

Allowing the Lord to Transform & Heal Our Fears

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Hi, my name is Father Steven Borello, the vocation director for the Diocese of Joliet in Illinois. Let us begin in prayer.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Almighty God, as you called Peter forth to walk on water, you gave him profound confidence and courage, Father, for he stood in the gaze of your Son. He stood in love. We ask, Father, that each of us would be able to stand in that gaze of love, that that love would cast out all fear. We entrust our prayers to you today through the intercession of Mary as we say, Hail Mary, full of grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Amen.

An Ordinary Part of Life

Well, greetings again, as we continue walking with the Lord in this journey now of encountering him in our fears and our sorrows and our suffering. Today, we're going to look at the question of fear and where it comes from and how does the Lord desire to meet us in our fears to transform and to heal them.

And so, first of all, we want to acknowledge that for many of us, fear is an ordinary part of our life. It comes sometimes out of nowhere. Other times, we know where it comes from, and it's just very present in our lives. Fears can paralyze us, or they can cause us to act in a way contrary to our desires. And sometimes we can feel truly powerless in the face of them because they have been with us for so long. Ultimately, every fear you or I experience points to a place we might or we will experience some kind of pain or suffering or even death, right? Fear makes that known in our own lives.

Now, Saint John tells us in his first letter, There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. And so, one who fears is not yet perfect in love. If we live in perfect love, there is no fear. And though many of us will spend our lives seeking to live this love, this perfect love, we're going to be experiencing fears through that time. So, our fears, rather than seeing being upset with ourselves, that we have them or frustrated about them. If we remember Romans 8:18, **"For those who believe in God, all things work for the good."** Or if we go back to Isaiah 43:1, right? He formed you. He formed me. He's going to use these fears that we are aware of to bring to light areas where we are in need of experiencing his love. Our Lord is so good, because He doesn't want to abandon us. Rather, He wants to enter in and to heal and transform, to fill us with truth, and to give us hope.

Two Kinds of Fear

So, there's two kinds of fear, right? And they both have the same font, which is that of apparent or immediate pain or death. And then the fear of future pain or death, as we mentioned earlier. Now, these fears influence our choices so that we can survive as a species. And at the same time, though, they can prevent us from living.

So, we have the first kind of fear, which is that of eminent danger and death, right? So, for example, standing outside and seeing a pack of wolves surround you. The fear you experienced, the fear I experienced in that moment is real. It is real. And it's there because it desires to grant us an emotional and physiological response to either fight or to flee. This response is all about self-preservation. Or it might be like if we're driving a car, and we all of a sudden lose control, right? All of a sudden, our body kicks into this place where it's now responding with heightened senses for the sake of fighting for our survival.

Then there's the kind of fear that I think is far more present in our lives. Actually, I truly believe it's far more present in our lives. And that is the fear that arises within us because of some wound or pain that we have experienced in our past. And this is where we're going to spend the rest of our time, is looking at these fears and how the Lord desires to use our fears to bring to light these places of woundedness. I remember walking with a young person who was recently offered a promotion. When we spoke about it, they informed me that they knew they weren't supposed to take it. And I began to question them and their decision.

And I just wanted to understand how they knew so clearly that they were not supposed to take it. And as we were speaking, they began to say, "Well, what if I fail? "How many people am I going to disappoint? "What if I mess up or realize I'm not capable "or good enough for this job?" And as they sat there processing these thoughts, they realized they turned down their promotion because of fear. Not because they were not capable, but it was the fear of the possibility that they weren't capable. It was an eye-opening experience for that person. And it led them on a journey with the Lord to reveal the source of these fears and to find healing and growth with Jesus.

Many of our fears, they come from some wound in our past, some experience which caused us pain, or something that we've come to believe will cause pain because we've seen it in others, right? Fears have the potential to overwhelm and control our lives, our choices, and our responses to different situations.

Relating to St. Peter

When we look at St. Peter, who we have been praying with, initially his fear is a natural fear, that the boat was going to flood and that he and the other apostles were going to sink. It heightened all of their senses, which caused them to act the way they were acting to fight for their survival. Now, when they saw the Lord, something changed, and there was a new courage present after they realized it was Him. Peter, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, right? This is key. The Holy Spirit who is loved, at the Spirit's prompting, at love's prompting, is called by Jesus to walk on water. He does. He goes. And his eyes are fixed on that gaze of Jesus. There is nothing distracting him. He is super courageous because of the Lord's love for him, of the Lord's gaze.

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He has no fear for the Lord is with him. The Lord will protect him, and the Lord will provide for him. The Lord loves him. But what happens? Well, as his gaze begins to shift from the Lord to the waves, to the things that threaten him, he loses his confidence. His security begins to sink. And what is it that drives the waves? It's the wind. And the wind could be in a real way the lies that are spoken in our lives, the whispering of the enemy. The wind drives the waves. It drives these fears, and they distract us. They distracted Peter from the Lord.

