

Faith like a night light in the hall

Do you remember the first time you felt scared?
Your earliest memory of being afraid?

I think I was about four years old, in my room and trying to fall asleep. Suddenly I felt very afraid of the dark. Maybe there was something hiding under my bed? I yelled for my dad. He said to me, "Remember, the dark doesn't last forever." Then he proceeded to install a night light in the hall outside my room. I felt less afraid. I slept soundly that night.

In this Sunday's gospel, Jesus sends his disciples/students out to continue his work, his mission. Of course, they're anxious and afraid. They are facing a great unknown. (Matthew 10:26-33)

Jesus knows that not everyone will welcome them; not everyone will want to hear what they have to say. They will be rejected by some. Rejection stings. At times it may even feel as if the mission is falling apart.

So Jesus tells his apprentices to think differently. The success of their work is less about popularity and "adding numbers." It is more about being faithful to the message.

So, don't let the rejection define you. Your purpose in life is far greater and noble!

For most of us, persecution isn't something we face. But we can all, at times, feel rejected or ignored. We've all tasted the fear of not being accepted, of missing out, of not "fitting in," like the rest.

The words of this prayer by a Jesuit priest can enlighten our path:

"Loving God, you made me who I am. Help me to remember the dignity you gave me the moment I was conceived.

Be with me when I feel rejected. Help me to respond as you would want, with a love that respects others, but also respects me. Help me to find friends who love me for who I am and the path I am called to follow in this life.

May I never forget that Jesus was at times misunderstood too. He knew rejection. He was even beaten and spat upon for who he was. But Jesus never failed to proclaim that God loved them. He encouraged everyone to embrace that dignity, even when others failed to see it.

And one more thing: Help me to remember that nothing is

impossible with you. You will find a path for me, even if I can't see it now. Please help me to remember these things when my fears overwhelm me like the dark of night."

So let's pray that our faith would be like that light in the hall: Courage by day and peace during the night.

Amen.

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