

Twelfth Sunday Ordinary Time...
“Fearless”

The Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/062120.cfm>

Fear is a murderer. It stops us from living.
It paralyzes us physically, mentally and spiritually.

And yet, there is plenty for us to be afraid of these days.
We're afraid of contracting COVID-19.
And we sometimes even cast a suspicious look on others for fear they have
it - and might give it to us.

We're afraid of what's happening to our world:
The racism, the violence, the disrespect for human life, the immorality, the
anti-religious fervor.

And who isn't afraid of death to some degree?
What will it be like? When will it happen?
Are we ready today to meet Jesus face to face if it be his will?

Much of Jesus's ministry was about conquering our fears.
He turned the lights on and opened the closet, showing us that, in the end,
there's no boogie man hiding in our room that's bigger than he is.
Not even death.

St. John Paul II had good reason to live in fear.
He lost his mom when he was eight.
Big brother when he was twelve.
His father when he was twenty.
By his 21st birthday he had lost all the people he loved.
He lived through the evils of Nazi-ism and communism in Poland.
The Auschwitz death camp was 30 minutes from his house.

And yet his personal motto was the command Jesus spoke more than any other in scripture: "Be not afraid!"
All throughout the Bible we read that we should not fear.
Jesus tells us that three times in today's Gospel.

Jesus knew well that we have much to fear, but from his eternal perspective, we really have no reason at all to be fearful.
John Paul II chose to not let his fears dominate his life.
He chose instead to accept the truth that Jesus conquers fear and promises us his help. In our first reading, while suffering persecution and threats, the prophet Jeremiah says, "But the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion..."

And now... you men, you fathers;
On this Father's Day, in the year two thousand and twenty...
What about you?
Are you living as fearless leaders and protectors of your family in the ways of faith?
Are you courageously giving testimony to the truth in your workplaces?

Are you standing up for what Jesus Christ teaches in the Gospels?
Are you defending the Catholic faith against the heresies and lies of our culture?

In 2015, Bishop Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix wrote an Apostolic Exhortation titled, "Into the Breach". He wrote it for us Catholic men. He begins: "Men, do not hesitate to engage in the battle that is raging around you. It's the battle that is wounding our children and families. It's the battle that is distorting the dignity of both men and women". And the Church is very much in the crosshairs.

The world is under attack by Satan, as our Lord said it would be. Satan is busy. He never stops working. He never rests. And fear is one of his most powerful weapons.

Bishop Olmsted goes on to say that one of the reasons the Church is faltering under these attacks is that many Catholic men have not been willing to "step into the breach" - to fill this gap that lies open and vulnerable to further attack.

A large number have left the faith and many who remain practice the faith timidly and are only minimally committed to passing the faith on to their children.

Men, do you respect, love and honor your spouse?

Do you model Christian marriage for others, especially for your children?

Our three daughters stunned us one day after they had grown up to be young adults. They told us the most important influence we had on them was how we showed our love for each other as husband and wife. We are far from being perfect parents and spouses, but it brought home to us what a powerful influence we are on our children.

Fathers, your children are watching you.

How you practice the faith has a tremendous influence on them.

If you are lukewarm, they will be as well.

If you are timid and fearful, that's what your children will be.

In our Gospel today, Jesus tells the apostles, "Fear no one. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but not the soul."

He warns us of the one, the evil one, who can kill BOTH body and soul for all eternity. It's the contagion of sin that we must fear more than anything else.

Is fear stopping us from living a full and joy-filled life?

Our Lord is inviting you to trust in him, his love for you, and his promise of everlasting happiness. He wants you to live life to the full.

The only real and lasting antidote for fear is love. Specifically, God's great love for us. Even when we feel like everything is closing in on us, God is right there with us. In Isaiah 41 God tells us, "...do not be afraid for I am with you; do not be alarmed, for I am your God".

A life of constant prayer helps us to deeply know God's love and helps to melt away our fears.

When you are feeling especially fearful, try this:

Stop what you are doing and pray a slow Hail Mary, or a decade of the rosary. You will experience a gentle peace rest upon you. I have started doing this myself and then I realized that the Blessed Mother had been waiting for me to come to her for help.

Our Blessed Mother will calm your worries and fears with her motherly love and care. Jesus has entrusted her with that responsibility, and she treasures it. She treasures you. She loves you.

Our Lord has given each of us a clear command: "Be not afraid".

So, remind yourself every day: "I am fearless because my God loves me".

Deacon Kevin Heckman

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