

Third Sunday after Pentecost, 10th June 2018

Life can seem to be full of worries, worries that can weigh us down, and that is why it is such a relief to hear those words of the Psalmist in today's Gradual: "Cast thy care upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee (*Jacta cogitatum tuum in Domino: et ipse te enutriet*)" (Ps 54:23). These are truly consoling words, and yet St Peter, in clearly echoing them in today's Epistle, amplifies and expands upon them to make these words appear even more consoling: "casting **all your** care upon him, for he have care of **you** (*omnen sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis*)" (1 P 5:7). Well, I tried to emphasize there what I consider to be amplified: namely, the use of "all (*omnem*)" and of "you (*vestram, vobis*)" instead of the singular, "thee (*te*)" (a weakness in standard modern English is surely the absence of a distinction between 'you' in the singular and 'you' in the plural). To say "casting **all your** care" upon the Lord, while addressing any number of people, is obviously stronger than simply "**thy** care", addressed to an individual.

And yet there is something else in St Peter's paraphrasing of Psalm 54, lost in both Latin and English translation, which suggests further amplification. Let us quote again here from the Epistle: "casting all your care upon him, for he have care of you (*omnen sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis*)" (1 P 5:7). That great Catholic author and scholar of the twentieth century, Monsignor Ronald Knox, pointed out that: "it ought to be *sollicitudinem vestri* rather than *vestram*; not '**your** care' but 'the care **of you**'" (taken from his book, *The Epistles and Gospels for Sundays and Holidays*). What then is amplified here? Well, we are invited to cast not so much our various cares and worries as the overall care of ourselves upon the Lord: "casting all care of yourself upon him".

It should not really surprise us that the New Testament, in the First Epistle of St Peter, goes one step (or rather several steps) better than the Old Testament, as seen in the Psalms. Nevertheless, both contain the strong expression ‘to cast’. Compare it now with ‘to pack up’ in the popular First World War marching song, “Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag” (I know this is a Sung Mass, but please don’t expect me to sing it!):

Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile, [...]
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worthwhile, so
Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile.

You have got to admire the sentiment and, it goes without saying, the smiling; though to cast, indeed to chuck (with some force), your whole care and worries upon the Lord is definitely more effective than to quietly pack them up in a bag, maybe for a rainy day. Worrying, as the song however rightly explains, “never was worthwhile”. And yet for us the point of not worrying is not the pointlessness of worrying as such but rather the fact that it is the Lord himself who, in the words of St Peter: “have care of you” (1 P 5:7), and, as the Psalm promises: “shall sustain thee” (Ps 54:23).

If we wanted an example of how the Lord has “care of” us, what better place to look than the parable of the lost sheep from today’s Gospel? – “What man is there of you that hath a hundred sheep, if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it?” (Lk 15:4). On the surface, it seems simply to be a story about what anyone would feel called to do in a certain situation, and yet we told beforehand that it is a “parable” (Lk 15:3), and so there must be some hidden meaning to it. We get some idea of

this though from the context of the parable within St Luke's Gospel: "At that time, the publicans and sinners drew near unto Jesus to hear him: and the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured, saying: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (Lk 15:1-2). The Lord is indeed the "man", the shepherd, of the parable, who goes "after that which was lost" (Lk 15:4); "that which is gone astray" (Mt 18:12), as in St Matthew's Gospel: after sinners, in other words; after us.

The Lord has such "care of" us (1 P 5:7), "lost" sheep that have "gone astray", but that does not mean that we do not do anything; that we do not respond to this care of his. The "lost" sheep wanted to be found and allowed Christ, the good shepherd, to carry it back to the fold. If it were a talking sheep, the opening of today's Introit could very appropriately be placed in its mouth: "Look thou upon me, O Lord, and have mercy on me, for I am alone (and if it did Latin: *Respice in me, et miserere mei, Domine: quoniam unicus*)" (Ps 24:16). Yes, have mercy on us, O Lord, lonely and lost sinners. Help us to cast, chuck (if you'll pardon the expression), "all care of" ourselves upon you (1 P 5:7). Amen.



Some sheep do not want to be found