

Live Without Fear

Gather

OPENING PRAYER

Play a recording of “Be Not Afraid” by Bob Dufford, or “On Eagle’s Wings” by Michael Joncas, or another song related to the topic.

O God, Father, everyday we hear about so many traumatic events: natural disasters, storms, disease, war, terrorism, crime. Life seems to be full of uncertainty and danger, and we have all been affected in some way. We worry about our families. How will we keep them safe; how will we prevent them from giving in to fear? Yet we know you are calling us to bring a message of love to our world. Help us to face our insecurities with hope in your providence. We ask this in the name of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Report on Actions

Scripture Reflection

A reading from the Book of Psalms.

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will
say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my

God, in whom I trust.”

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

—Psalm 91:1-6

A Reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

—Matthew 5:3-12

—What is the image of God revealed by these readings?

—What is needed for one to be at peace and have no fear?

SOCIAL INQUIRY

- Fears may develop rapidly after a traumatic event. After the initial feelings of shock and numbness wear off, some people find that they are still having trouble resuming daily life because of lingering fear.

Fears may revolve around activities directly related to the traumatic event, or they could be about something you have read, heard, or even imagined about the event. Fears can also be related to a resurgence of painful feelings from a past trauma or loss that is triggered by the current situation. As a result of the September 11 attacks, some people may have difficulty:

- Allowing a family member or loved one to fly
- Saying goodbye when a loved one leaves for work
- Traveling in an elevator
- Spending time in tall buildings
- Visiting tourist sites
- Returning to work
- Being in large groups of people
- Leaving home

It's normal to experience these fears and other responses to traumatic stress like:

- Anxiety or nervousness
- Irritability
- Depression
- Anger
- Mood swings
- Physical symptoms such as chronic aches and pains or difficulty sleeping
- Nightmares

The amount of time that people will experience these emotions and fears will vary. It may depend on the nature of your involvement with the traumatic event or whether you've experienced other kinds of trauma or loss in your life....

"Coping With Fears Following a Traumatic Event"
U.S. Coastguard/Homeland Security

After September 11, we are a wounded people. We share loss and pain, anger and fear, shock and determination in the face of these attacks on our nation and all humanity....

The war-like acts of September 11 were appalling attacks on our nation, our citizens and citizens of many other countries. The Holy Father rightly called these acts crimes against humanity. Terrorism is not a new problem, but this terrorist threat is unique because of its global dimensions and the sheer magnitude of the terror its authors are willing and able to unleash. It is also new for us because we have not experienced war-like acts of violence on our own soil for many decades....

We need to turn to God and to one another in hope. Hope assures us that, with God's grace, we will see our way through what now seems such a daunting challenge. For believers, hope is not a matter of optimism, but a source for strength and action in demanding times. For peacemakers, hope is the indispensable virtue. This hope, together with our response to call of conversion, must be rooted in God's promise and nourished by prayer, penance, and acts of charity and solidarity.

Our nation and the Church are being tested in fundamental ways. Our nation has a right and a duty to respond and must do so in right ways, seeking to defend the common good and build a

more just and peaceful world. Our community of faith has the responsibility to live out in our time the challenges of Jesus in the Beatitudes—to comfort those who mourn, to seek justice, to become peacemakers. We face these tasks with faith and hope, asking God to protect and guide us as we seek to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these days of trial.

—U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
“A Pastoral Message: Living With Faith and
Hope After September 11”
November 14, 2001

Fear is something that comes upon us the moment we don't believe that God is able to keep us, or all we care about, safe. FEAR—or False Evidence Appearing Real—easily strikes children because they can't always discern what's real and what isn't. Our comfort, reassurance, and love can help them; but praying, speaking the Word of God in faith, and praising God for His love and power, can free them.

When Jesus was at sea with His disciples and a storm came up, He responded by saying, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith” (Matthew 8:26). He wants us, like them, to believe that our boat won't sink if He's in it with us.

There are times, however, when fear is more than a passing emotion. It can grip a child's heart so strongly that no actions or words can take it away. When that happens, the child is being harassed by a spirit of fear. And the Bible clearly tells us a spirit of fear does not come from God. It comes from the enemy of our soul.

