, in which we can firmly count on His care and love. From this communion flows that joy of which today's text speaks. Joy in God and for God's sake, being able to live in His love and constant companionship, becomes an inexhaustible source, which floods us and can also reach others through us. St. John Bosco expressed it in this phrase: *"The best thing we can do in this world is to do good, to be cheerful and let the sparrows sing"*.

We are thus invited to put our faith into practice in concrete love, thus cooperating in the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Every day presents us with opportunities to do so! In this way, we can grow in trust and acquire this carefree attitude.

But we must also perceive when we are invaded by the shadows of unnecessary worries, when we are too anxious to have everything in our own hands and are not attentive to the plans the Lord has for us and the ways He opens for us. Unnecessary worries cause us to live in an inner tension. They rob us of the simplicity and agility of faith, which are born of true joy.

"Unload all your burden on to him, since he is concerned about you" (1 Pet 5:7). Let us put these words into practice! God is waiting for you!