

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

February 26, 2017—The story is told of an American tourist who visited the renowned Polish Rabbi Hofetz Chaim. As the tourist entered the Rabbi's home, he was amazed at the sheer simplicity of the room filled only with books, a table, and a wooden chair.

The American asked the scholar, "Rabbi, where is your furniture?"

To which the Rabbi asked, "Where is yours?"

The puzzled American tourist quickly replied, "My furniture, Rabbi? I am only a visitor here; I am only passing through."

And the Rabbi replied, "So am I, my friend, so am I."

What a freeing disposition this is. Experts tell us that, unlike the Rabbi, the most prevalent trademark of our modern day American culture is **anxiety**—that overriding human emotion that surrounds and even rules us (and so often without our permission). Webster's Dictionary defines anxiety as "*Worry or uneasiness about what may happen.*"

It can fuel our fears, quench our exuberance for life and living, and make of us robots who *think* we are alive. Instead we are alone, together. We belong to no one in our journey, and travel alone and in vain to nowhere.

We now have pills to treat anxiety, aromatic candles and soft music to soothe us, and studies and theories to explain it.

But, **anxiety** is not, by any means, a new phenomenon, since in our sacred family heritage are pages upon pages of just that reality. For in the year 700 BC, when the nation of Israel had been crushed and captured by the Babylonians, and hundreds of thousands of Israelites had been driven into exile, the heart of God's promised people lay open and

broken. This people believed that God had forgotten about and abandoned them, and that they were all alone.

But with keen wisdom and holy insight, the Prophet Isaiah, a God-sent messenger of hope, used eloquent and colorful imagery, and assured this broken nation with the words of today's first reading, "Even should she [a mother] forget [her child], I will never forget you!" [IS 49:14-15]

My friends, as disciples of our Blessed Lord, centuries removed from his sandaled presence in our midst, His words in today's Gospel [MT 6:24-34] still remind us that, although we may never be free from anxiety around us or within us, we have the great gift of our faith. When we look at our anxious and often faithless and confused world, we can see that the only roadway to sanity is through Him, who teaches us that trust in God is paramount for peace to rule our lives.

Today, let us allow the trust of the Lord to rub off on us. Let us redefine the wording of our lives, as the good Rabbi reminded us, that we are just visitors passing through—not with anxiety and fear—but, with calm assurance and abiding trust in a God who assured us that He would never forget us. And that is the only reason in life that we will ever need. God love you.