Parents have the authority and power through Jesus Christ to resist the spirit of fear on their child's behalf. Fear doesn't have power over them. We have the power over it. Jesus gave us

the authority over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). Don't be deceived into thinking otherwise. If fear persists after you have prayed, ask two or more strong believers to pray with you. Where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, He is there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). Fear and the presence of the Lord cannot occupy the same space.

Because we have Jesus, we and our children never have to live with or accept a spirit of fear as a way of life.

—Stormie Omartian,
The Power of a Praying Parent

Observe

1. Interview a family member or friend who has lived through a natural disaster or another very traumatic experience (i.e. hurricane, tornado, auto accident, fire, etc.). What crosses does he or she still bear in the aftermath of that experience?
2. What was your initial reaction to a recent disaster or traumatic event? What fears or anxieties do you or family members still experience as a result of this?
3. What anxieties have developed in your children as a result of a traumatic event?
4. List what aids or techniques you or your family members have used to cope or help your children cope with the fears that you experience as a result of the uncertainties in your world.

Judge

1. How does your faith play a part in how you deal with the uncertainties of this world?

2. Which of the things listed in Observe 4 have been the most successful for you?
3. In light of the Bishops' Pastoral Message, what are you as a Christian called to do when traumatic events occur in our world?
4. How can you promote peace and a freedom from fear in your home?

Act

1. Have a family meeting and discuss with your family what they would do in the event of a fire or accident if one of the parents were unable to be there.
2. Join or initiate a neighborhood watch program that combats crime.
3. Volunteer for a local relief agency, such as the Red Cross, or a public health service in your community.
4. Adopt the custom of blessing your family members when they leave home for work, school, or travel.
5. As a family, send encouragement or other support to men and women in the armed services.
6. Identify counseling resources in your community that can help you deal with a traumatic experience. Share your findings with your group.

RESOURCES

Hutchinson, Gloria, *Be Comforted: Healing in Times of Loss, Anger, Anxiety, Loneliness, Sickness, Death*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004.

Overberg, Kenneth R., *Into the Abyss of Suffering: A Catholic View*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003.

Look Ahead to Next Meeting

1. Make arrangements to keep in touch with each other if you are taking a break for the summer months.
2. Set a date and location for your Fall Kickoff.
 - Date _____
 - Location _____
 - Phone and email of host _____
3. Consider hosting a summer gathering or picnic for families in your group.
4. Invite new families to join CFM. Expand your group or start a new one. Help CFM train local leaders and produce excellent program materials by sending an extra monetary donation to CFM, P.O. Box 962, Evansville, IN 47706.
5. Send news of your group's actions to CFM-USA by contacting the National Office, office@cfm.org or act-editor@cfm.org , or call 515-962-5507.

CLOSING PRAYER

A Rainbow Prayer—A Blessing Prayer after a Storm or a Time of Danger

*Lord and Divine Protector,
when your trustful servant Noah came forth
from the ark,
after a long and difficult storm,
he built an altar where he and his family
gave praise to You, their God, for saving them.
Your holy rainbow
was both a sign and a shrine
for that prayer of gratitude.
We, like Noah and his family,*

*come now to thank You
for protecting us in a time of danger.
That danger has now passed,
and we prayerfully give thanks
that You, our Lord, have heard our prayers
and have kept us safe within Your holy hands.
Our sacrifice
will be this lifting up of our hearts
in gratitude and in praise of You.
We thank You not only for safety from harm
but for this opportunity to place all our trust
in You, our Lord and Savior.
This peril, even with its dark danger,
has been for us a source of renewed devotion
and of dedication to each other and to You.*

*Lord,
You are a God who brings forth good things
from the dark times of life.
From that which is bad and ugly,
You create a rainbow of the good and the
beautiful.
We pause,
and, in silence, thank You
for Your protection and blessings
in this danger that has passed.*

Pause for silent prayer

*Blessed are You, Lord our God,
who saves those who trust in You.
Amen.*

—Edward Hays,
Prayers for the Domestic Church: