

Fear

Have you ever been afraid?

I think most of us have at some point in our lives

I looked at this on the internet

Professionals boil fear down to 4 or 5 categories

All our fears flow from one of more of these

And then there are phobias

Taking a legitimate fear to a high level

Any of these are enough to paralyze us

Both physically and spiritually

They can keep us from growing

From truly developing the gifts God has given us

And don't be fooled

Satan knows all of this

And he is a master of manipulating our fears

So we turn inward to where we feel safe

Fear has been a part of the human condition since the beginning

There is an antidote to fear

And that is faith

In our first reading

Jeremiah knew fear

He knew those that spoke God's word

His prophets would be opposed and hated

He was charged with a difficult message

Telling the Jewish people that God's judgment was coming

Things they did not want to hear

His enemies wanted to silence him at all costs

And he knew this

His fear was legitimate

But he found courage in the Lord

But the Lord is with me,

like a mighty champion:

my persecutors will stumble,

they will not triumph

His faith is the source of his courage

A courage that allowed him to face his detractors

To overcome his fear

Sing praise to the Lord

For He has rescued the life of the poor

From the power of the wicked

St Paul also knew what it was to be persecuted

And how not to allow the fear of this to paralyze you

God's message has always stirred up resistance

Through one man sin entered the world

And through sin, death

This is one of our primal fears

And affects us both physically and spiritually

It can make us want to silence God by silencing His messengers

But God does not leave us in our sin

By His grace and love

He has restored life to us in Jesus Christ

The disciples also knew fear

Our Gospel today comes just after the calling of the 12

Now they are being sent to preach the Good News

Jesus gives them their instructions

Fear no one

Fear is not an excuse for not taking part in the mission

Recall the parable of the talents

Do not be like the third man

Paralyzed by fear, he buried his talents

He refused to take a risk

For the most part our culture only wants to hear what it wants

It wants to be reassured it is doing good

It doesn't want to be called to conversion

But we need to hear what stirs our hearts

What makes us uncomfortable

And that is our mission as Christians

To take the Word of God into the world

Even when we are afraid

Because we are often afraid of the wrong thing

Do not be afraid of those that can kill the body

But cannot kill the soul

Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul

Jesus knows his message is an outrageous message

It will be opposed by powerful forces

But nevertheless

It is a much needed message

It is the message of salvation

A message Satan wants hidden and behind closed doors

So although we will be opposed

Have courage

See how many sparrows are in the world

And yet not one falls to the ground without the Father's knowledge

Even the hairs on your head are counted

This gives us courage to be his disciples

To be his witnesses

Even if bodily persecutions come

The Father is well aware of our needs

And He will give us what we need

Have courage

Everyone who acknowledges Me before others,

I will also acknowledge before My Heavenly Father.

But whoever denies Me before others,

I will deny before My Heavenly Father

Words of comfort and a warning at the same time

Is fear a part of your life?

Christ gives us the remedy in our Gospel

For every mention of fear

He mentions the Father

The mercy of the Heavenly Father

This is the antidote to earthly fear

St John Paul II tells us:

Do not be afraid

Do not be afraid of your past

What lies hidden in your life

We all have these things in our lives

Past sins

Secrets we are ashamed of

And we can let Satan blackmail us with these

Afraid everyone will know how weak we really are

These can terrorize us

And keep us silent

Hoarding the talents we have been given

Do not be afraid to speak in the light

What you have heard in the darkness

In Christ's darkest moment

Upon the cross in Calvary, he called out:

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

Not a cry of misery, but one of mercy

True fear is separation from God

The times we let our sin and our ego lead us into isolation

But Christ gives us the courage to confront these things

Even the painful truth of ourselves

So we can live in His glorious truth

We live in a fragile world

A world that is fraught with danger

A world that desires us to be silent

We see it in the persecutions of Christians in the middle East

We see it in court decisions here in the United States

Attacks against marriage and the family

Attacks against the Church with the clerical abuse scandal

When fear reigns

Turn to the Father

And so we will close with a prayer of St Theresa of Avila:

Let nothing disturb you

Let nothing frighten you

All things are passing away

Patience obtains all things

Whoever has God lacks nothing

God alone suffices

Amen