

**Reflection on the Gospel- Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A
(Matthew 6:24-34)**

'Today's trouble is enough for today!' These are the concluding words of the gospel for this Sunday. We are "not to be anxious". Rather, we are invited to be single-minded in our commitment. The challenge of this gospel is to live in the present, in right relationship and connection with the whole Earth community and to trust in the goodness and providence of God. That is not always easy, especially for certain personalities and under certain difficult circumstances. In *What Makes us Tick? The Ten Desires That Drive Us*, Hugh Mackay claims that there is an epidemic of anxiety in the Western world. He reflects on our need to embrace our connectedness with ourselves, with each other, and with nature. If our innate desire to connect is frustrated or neglected, Mackay believes that the desire to control and the desire to be taken seriously will 'expand unhealthily'. It is all a question of balance and of daily attention to the right ordering of our relationships with the material world, with one another and with God. Anxiety inhibits healthy living and impacts negatively on ourselves as well as on our community environments.

The challenge not "to be anxious" appears six times in various forms in this one gospel reading. Three times in this passage Jesus tells the assembled crowd, including his disciples, not to worry. They are not to be anxious about food or drink or clothing. Neither are they to worry about what tomorrow might bring. It is clear that Jesus does not discount the human need for food and drink and clothing, for he states explicitly that God knows that they need all these things (6:32). Jesus' concern is with their "little faith" or their lack of trust in God's capacity to provide for the needs of all living beings. He challenges his listeners to be attentive to the processes among all living things, such as the way the birds of the air are fed and the lilies of the field are clothed. He also invites attentiveness to the life-sustaining processes at work in our own bodies. The hairs of our head, for instance, grow without any effort or anxiety on our part.

Jesus places all of this in the context of the right ordering of our relationships with the whole Earth community, expressed in terms of seeking God's kin-dom and God's "righteousness". There is an echo here of Matthew 5:6 where those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are said to be blessed and told that they will "be filled". In other words, God will care for them in the same way as God cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields.