

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

The Second Sunday of Easter Divine Mercy Sunday

Happy Easter again. Easter is so important that the Church stretches out its celebration for weeks! It's a reminder to be joyful. Do you know what often dries up our joy? Fear! Along with its cousin, worry, Jesus warned us about them countless times. Fear not. Don't be afraid. Yet to be honest, fear and worry seem always to be around. Families have fears. After all, the world can be a dangerous place. But ... is fear good for us? Jesus witnessed fear in his followers because his ministry was judged a threat to those in power. So he invited them to be more carefree, and to live like the lilies of the field. Don't worry. God will take care of you, he said. After he died, Jesus' disciples slipped back into fear. So he returned to life to remind them about God's abiding concern and care for them. Don't fear. Be at peace. Today, we all need to hear those words.

A Gospel Word for the Home

John 20:19-31

It happened in the middle of the night. The house was quiet, and I lay awake with worried thoughts flying through my mind. Our bank account was nearing the bottom. What will happen to us if there's nothing there? My mom was suffering through her last days in a nursing home. I worried about her too. One of our children wasn't doing well at school. The teacher recommended professional help. What could be wrong? The terrors of the night were in full force. I was in misery.

There always seems to be enough going on in our lives to generate a whole barrel of fears and worries. No area of life is exempt. We are weighed down by thoughts of not enough money, uncertain health, troubled children, the difficulties of marriage, shaky jobs, ailing cars ... the list of potential worry-makers is almost endless. And beneath every worry is a fear.

Some fear is well founded. Too many fears, however, obstruct life's goodness. It may also indicate that we are depending only on ourselves. We've lost trust in God. We forgot who's really in charge.

Jesus rose from the dead to give us courage to live more fearlessly. He knew the destructive power of fear and how it robs us of the happiness and joy God wants for us.

We're in Eastertime in the Church's year. It is a great time to stand back to assess our strengths in dealing with life's inevitable challenges. One of God's greatest gifts is mentioned in today's Gospel reading: "Peace be with you."

Parent Survival

Experts in parenting recommend that parents try to maintain what's called non-anxious presence with their children. That means try not to over-react, get bent out of shape, or lose your cool. Stay calm. In the words of Jesus, be at peace. And there's good reason to do so. Anxiety and fear block clear thinking. They literally shut down part of the brain. And what parents should do is offer their clearest thinking to their children.

Furthermore, there's old wisdom that says that no one should make important decisions when under the influence of strong emotions. It is good to think of this before situations arise that cause us to become emotionally unsettled.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus calmed his disciples who worried about their future. After all, their leader had just been crucified. But the same advice is good for us. Be at peace. Enjoy your children.

Car or Meal Talk

Play the "name your biggest fear" game. Have all family members express their biggest fears. Then talk about them. Get them out in the open. Children may be surprised that parents have fears. It's good for them to know this. And it's certainly good for parents to know exactly what worries their children. In this game, everyone wins.

One-Line Prayer

God of might and power: Help us to trust that you will care for us no matter what. Amen.