

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, June 20, 2021

## Fear Is Not the End of the Story

*Written by Bro. Silas Henderson, SDS*

**Job 38:1, 8-11**

**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**

**Mark 4:35-41**



*Jesus asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?"—Mark 4:40*

Were you afraid of the dark when you were a child? I certainly was. Although there was a nightlight in my room, I was still often afraid because that soft light — which was there for comfort — cast shadows and didn't quite penetrate to every part of the room, including those corners where I knew something sinister was lurking.

Like countless children through the ages, I feared what I didn't understand, and my young mind couldn't penetrate the mystery of night's darkness.

When we think of the experience of the disciples related in [this Sunday's account](#) of Jesus calming the storm at sea, it's easy to sympathize with their plight, even as we might be tempted to shake our heads at what we — who like to imagine ourselves to be more enlightened — dismiss as a limited vision and weak faith. After all, they had already seen Jesus demonstrate the divine power that was at work within him in acts of healing and heard his teachings. Why should they possibly feel frightened because of the storm that was raging around them?

Just like a child who still feels fear, even though she has been assured, again and again, that she is safe and secure and that the shadows that seem to be hiding places for monsters are really just tricks of the light, our faith and confidence can also fail us when we encounter frightening or

uncertain realities in our lives. In our most human moments, we are not all that different from those frightened disciples. But as we reflect on the text of this Sunday's Gospel, we also recognize that fear is not the end of the story.

In his Gospel, Saint Mark is again and again inviting us to join the disciples in asking, "Who is this?" Because, for Mark, Jesus is the embodiment of the saving work of God and each of the miracle stories he relates becomes an opportunity to come to a deeper understanding of Jesus as the one who brings God's power and providence to human needs.

Although our *Lectionary* translation of this passage tells us that Jesus "woke up" (in verse 39) after the disciples called out to him, a more specific translation of the Greek word *diegertheis* (literally "getting up") conveys the image of Jesus rising to his full height in the stern of the boat, directly confronting the nearly overwhelming power of the wind and the waves. Mark seems to be invoking Old Testament images of God's power over raging waters (including those in Job and Psalm 107 that we hear in the First Reading and Responsorial Psalm assigned for this Sunday). The evangelist is proclaiming that Jesus possesses the same divine power that inspired the faith and hope of the people of Israel for generations.

In a sense, this passage is holding up a mirror for us, inviting us to look at our own lives and to consider how we respond when all hell seems to be breaking out around us. Do we revert to an unenlightened fear as we try to hold onto some illusion of control, or do we find hope and confidence in what has been revealed to us about God's power and action, even if we might not be able to recognize it in the moment?

In [The Road to Peace](#), Henri Nouwen reflected, "Fear is not of God," going on to add that God is "the God of love, a God who invites you to receive — to receive the gifts of joy and peace and gratitude of the poor, and to let go of your fears so that you can start sharing what you are so afraid to let go of."

The invitation for us in this Sunday's liturgy is to allow Jesus' questions to the disciples to lead us into a deeper reflection on the power of God that is at work both within himself and, through faith, in us. Rather than freeing the disciples from any experience of fear or suffering — or simply explaining away their fears — Jesus invites us to look with the eyes of faith so that fear may be replaced with wonder and awe at what God has done — and is continuing to do — in our lives and in the world.

Bro. Silas Henderson, SDS

## PRAYER

Lord our God,  
in you justice and mercy meet.  
With unparalleled love you have saved  
us from death  
and drawn us into the circle of your life.

Open our eyes to the wonders this life  
sets before us,  
that we may serve you free from fear  
and address you as God our Father.  
Amen.

(from [The New Saint Joseph People's Prayer Book](#))