

WELCOMING IN CHRIST
Monthly Devotional Reflections
for the St. Paul's Anniversary Campaign

OCTOBER 2018

Season after Pentecost with the expanding mission and influence of the church
St. Paul's sixty years of programs achieving both growth and outreach

TEXTS: Matthew 6:25-33

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. 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 can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry 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 clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Psalm 90:12-17

So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart. Turn, O LORD! How long? Have compassion on your servants! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and prosper for us the work of our hands-- O prosper the work of our hands!

REFLECTIONS: *The Urban Dictionary* observes that *angst* is a transcendent emotion in that it combines the unbearable anguish of life with the hopes of overcoming a seemingly impossible situation. Jesus addresses such anxieties—from trivial daily decisions to the shape of one's life—in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) by observing that God knows and provides for the needs of all creation. We are instructed simply to seek God's kingdom and righteousness, confident that our needs will be met in abundance. How we live, who and what we love, the decisions we make each day, our stewardship of time, talent and treasure—it all matters. But the focus must be outward rather than inward; welcoming rather than ignoring others; sharing instead of hoarding. Life together in the family of St. Paul's Episcopal Church keeps us focused day by day upon God's will and our faithfulness. We cannot overcome anxiety alone. Indeed, we grow into discipleship surrounded and encouraged by friends, receiving each day of life as a gift, seeking to grow in wisdom and compassion. The impact of our parish is magnified in worship and study, outreach and service, **sixty years and counting** of tradition and leadership—the steadfast love of God, the favor of the Lord, made real to generations. And now we embark

upon an ambitious project: *Welcoming in Christ!* It is the opportunity for all associated with St. Paul's to make a special commitment of personal resources to improve and expand the facilities that serve as our mission base. God always knows what we need before we do and, if we work first for righteousness, we need not be anxious. Now we move forward by the light of Christ.

PRAYERS: Let us join hands and hearts and minds with gift pledges that make a difference, confident that God's provisions to us are not simply adequate but abundant. We offer the prayer of the ancient psalmist, repeated by generations past: "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands." God's favor meets our responsibilities. ***God of all life, with all your creatures great and small we celebrate your bounty and your goodness, for in the harvest of land and ocean, in the cycles of the seasons, and the wonders of each creature, you reveal your generosity. Teach us the gratitude that dispels envy, that we may seek your kingdom, honor every gift, welcome each one, and praise you in all times and places; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***



The Work of our Hands montage for Habitat for Humanity, artist unknown

ART: This image of unity is made up of hundreds of smaller pictures. Whose hands are these? What has happened just before the scene? What will happen next? What are the occasions for joining hands? How do the background pictures matter even if we can't discern them? Why?

ACTION: Take the opportunity to learn even more about *Welcoming in Christ!* Pray for the success of this campaign and please make a generous financial commitment by October 14. Affirm the vestry and clergy and all those who have worked so faithfully over the past year shaping this important mission endeavor of St. Paul's church. Rejoice and give thanks!

Please see <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily.php?year=B> for daily scripture readings