

Encouragement Encouragement

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Fear...??

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We live in times where, in many people's lives fear stalks them greater than any plague. The uncertainty surrounding the many things that we once took, perhaps, too easily for granted, seeps into our consciousness like a silent enemy and can destroy both our peace of mind and our well-being as well as making us react in ways that have a host of consequences. Our mental, physical and of course spiritual well-being is attacked. There are so many causes, many of which pose us dilemmas and therefore become a breeding ground for fear. We, as people, are nervous of the unknown and so avoid situations that spark it off or we do not like to enter into unsafe territory.

Fear, of course, is natural and indeed, essential sometimes, for it prevents us from doing things that may injure us. We naturally pull back from stepping out onto the road without checking that it is safe to do so. We do not jump into a river if we cannot swim or go into a lion's den. Fear of injury or death, in those situations, enables us to avoid danger. The syndrome of 'fight or flight' is a natural precaution that we learn as children. However, we now have to deal with so much more and with things that are perhaps less predictable and obvious. A few examples may be – a pandemic that we do not understand, climate change that we do not seem to be able to deal with as individuals, the movement of peoples all over the world, economic collapse, poverty – all which cause major stress and can lead to panic, which after all is an expression of fear.

There are many ways that, as individuals, we deal with fear, and some depend on temperament, age, or circumstances but as Christians we have to look deeper at how we deal with fear because it can not only blind us from action, generosity or mercy, but it can also make us lose hope and trust.

The phrase 'Real love casts out fear' (John 4:18) is relevant in this regard...

'There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear involves punishment. The one who fears has not been perfected in love'.

Fear is mentioned 80 times in the Bible: Jesus Himself recognised fear in the Apostles and others He encountered, saying to them "Do not be afraid". Why does Jesus do this? Why does He reassure us so often? When He enters into the room after the Resurrection He greets the startled Apostles with "Peace, do not be afraid..." When He walks on the water to meet the fishing Apostles He greets them with the same remark.

One of my favourite expressions coming from the lips of Jesus is 'Fear not little flock' but the continuation of His words are the most reassuring of all... 'because' The Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom. (Luke 12:32).

For the Christian the key to dealing with fear are the above words. The Father, Son and Spirit know only too well that the going can get very tough in life and things often present themselves that can not only be a challenge but demanding of us in so many ways. Fear can paralyse us into a belief that God does not care, or does not listen to us when we pray. It can cause great anxiety, depression and hopelessness. Anxiety and panic attacks are now great in the young and the number of people who live life filled with fear or phobias has now risen to unprecedented levels, which prevents people from living fully. But that phrase – that 'The Father wishes to give us the Kingdom' is the antidote to fear. We are destined for better things. How we respond to this in our hearts depends on the degree to which we truly believe this. Do we believe that the best is still to come?



Moreover, underpinning all of this is God's Passion for His beloved Creation. He is the Masterful Creator that turns all things, in the end, to good.

Only in Christ do we find real love, and the fullness of life. And so I invite you today to look to Christ' St. Pope John Paul II

How could, or did, Jesus endure Gethsemane and the Cross? Because He knew that the Father's Love was total and He trusted in His Goodness and Total Love. This trust is often exhibited by those who die for others and for belief in God's tremendous love of us. If we concentrate only on the 'incidence' and not the totality of our purpose we can be lost in fear and perplexity. If we try to look at the 'master plan' – that is The Kingdom – we can live in peace and acceptance even with difficult personal events. This does not necessarily take away suffering or pain but we transfer all into the hands of a Loving God, leaving us free to continue.

'The little flock' that Jesus speaks of is His way of saying 'I know your struggles and that you are frightened but I am taking care of it'. The Flock, the little sheep will gather around Him because He will be the Gatherer. The wolves scatter the sheep but the Shepherd gathers – he carries the little lambs too frail to go it alone.

If we have this perspective, even in the severest of circumstances, that His love of us, is so total, this can interrupt those fears and panic attacks. It is a well-known fact that 'meditation', even in the less spiritual sense, can reduce the heart rate and bring peace. How much more so can prayer or meditation on the Word, also do this for us in an instant? Modern technology has now demonstrated this with evidence of a change in the brain as we pray. I remember lying for yet another scan in the 'big tube' or 'doughnut' as they now call it, thinking that Jesus laid in the tomb but Rose from the dead, and those thoughts made me relax and be at peace.

If we can try to remember that we are loved at each moment, second, of our lives, then fear will become a secondary response, and manageable. It is human to be nervous at times, or fearful but it should not dominate us, nor prevent us from serving, or enjoying the blessings that are showered on us daily. Joyce Meyer, whose early life was so fraught and who was beset by many fears and anxieties learned how to cope with the fear in her life in the following way: every day she would write down all the good things that she had experienced that day. Sometimes it was only one thing but it lifted her spirits and enabled her to cope with the next day. Soon the blessings became greater than her anxieties.

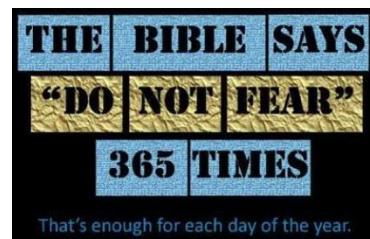
Finally the passage from St. Paul to the Romans, (8:38-39) is very important in this regard...

"For I am certain that *nothing* can separate us from His love; neither death nor life, neither angels nor other Heavenly rulers, or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below – there is nothing in all creation that will *ever* be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord."

Do not let fear change your life, let God's love fill you with the certainty that you are precious and try to live fear-free!
Halina Holman

Pope Francis:

"Where does fear lead us? The feeling of being closed in on oneself, trapped. Once we feel that way, our fear starts to fester and is inevitably joined by its 'twin sister,' paralysis: the feeling of being paralysed. Thinking that in this world, in our cities and our communities, there is no longer any room to grow, to dream, to create, to gaze at new horizons – in a word to live – is one of the worst things that can happen to us in life, and especially at a younger age. When we are paralysed, we miss the magic of encountering others, making friends, sharing dreams, walking at the side of others." Krakow, Poland 2016



Feast Days in October

- 1st St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus & The Holy Face
- 2nd **The Guardian Angels**
- 4th **Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 5th St. Sr. Faustyna, 6th St. Bruno
- 7th **Our Lady of the Rosary**
- 9th St. John Henry Newman
- 10th St. Paulinus of York
- 11th **Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 12th St. Wilfred, 13th St. Edward the Confessor
- 15th St. Teresa of Avila
- 16th St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
- 17th St. Ignatius of Antioch
- 18th **Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 19th St. Paul of the Cross
- 22nd St. Pope John Paul II
- 25th **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28th **Ss. Simon & Jude, Apostles**