

# Connecting With the Sunday Readings

## The Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

This is “do not fear” week. Papal commentators say that the late Pope John Paul II often said, “Do not fear.” There are even T-shirts with his picture and those words. But if the truth be told, he wasn’t the first to warn about the dangers of excessive fear. It was Jesus. In fact, biblical scholars tell us that this admonition is the most common one uttered in the New Testament.

Those were fearful times. People had an undeveloped understanding of nature, so they feared the storms. They also failed to understand illness and disease. Filled with unknowns, they could easily live in terror of their world. Yet even today, people are pulled down by fear. So, the message to quench fear is a valid one? Not entirely. There are always dangers aplenty. Do not overly fear the unknown, because fear can paralyze us so much that we don’t experience the freedom and joy God desires us to have.

## A Gospel Word for the Home

### Matthew 10:26-30

Children are those most vulnerable to being fear-filled. We older folks forget that youngsters come into this world without an understanding of how things work. After arrival, they start listening to what’s said and done around them. Parents tease about the boogie man and the monster under the bed. But for some children, this is no joke. They sleep with one eye open to possible danger.

It is necessary for parents to help their children sort out the difference between what’s to be feared in reality, and what’s not to be feared. Parents can begin this task by first assessing their own fears. Our culture contains many exaggerated potential enemies. We all need to make a list of what we fear. Then do a calm evaluation of what’s worth our fear-energy and what’s not.

Then, like Jesus, seek to mitigate the damage or restrict the power of unnecessary fears. If we don’t first do this for ourselves as parents, our children will inherit our fears, along with those fears they develop themselves by watching TV every day.

## Parent Survival

We've already touched on an important part of survival as a parent and dealing with fears. Let's go a little deeper. Ask yourself what fears existed in your own family of origin. What kinds of monsters bothered you as a child? Have you successfully slain the dragon? Have you dropped your fear of darkness and the unknown? These are deep issues and important in your life, even as an adult. Fears are among the most powerful of debilitating emotions. They accompany us to the end of our days unless we deal with them. When Jesus told his disciples not to fear, he was not addressing children but adults.

## Car or Meal Talk

Today's question is obvious. Ask your children what they fear. Share with them your fears. Conclude with a discussion of which fears are really groundless, and which deserve attention.

## One-Line Prayer

Dear Lord: Protect our family. Bring us the peace of mind that comes from trusting you to care for us always. Amen.