

XV Trinity 2021  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*Gal. 6.11-18 St. Matt. 6.24-34*



We love to worry...about almost everything. We worry about the weather. We worry about a disordered world spiraling out of control. We worry about the cost of living. We worry about the pandemic. Jesus tells us to stop worrying so much...because it does us no good!

This morning's Gospel is from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In the language of the *Book of Common Prayer*...Jesus tells us we can't serve two masters...we can't serve God and *mammon*. The meaning becomes clearer in the GNB...we can't be a slave both to God and money.

*Mammon* is a word used in the Bible for *material* things...money, clothes, food, our homes and almost anything we own or possess or place our trust in. Material things aren't bad. We need money to buy things and pay our rent and mortgage. We need clothes to keep warm. We need food to stay healthy.

Jesus isn't saying material things are bad. Earlier when his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray...he gave us the perfect prayer: Our Father in Heaven...give us today the food we need. God expects us to ask him not just for food, but for anything else we need to live. Jesus wants us to trust God will take care of our daily needs.

Jesus tells a story about birds flying and flowers growing in a field. God provides the seeds birds need to live and the sun and rain flowers need to grow. Jesus tells us God takes care of birds and flowers and we are more important than birds and flowers. We shouldn't worry so much about things...worrying can actually cut our lives shorter.

The 1963 movie "Lillies of the Field" is based on today's Gospel and real-life East German nuns who have transplanted to the Arizona desert. The movie stars Sidney Poitier, who plays the part of Homer Smith. Homer is an itinerant handyman traveling around the country looking for work.

Mother Maria Marthe is the leader of the nuns and she likes things done her way. She sees Homer as the answer to her prayer...she wants a chapel built for the townsfolk. Homer sees this as a way of making some money.

Homer is good at what he does. He gets local architects and construction companies to donate their time and material. But Homer soon comes to realize the nuns have no money and he will likely not be paid for his hard work.

Mother Maria gets her chapel. The local traveling priest...appropriately named Father Murphy...will no longer have hold tailgate Mass from the back of his station wagon. He will have a real altar in a real chapel in which to celebrate Mass.

The movie closes with Homer and the nuns singing the African-American spiritual "Amen" by Jester Hairston (1901-2000). "Ah-men", says Mother Maria. "Ay-men", replies Homer.

As Homer backs out the door, Mother Maria realizes he is not just heading out to sleep in the tent by his car...he is leaving. The credits role as Homer drives off down a lonely Arizona highway...and the word "Amen" appears on the screen.

If we were to make a sequel to the movie...we might start by saying Mother Maria and Homer both learned something. Mother Maria would have to learn...or perhaps re-learn humility. Homer would learn he took away something much more precious than money...God's grace! Both learned lessons in why worry only creates more worry.

In the Collect we ask God to keep us from things that hurt us and from the things that distract us and make us worry too much. We ask him to lead us to *profitable* things. *Profitable* doesn't mean money. *Profitable* means our love for God and others must increase every day of our lives. We're placing our trust in God's love and mercy. We believe he knows what we need and that he can and will take care of our needs.

That should give us every reason not to worry!