Now, the development of fear and how we resolve it is an important question. So, I just want to start with just talking a little bit about how most fears develop. So, in our lives, what drives these winds are normally places of pain, right? Which drives the winds of the storm are the places of pain that we have experienced. Dr. Bob Schuchts talks about the progression of a wound from those initial places of hurt, which, when not related to the Lord, become the source of many of life's difficulties. He goes on to say, when it comes to these places of pain and woundedness, we often ask the question, "Why?" And because the question isn't rooted in the Lord, we're not looking at the Lord when we asked that initial question, our minds seek to find an answer. And these answers, not being rooted in the Lord or in the truth, are distorted. And these distortions are lies.

So instead of us hearing the truth, we experience lies, right? Lies about self. "It was my fault." "I caused this." Lies about others. "My mom doesn't love me." Or lies about a particular situation, right? "It was only a matter of time." That self-fulfilling prophecy. "It was only a matter of time that they would discover who I was." Or about God's presence. "God doesn't care about me." "He was never there." "He was never faithful." These lies all seek to insulate us from the pain so that we don't have to experience it. They are really our means of self-preservation when our own experiences haven't been shared with God.

So, we don't like encountering these lies. We often find ourselves being on the lookout for things that might cause us to encounter them. And so, we protect ourselves from them, and we use fear, since fear's about preservation.

What Can We Do

Well, what do we do? How do we allow the Lord to begin to address these places of fear and these places of lies? Well, just as fear grows out of the lies, and the lies protect the pain, we ask the Lord to walk with us and to reveal the lies and the pain that fear is trying to protect. I think this is so important. I think what is so important is that we never do this work alone, right? We always need others to help us, especially listen to what is going on in our hearts. You know, I am one who, when I sometimes go on retreat, I always begin my time of prayer with the Lord saying, "Jesus, you know, I'm going to try to control this time of prayer with control. And I just want you to take over, and I want it to be your time of prayer."

And so, it's always the Lord and I, Like, I'm always trying to make sure that my prayer and my time with the Lord, that we're always together. So where do we begin?

Noticing the Fear

Well, first is noticing the fear or discovering that it's there. So, when I was talking to this young person, right, about her promotion, and I just asked her, well, how did she make her decision? What were some of the influences for it? That she began to speak, the fears themselves became known. They were made known to her.

I remember when I was talking with a friend about what was going on in the vocation's office one time. And she asked me, "Father, well, what's behind that?" And I had no idea that there was something motivating my actions, right? Like, there was just this place where I was making decisions or feeling overwhelmed about something. And she just said, "Well, what's behind that?" And so, as I thought about it, nothing really came up. But as I brought it to prayer, as I said to the Lord in my prayer, "Lord, what is here?" And as I sat with the Lord in my lectia, I began to realize that there was a fear of disappointing people. So, the first thing that we have to do is we have to become aware of the fear. If we aren't aware of the fear, then there's really no space for the Lord to meet us or to move.

Trust in Him

After we become aware of the fear, I'm invited like Peter to gaze into the eyes of the Lord and to keep my gaze fixed on him. Now, often the mistake that I make is trying to deal with it all myself, to try and figure it out and make something happen. And then the reality is, is that the Lord is the one who needs to move right? And since He's the one who needs to take care of this and to heal what is bubbling up in my heart.

The overcoming of fears requires of us a great trust in the Lord. And this trust comes from wasting time with him. It is only in trust that my heart is often able to hear the lies that keep me living out of fear. With the Lord's help, one can renounce the fear. "In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounced the fear of embarrassing myself. In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the fear of being a disappointment." And then all of a sudden, we discover, "Oh, there's something else that's here." And so, as I spent time with the Lord, this might be a single day, or it might take a few days or a week or weeks. And I grow in my trust that the Lord really loves me and he's not disappointed in me or afraid of being here with me, I'm able to become aware that there were lies, the lie that I was totally responsible for what was going on and if something happened, it was my fault, right? So just going back to the vocation's office, that's what was coming up. Like, there was this fear of disappointing people, and it was coming out of this lie that I had this responsibility to everyone.

As I just sat with the Lord in my lectia, just letting the words come up from the scripture, sharing it with the Lord, He began to make known to me this lie was there. And so, the next thing is, is I've shared with Him the fear. I've sat with Him asking what's behind it, and really just growing in my trust with Him. And sometimes we would talk about the fear. But most of the time, we just talked about other things to strengthen our relationship to the point where He makes known this lie. And now I'm relating the lie to Him. Once I became aware of the lie, now it's important to keep returning to the Lord so that He can speak truth into these lies. And this, again, calls us to

rest with Him, to remain in His presence and allow Him to reveal the plans that give these lies, to reveal the pains, excuse me, that give these lies power, and to speak truth over me.

