

Pray More Advent Retreat 2019 - Transcript

Feeding Your Faith and Overcoming Your Fear **John Kinuthia**

Hello, and welcome to this session, this segment of Feeding our Faith and stemming our doubts. And I'm really excited to be sharing with you on this platform, online Pray More Advent Retreat. So that being said, before we dive into it, let's just invite the Holy Spirit to come and guide us, guide this conversation, and guide my testimony as we proceed.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Thank You, Jesus, for this particular time. Thank You for this talk. As I share my testimony with our listeners, touch their hearts, and may You give them an inspiration to learn a thing or two. Come, Holy Spirit, and light the fire in our souls to be able to follow You. St. Joseph, pray for us. St. John Paul II, pray for us. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So, once again, I welcome you to this particular talk. This particular talk is about fear, and I always like to share... I want to start this particular talk by saying that, growing up, I grew up with two feelings or two sentiments: I grew up with a lot of fear and a lot of love. And a lot of fear because of... from my dad's side, and my mom actually gave us a lot of love. But I wanted to share a reflection that changed the way I think and the way I reason, and the ways dad taught me about approaching the fear, and how fear has actually made his life go south.

So, my dad was very... he was a hard worker. But also he made a lot of mistakes, and because of these mistakes, he ended up becoming an alcoholic. And, you know, we... as the siblings grew up, the more he became more alcoholic. And I remember very well one day he left in the morning and he was supposed to... he used to run a small business, and he went to work, and in our mind, yeah, he went to work. But, instead of going to work, he encountered or he met one of his long friend whom he had not seen in many days, but they decided to grab coffee. But instead of grabbing coffee they went to a club, they went drinking 8 o'clock in the morning. So they started drinking 8 o'clock in the morning. And I remember very well that day there was a downpour, it rained very heavy, and you know, they were just having a good time, and I think he drank too much.

And so, after a couple of hours there they, you know, he decided to come home, but he couldn't walk because he was heavily drunk. So he was falling all over, and a couple of friends who knew him and had their own car, they decided to put him in the trunk to bring him home. And so they did. But because, you know, in our home the path is not... doesn't have... it's not tarmac road, it's a soil road, it's a soil road, so they were afraid that if they entered there they were going to get stuck in

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the mud. So they left him, you know, just half a mile from home, and then he had to walk home. So, you know, he decided to walk. But it continued to rain, and on his way home, because he's losing his balance, he fell into a ditch. And so the ditch... I don't know. I'm even laughing because of how the situation was. And then he started screaming, and he didn't want to die there, he was saying, you know, he didn't want to die there.

Luckily, a neighbor was coming from the shopping center and she saw him, and she tried to pull him out but she couldn't. So she ended up walking home and knocking on our door and told me mom about my dad, he's stuck in a ditch somewhere, very drunk, his clothes are all wet and muddy and, you know. So, my mom just, you know, told us that, you know, we need to pick him up. I's about half a mile from home. So myself and my other three siblings, who were older, decided to go pick him up.

So we reached the point where he was, and there he was. Actually, he had slept. It was raining, but the alcohol overpowered him. So we dragged him home, literally dragged him, our dad, and it was very embarrassing to see him in that situation. And that picture is always in my mind of how I found him, or how we found him, in a ditch and dragged him home about half a mile, because he was so heavy we couldn't even lift him up. And it's raining and muddy, so all of us were a mess. So after, you know, he slept for 24 hours and, you know, we thought he was dead in a way, but he woke up and he didn't even know how he got home.

Fast forward. In 2012, before I came to the US, before I came to this country, we were chatting there just like a weekend before and, you know, I was asking questions, and now it was, like, goodbye time, and I spending one-on-one time with each of them, with my family and my siblings. And we're talking, and he looked at me and he said "You know, there's one thing I want to tell you." I said "What?" He said "My life has been a mess. It has been a mess because I was afraid to face the reality, I was afraid to face the inner self, I was afraid to face my mistakes, I was afraid to look inside of me and see what kind of a person I am."

And he said the spirit of the devil took him over, took his life over, and this fear just made him to see all the negative side of his life. This negative... this fear fed his mind a lot of negativity, a lot of shame, a lot of embarrassment. This fear made him not see anything good in himself and in his life. And he said "John," he said, "I want you to get this from me." The fear of feeling ashamed, the fear of embarrassment, the fear of him not being good enough, the fear of his own mistakes in life led him to be an alcoholic. He couldn't face himself and, therefore, he was trying to hide himself behind his drinking problem.

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And he said it all started when one time his mom, now my grandma, sent him to do some work in the yard, in the garden, and instead of doing the work that was so crucial for their livelihood he decided to go out and hang out with the boys. And he said “Failure to do.” To let my grandma down, and meaning they were going to go hungry for a couple of days because he did not do the work he was supposed to do. He chose the wrong route. He was afraid that my grandma would be very upset with him, he was afraid my grandma would kick him out of the house, he was afraid... he was totally afraid. That’s what he told us, told me.

