

February 26, 2017 Trust In The Lord Homily: Brothers and sisters, the next time you remove a one dollar bill from your wallet or purse, I recommend that you look carefully at the flip side of the currency. And what will you see? Four simple words: "In God we Trust". It is the official motto of the United States and one that expresses in lapidary fashion one of our nation's highest ideals. In the year 1956, the then President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, signed the bill into law making those four words one of the linchpins of our Republic. It is rather noteworthy that the recognition of God on our nation's currency dates back to the beginning of the Civil War. The then secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase, received many requests from people of faith, strongly urging that the United States recognize God on all its coinage. Chase complied with their request, he instructed the Director of the Mint, James Pollack, to prepare a motto that would likely satisfy the American people. In his letter to Secretary Pollack, Mr. Chase wrote: "Dear Sir, no nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in his defense. The trust of our people in God should be declared in our national coins". A footnote: in 2013, atheists filed a lawsuit in federal court to have the motto removed. They lost their appeal!

Today's scripture readings are all about trust. In the first reading, God speaks through the Prophet Isaiah, who reassures the dispirited Jewish exiles that God will never forget them. Having been deported from their homeland and aching to return, the Jews were given to doubt the Lord's promises. Their doubt... "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me" is answered with a mother's tender words of comfort. "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb?" (Is.49:14) The Psalmist puts his trust in God alone. "He alone is my rock and salvation." (Ps.62:2-3) And in the gospel, Jesus offers his disciples a stark choice. Either they serve God or serve mammon, an Aramaic word meaning wealth or possessions. They must decide to secure their future by trusting in God rather than in perishable goods.

No less than five times in our gospel do we hear the word "Worry". Clearly, the chief enemy of trust is worry, anxiety, fear and mental breakdown. Worry dominates the heart of many Christians today in a culture showing few traces of the supernatural and transcendent. People are so often frantic in our fast paced society, yet Jesus insists that the faithful face the future without anxiety. And when He speaks of "Faith" in today's gospel, Jesus means confidence that their lives are in the hands of God and that their heavenly Father will care for them. "If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown in the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith." (Mt.6:30)

What lessons can we derive from Today's readings? First, (Quoting Pope Benedict), "Christians are distinguished by their absolute trust in the Heavenly Father, as was Jesus. It was precisely Christ's relationship with God the Father that gave meaning to his whole life... to his acts of salvation until his passion, death and resurrection." Second, we can learn from the extraordinary witness of the Saints whose trust in God was unwavering. To cite just one example, while awaiting a barbaric death in the Tower of London for having defied his King, Henry VIII, Sir Thomas More wrote a letter to his beloved daughter, Margaret, in which he declared his faith. "I will not mistrust Him, Meg, though I shall feel myself weakening and on the verge of being overcome with fear. I shall remember how St. Peter at a blast of wind began to sink because of his lack of faith, and I shall do as he did: call upon Christ and pray for Him for help, and then I trust He shall place his holy Hand on me and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning".

Thomas More died as a witness to the faith and his martyrdom is recognized by the Church as a powerful example of living the faith under fire. In conclusion, I quote the words of the psalmist: "Trust in Him at all times, O my people! Pour out your hearts before him".

Amen!