Renounce The Lies

We can also ask the Lord to help us renounce the lies in a similar way to the fear. "In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the lie that I'm not enough. In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the lie that it's all my fault, that it's my responsibility." Or, "In the name of Jesus Christ, it's only a matter of time until they find out that I'm fake or that I'm false." Or in my case, right, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounced the lie that it's my fault."

When I asked the Lord to speak His truths over me, that it's not my fault, that there are many responsible parties in all these different things, it's painful because I realized that there's a woundedness there where at some point in my life, this became my sense of reality. And it came out of just these wounds of childhood. And so, as each of us remains in this relationship with Him, you know, as we remain rooted in His word, as we remain seeking Him, right?

So, one, once we notice the fear because of a conversation with a friend or just an experience in the office or at school, and we begin to share that with the Lord and ask the Lord to bring to light what's there and to help us renounce it. And He reveals these places of lies, right? As I spend this time with Him, you know, each of us is growing in our sense and awareness of being a son or daughter of God. And as we grow in vulnerability, our relationship grows, our trust deepens, love expands. And this is what's so beautiful, right? As the trust deepens and the love expands, I am no longer afraid of going to this place of woundedness. Because the Lord Himself is already there with me.

Share Your Pain

Now, while there can be many wounds that are the source of pain in our lives, often the Lord brings us to one or a couple that've caused us to most accept these lies as truth. So, in my own case, it would be around that it's my fault, right? And that's just what happened there. And so, these wounds, when they happen, each of us lack the ability, the knowledge, or the capacity to share them with the Lord and invite Him into that initial pain. So now, as He brings them back to our awareness, He asks us if we can share them with Him now.

And a secret here is that often we only want to tell what happened without experiencing it. And the Lord is often asking to share with Him the experience itself. Not just what happened, not just the intellectual framework, but really, from the heart. What did you and I experience? And this can take time because it engages our emotions and what was happening at that time in our lives.

A way to think about this is what was my five-year-old me going through when I experienced that? What was the five-year-old me going through when I experienced that pain? And now, I invite Jesus into this, because as I'm sharing this pain with Him, as I'm sharing this wound with Him, it allows Him to draw us closer to Himself so that you and I discover that we are no longer alone or isolated, but that the Lord is here and that He is capable of redeeming our pain and our wounds. And he moves with us from Good Friday through Holy Saturday into Easter Sunday.

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And what was once a place of deep woundedness and pain becomes a place of encounter with the Father and a source of blessing. The fears we experience in our lives are real. In my own life, the fears are real. And they're real because they flow from our experience.

Means to the Father

The good news, though, is that if perfect love casts out fear perfectly, you and I are asked to grow in love through the vulnerable sharing of our hearts with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each and every fear points to places where lies and pain have pulled or pushed us away from God. So that we who are blessed may come to know that he uses these places of fear and of lies to make Him known and to bring about a return to Him.

So let us not be afraid of the fears, but see them as means to the Father, as a means the Father uses to call us back to Himself so that we run to Him. We run to Him in vulnerability. We run to Him in truth. We run to Him from the depths of our hearts that we ourselves would run and cry, "Abba, Father." And so, with each fear, we ask for the grace to remain, to allow God to reveal and to heal, to heal them, that our lives will grow in trust and in confidence that all things work for the good for those who believe in God.

And so, in my own story, as I relate to the Lord, these places of control, these places of responsibility that are not mine, right, that I've taken for. And as I renounced those lies, He brings me back to the places, those places of pain. Where I was embarrassed because I wasn't ready. Where I was embarrassed because I didn't have things properly prepared to meet others' expectations. And as I let the Lord into these places of woundedness, there is a deep, deep love that is experienced. Because the Father looks at me as He looks at each of His children. And He looks at us as he says in Isaiah 43:4, "***You are precious in my eyes, honored, and I love you.***" And here I sit with the Lord in these fears and these lies and these wounds, and I allow Him to speak over me the truth. "Steven, you are loved. "You are loved here and you are loved in each of these moments."

So, I want to invite you to please join me next time as I discuss how we explore suffering with the Lord. And I invite you to spend this week continuing to pray with Peter walking on the water. Or, as we prepare to talk about suffering, with Jesus in the Garden. And that is Luke 22:39 to 46. Let us conclude in prayer.

Closing Prayer

The Lord be with you. Good and gracious Father, we ask on our brothers and sisters and all who are watching that they would experience the truth of your presence in their lives, that you would make known how the fears they experienced, the lies and the wounds behind them. And that in your love, Father, that you would heal them. May they walk with Jesus in his passion, his death, and his resurrection. May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

God bless. Until we see you next week.