And he said “Year, over year, over year, over year,” Instead of looking back into his life, and instead of looking at the positive side of his life, he looked at the side that was filling him with all the negativity. Instead of realizing that he’s fearfully made by God for good, he would look at the other side and say “You know, my life is full of mistakes. My life is full of shame. My life is full of nothingness. And therefore, drinking is my best friend.” And, you know, that put a lot of stress, a lot of pressure in our lives too, especially my mom. And my mom’s consolation was prayer, was devotion to the Blessed Mother, was praying through St. Monica that he would convert, and we would see how his life is and not live like that.

So the fear, the biggest fear he told me that we have to be aware of, I have to be aware of, is the fear of looking inside of myself. Is the fear of looking at my mistakes and owning them. And he said “Every single moment you make a mistake, do not be afraid to own it up. Everything you mess up, do not be afraid to own your mess and go forth. Every time you feel like you’re going to the negative direction, do not be afraid to look inside.” And this is what I want to share with you today: Every time you feel any sort of fear, do not forget that you’re fearfully and wonderfully made. Do not forget that you are created for love and created in love, and God, who is most high, sees you, and observes you, and watches over you, and wants to redeem you from those fears. The only fear you should have is only one fear: Is the fear of the Lord. That is the beginning of wisdom, is that reverence. And, like my dad, who hid himself and saw himself as nothing, and resorted to alcoholism. It took all his life to admit to us that it’s the fear of owning up to his mistakes, looking inside of himself, and lacking the faith to see the good and positive.

And I didn’t realize how much I have struggled to forgive him until two years ago, when I was in a retreat and somebody... The retreat leader was asking us to list all the emotions that we have experienced, and to scale down to two emotions that we feel that we have held on to a long time, and mine were fear and love. And when I dug deep, when he helped us to dig deep into this negative emotion that we have held on to for a long, long time, he said “Dig deep and see what is the root of that emotion. And what do you do about it?”

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And the more I thought about it, and the more I looked deep into my relationship with my dad and all of these things, I realized that I fell into his fear. That I have allowed him to influence me, and I was bitter. I was pained. I had not been able to come to terms and forgive him. And two years ago I did. I was able to let it go. I was able to open myself to God. Even though I give these conversations and these talks, I realized I had struggled in my own way, and I had not fully allowed myself to forgive him.

And I remember very well I called him, and I talked to him, and shared with him, and I said “From the surface, I didn’t realize how much I had held to some of the bitterness, some of the things that he had said to my life.” And I thanked him for teaching me what not to be doing and what not to do in my life, and resorted to what my mom had always taught us: To love no matter what. To look into God Almighty and surrender everything that we have. My friends, fear blindsides the love of God. Fear can resort into many negative attributes toward the self.

So what are some of the three things that you can do to feed your faith? Love is one of the... Love is the overall. With love, you can do anything. It’s love that drives out fear. It’s love that makes you own up, face your fears. With love comes gratitude. It’s the moment you can be thankful to God, and thankful to Him for every single thing that He has given into your life. It’s through love that you can face inside and, instead of seeing the negative, you see the love of God and you’re grateful for it.

So the first one is to be grateful for everything that you have, for everything that you are. The second one is being God-dependent. My mom taught us that if we depend on ourselves and on the world, we cannot go far, but being God-dependent and going to the foot of the cross and asking the Lord Jesus to be with us, to bear all of our sins. And not to be afraid to say “I have messed up,” and not to be afraid of our mistakes, and not to be afraid of anything, and allow Him to take control of our lives.

The last thing is to seek growth: Spiritual growth, personal growth, professional growth. Every time we have to be people who want to grow every single day, to feed our spirits with the word of God, to feed our minds with positive messages, with professional and personal development. Because, if we don’t grow, then we leave ourselves open to other voices that may influence us negatively. If we are not growing, then we feel like we are stuck. If we are not growing, we feel afraid that our life is not going the direction that we would love to. Having known that God’s desire is for us to see heaven, God’s desire is for us to be saints, is to be perfect as He is, then growing ourselves is necessary.

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My friends, I challenge you today. Do not be afraid to look at your life, the way you are, and remember you are created for God, you are created in love, for love, and with love. You are not a mistake, and we are not defined by our own mistakes. To rise up above our fears and our doubts, looking at the foot of the cross and seeing we are already redeemed from those fears. To be grateful, to be God-dependent, and to seek spiritual growth, professional growth, and personal growth every single day.

And I hope that this retreat will help you in feeding your faith, will help you in growing yourself, your soul, your spirit, and that you will connect all the dots that God is providing in your life. I'm so, so, so honored to be able to be providing this retreat and these talks to you. I hope you're inspired. I hope that you grow and you take some takeaways from them. Once again, my name is John Kinuthia. Thank you so much for listening, and I hope that the Lord will bless you as you go through your life and as look at the foot of the cross. Thank You, Jesus. We praise You, Jesus. Let me just close it out with prayer.

Dear Heavenly God, thank You so much for this wonderful moment. Thank You for allowing me to be sharing with Your people everything that You have put in my heart. May the Holy Spirit guide us to just take one or two takeaways that we can implement in our lives to grow in Your love every single day, to know that You have created us to be saints. May You bless our families, may You help us to keep feeding our faith and raising above our fears and our doubts, to know that You love us every single day. We are doing this for the greater glory of Your name, through Christ, our Lord. Amen. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. God bless you, and have a wonderful retreat. Thank you.