

**DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT TOMORROW - Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Matthew 6,24-34**

**“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**

**“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

**“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**

After having taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer that, in the form of prayer, is the formula for acceptance of the beatitudes. Jesus turns to comment the effect of the welcoming of the first beatitude, that is the most important and permits the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, that is the kingdom of God: the new alternative society proposed by Jesus

In today's reading, Matthew's gospel chapter 6, 24-34, Jesus says: *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”* And here is a very clear warning: *“You cannot serve God and money.”* What we translate as wealth is actually mammon, what is mammon? It is money, wealth, material possessions, in which mankind puts its security.

The rival of God and Jesus, in the Bible, is never sin: God, in his boundless love, is able to conquer and convert the sinner; but the rival of God, the wall he is facing, in front of which even God's hands are tied, is convenience, self interest, and greed, this is why Jesus gives a clear warning to his disciples. And then for three times, Jesus tells his disciples to not worry once they accept the first beatitude. Jesus says to them : occupy yourselves for the good and wellbeing of the others, and permit God as father to occupy himself for you. Therefore a complete change for the disciples to their advantage.

The first is: *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”* therefore Jesus tells us not to have any worries, it's clear a person has to deal with things, but not to remain in this feeling of anxiety. And Jesus gives an example: *“Look at the birds of the air:”* why, did Jesus choose these from among the many examples he could have used? Because birds were considered useless animals, in the list of the blessing of the animals in the creation they do not exist, they are pests, so Jesus gives this example: Look at the birds of the air the most useless beings, the most insignificant of the

creation, "...they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

What does Jesus want to say? It is not an invitation to laxity, to doing nothing: if the Father feeds the birds of the air, that do not sow, reap or gather, even more will he feed you who sow, reap and gather. "Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" And here Jesus gives an example that in the ears of the listeners was very clear; "And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow:" field lilies were beautiful flowers, but they lasted only a day "...they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon... " who was known for his vanity, and the excess of luxury "...in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." So Jesus tells us to not to be preoccupied.

Why mustn't we be worried? It is important that, when Jesus had said: do not worry for what you eat, for the first time, in Matthew's gospel, appears the verb to eat, it appears then only in the Last Supper. There is a link between these verbs and these two reasons: it is the generous gift of self, to become "bread" for others, which causes God to become "bread" for us, in a force of love received and communicated.

Jesus continues: *But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,...* - this flower that lasted only a day - "...will he not much more clothe you.. " and here there is a reprimand, " O you of little faith?" The expression little faith does not mean that you do not have enough, it is an expression to say that you do not trust.

For the second time: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying,..." Jesus insists because he had naturally heard the preoccupation of his disciples with this argument. "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things," therefore Jesus is against his disciples, who should have had experience of this Father, trusted in him, with those that do not believe in the Father, but believe in other divinities. "...your heavenly Father knows.." here Jesus makes an important statement, if welcomed all forms of anxiety is taken away. "...that you need them all." The actions of the Father precede the moment of need, the moment when the disciple realizes this and requests it, the Father's actions do not meet the needs of the disciple, but actually proceeds them, and this gives full serenity. We should not worry about anything, because in times of need God intervenes, but, even before the need, the Lord is already in action.

And here is the conclusion: "But seek first the kingdom of God.." so, work for this alternative society, this society where, instead of having, there is sharing, instead of commanding there is service, "...and his righteousness," the faith of this programme "...and all these things.. " therefore all these things that Jesus had said "...will be added to you." So do not be preoccupied: when one make one's own life bread for others, the bread, not only will never finish, but will be given but it will be given in addition.

And then the conclusion: "...do not be anxious.. ", it is the last time that Jesus tells us not to be anxious, not to worry, "...about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself". Jesus says: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow", the exact translation, "will take care of itself" as now you have experienced the fatherly action of God, who has taken care of even the smallest aspects of the insignificant of your existence, so it will be tomorrow. So do not worry, but direct your life for the good of others. And Jesus continues: "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. " The difficulties of every day are guaranteed, the solution is in the continued presence of the Father of Jesus.