

Easter (A)
April 5, 2026
“Do not be afraid”

An elderly lady was invited to a friend’s house for dinner one evening. She was impressed by the way her lady friend preceded every request to her husband with endearing terms such as, “Honey, My Love, Darling, and Sweetheart.” The couple had been married for almost 70 years, and clearly, they were still in love.

While the husband was in the living room, her lady friend leaned over to her hostess to say, “I think it’s wonderful that, after all these years, you still call your husband all those loving names.”

The elderly lady hung her head and said, “I have to tell you the truth. His name slipped my mind about ten years ago, and I’m scared to death to ask the cranky old goat what his name is.”

We fear many things. We fear for the future of our parishes and archdiocese, in light of changings to be announced; we fear failure to achieve life’s dreams and personal goals; we fear favoritism, which keeps some people ahead; we fear financial insecurity; we fear the decline of our health as the years go on; some fear to die and others fear to live. We fear so many things.

There is a good kind of fear, in addition to bad fear. A child, for example, “fears” or deeply respects his father; a servant fears to displease his master; and those who are confirmed receive the Spirit’s fruit of “fear of the Lord,” which is wonder and awe in God’s presence. But the resurrection story is not about these “good fears.” It’s about the other kind of fear.

The people at Our Lord’s tomb were afraid, and God knew it. A mighty earthquake, and an angelic appearance at the tomb would be enough to put the fear of God in anyone, including these women. In response to their fears, there is one double command in Saint Matthew’s resurrection account: First, “an angel of the Lord” comes to the women at the tomb, and orders them, “Do not be afraid!” The mighty manifestations of God at the tomb were signs of a new era rather than a divine punishment for past sins.

Later, Jesus appears to the women leaving the tomb in haste. As they embrace him, he repeats the angelic command: “Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee,” the place where his ministry began, “and there they will see me.” Jesus wants his followers to be confident and courageous rather than timid and fearful.

My brothers and sisters, fear is a natural reaction to threats or danger to our persons. But fear can be quite harmful to the disciple of Jesus. Fear tells you worthless things, like life is not worth living; fear paralyzes you, keeping you in a straightjacket; fear stops your steps, robs your rest, steals your happiness, disturbs your peace of mind, and shames you into inaction. Fear keeps you from being all God wants you to be. Does fear keep you up at night?

Our Lord came to the women on that first Easter in order to show that the grave is not our final home and that death does not have the final word. His command “Do not be afraid!” is meant to strengthen their spine and lift their spirits. He personally assures them, and us, that he is truly alive. Do we believe?

Life can be scary and the future can be foreboding. But the resurrection reminds us that Jesus triumphs in the end of the struggle of salvation, and there is no obstacle, no terror, no challenge greater than the power of God.

Jesus comes to us tonight (today) to give us Easter encouragement, a word of consolation, a new way of seeing life, and courage to face the uncertain future. And he invites us to throw our fears, no matter how great or small, into the white hot furnace of his divine love. Can we do this?

We cannot make the world around us conform to our plans and ideas. We cannot always change the circumstances in which we struggle, but we can commend ourselves into God’s hands, and, like the two Marys, go to Galilee and encounter the crucified and risen Christ. He will empower us to overcome our fears. Resurrection power is saving power, liberating power, glorious power to share Our Lord’s victory over sin and death, the tomb and the terrors of life.

May you and I remember resurrection’s power, and have no fear because Jesus is here!

Happy Easter, and God bless you.