

Peace Beyond Understanding

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A - Dcn. Jason Nguyen

I am drawn to our second reading today because it begins with a statement that can stop us in our tracks. St. Paul writes: *"Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all."*

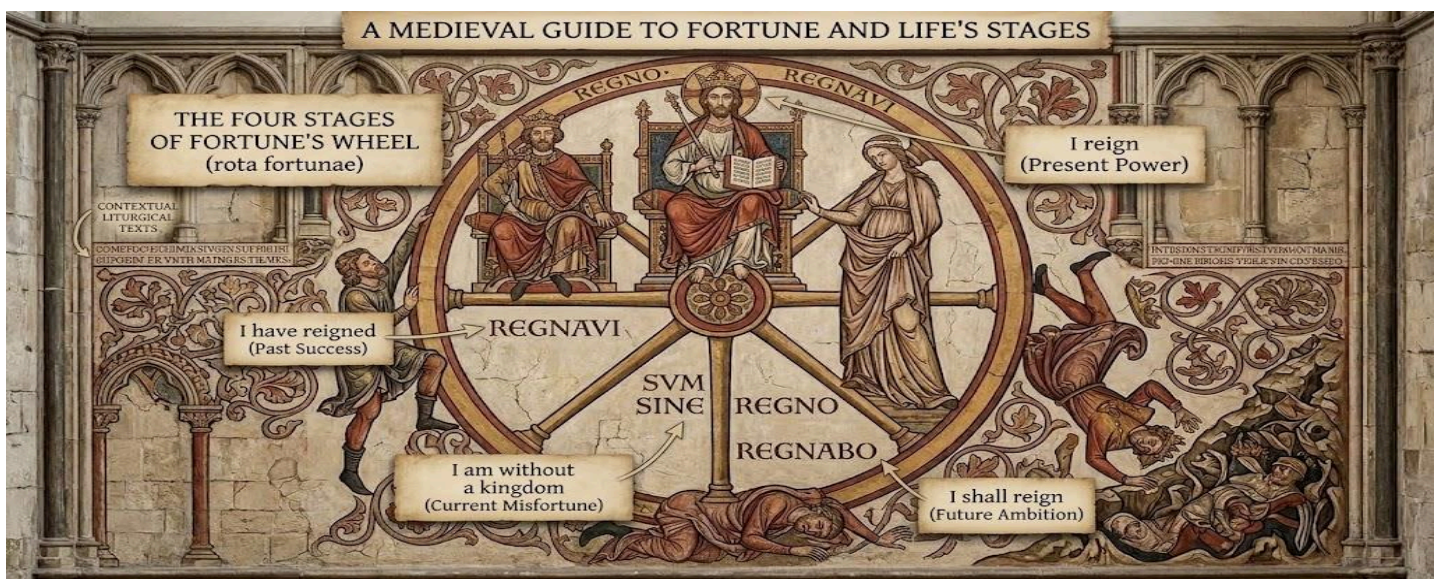
Let us be honest: that sounds almost impossible. There is no simple switch we can flip to turn off worry or fear. When someone says, "Just stop worrying," our minds race to everything weighing on us: our health, bills, family conflicts, or whatever crisis is in the news.

Yet Paul gives us a key to overcoming anxiety. He tells us to turn our focus toward God: *"In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God."*

Remember, Paul wrote these words while chained in prison. He does not promise that God will instantly remove all our problems. Instead, he promises that God's peace will protect us: *"Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*

Our circumstances may not change right away, but something changes inside us when we surrender our worries through prayer and gratitude. In Greek, the word for *guard* (*phroureo*) refers to a military garrison protecting a fortified city. Paul is showing us that God's peace stands guard at the door of our hearts and minds.

The Analogy of the Wheel



To help us understand this, Bishop Robert Barron often uses the symbol of the **Wheel of Fortune**:

- **Living on the Rim:** When we live on the outer rim of the wheel, our peace depends entirely on changing circumstances—our jobs, health, finances, or what is trending online. Because the rim never stops spinning, living there creates constant anxiety. Our happiness rises and falls with every turn.
- **Dwelling at the Center:** But when we anchor ourselves at the center—in Christ—His peace remains steady, no matter how wild the world spins around us. Circumstances change and seasons pass, but Christ remains the same.

Paul gives us practical advice for staying centered in Christ: ***"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."***

He is urging us to feed our minds with Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Just as poor nutrition weakens the body, filling our minds with constant outrage and fear weakens the soul.

This peace is not Stoicism. God does not ask us to hide our pain or pretend we are not hurting. Consider Job: when hardship struck, he wept and grieved deeply, yet declared, *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"* (Job 13:15). Christian peace is not the absence of problems; it is the presence of Christ right in the middle of them.

Conclusion & Practical Reflection

Today's First Reading and Gospel serve as a powerful reminder: when we try to grasp control on our own, like the wicked tenants, we drift to the spinning rim and lose our peace. But when we remember that the vineyard belongs to God, we are freed to simply cooperate with His grace and bring forth good fruit—fruits of gratitude, patience, and prayer.

Today, God calls us away from the spinning rim of the world to the quiet center of His grace. This week, when worry pulls you toward the rim, pause and ask: *What simple step can I take today to stay rooted in Christ?* Even five minutes of quiet prayer and thanksgiving can anchor your heart in God.

As we prepare to approach the altar, bring whatever burden is causing you sleepless nights. Place it on the altar alongside the bread and wine. Offer Him the fruits of your life—your prayer, your gratitude, your forgiveness, and your patience—and as Christ gives Himself to us in the Eucharist, may the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, Amen.