

For Sunday, April 8, 2018

“Think Outside the Box”

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040818.cfm>

Acts 4:32-35
1 John 5:1-6
John 20:19-31

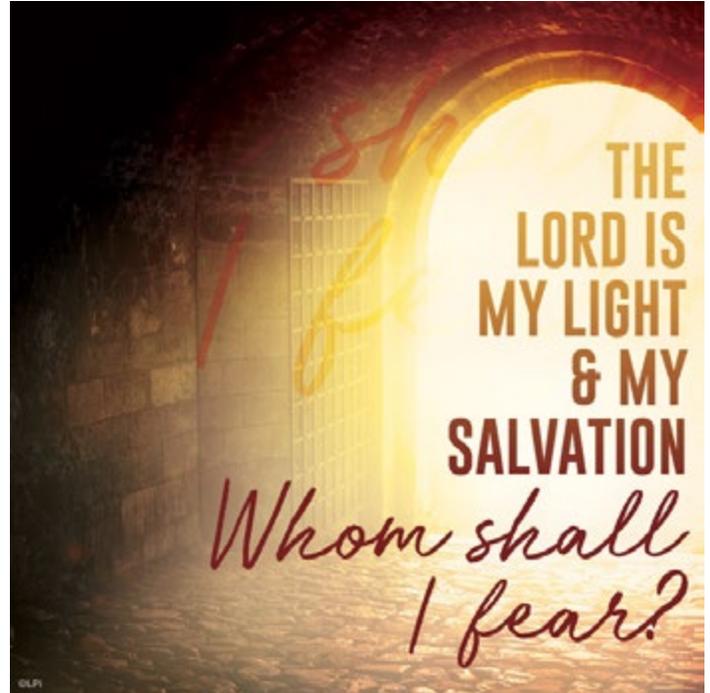
When people are feeling afraid or insecure, they often find security and solace behind the locked door of a room. While locking oneself in a secure place may relieve an immediate threat or reduce anxiety, it is not a place in which you can stay for very long. Being afraid to leave a secure place when taken to the extreme can lead to agoraphobia and actually cripple a person's life. Fear caused the disciples to lock themselves in a room. Fear does the same to us.

We live in a world that is becoming more and more fearful. Even when we try to take positive steps to prevent tragedy from occurring, it seems to happen anyway. Trying to do the right thing does not always lead to the right thing happening. The circumstances surrounding the life of [Nikolas Cruz](#), the young man who recently went on a rampage at a Florida school, are a testament to this. There is always a chance that when we step outside the door of our secure place, the world (or someone) could hurt us. Even Jesus knew that his friends were in for a rough ride.

We like our boxes and our rooms. These safe havens allow us to control the uncontrollable and shield ourselves from the unbearable. They can be found in our institutions, our homes, our places of work, our ideologies, our prejudices, and even our churches. As much as the phrase “think outside the box” may seem trite, the resurrection of Christ pulls us outside of the box! In fact, it is impossible to hide from God even when locked up in a secure room. God finds his way in and says, “Peace be with you.”

Even though it is tempting to seek peace in a secure place, it is always an illusion. True and lasting security is found within only when we can truly look to the resurrected Christ and exclaim, “My Lord and my God!” The Gospel calls us into the world. Our faith is expressed and validated not inside some stale locked box but in the wounded, broken messy stuff of people's lives. God created all of us and offers all of us His love and mercy. The disciples were eventually able to let go of their fear. What they were originally trying to maintain, protect, and fortify no longer seemed relevant or necessary.

Running from a physical threat is one thing. Running from a perceived, ideological, or emotional threat is another. For some, faith becomes a matter of security and finds its best expression behind a closed door, in a particular place. For others, faith is related to action and risk and finds its greatest expression in the unpredictability of the marketplace. It is clear that not only God but our Holy Father are challenging us to bring it there.



Locks can be broken. Buildings and institutions change. What is going to ultimately alleviate fear? Faith is the answer. "For whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith." Our Easter season presents us with the challenge once again to "not be unbelieving but believe." Our faith dictates how we live our lives, organize our priorities, care for one another, share our possessions, and work toward a world where there is no longer want or need.

Is the world a scary place? Absolutely. Is there a tendency to retreat to safety out of fear? Yes. Venturing forth alone, we are doomed to fail. Venturing forth together we can be heralds of change. We have been given the Holy Spirit as our divine helper and guide. Does the way we live our lives show others that we have received this gift?

Rev. Mark Suslenko

PRAYER

Loving God,
we live in a world that is becoming more complicated and fearful.
It is difficult for us to live simple lives, and we are often conflicted.
Christ's resurrection brings joy and hope to what was lost and light to what once was dark.
His resurrected presence has the power to dispel and minimize fear, if we permit it to.
Help us discover the faith that will allow us to exclaim, "My Lord and God!"
and walk confidently even in the midst of uncertainty and fear.
You, our faithful God, are mercy itself.
Give us the courage to put the Gospel into action
and show to all the world what being a disciple of Jesus Christ really means.
May we risk losing the comfortable, familiar, and predictable and trust that you will lead and guide us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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