

Letting Go of Fear...

Last Halloween my then two-year-old grandsons were frightened by a “scary” man with a big beard. They carried this fear over to Santa Claus. In their little minds “big beard = scary.” It took some explaining and time to help them understand that not all men with big beards were scary, and by the end of the Christmas season they were beginning to warm to Santa.

My oldest grandson was chased and knocked down by a large dog when he was four. He didn't understand that the dog was trying to play with him and meant no harm. For a while he was afraid of even little gentle dogs.

We're supposed to become less fearful and wiser as we grow up, but unfortunately we live in a society that encourages not just prudent caution but fear around every corner:

- A passer-by can skim your credit card without your knowing it and steal your identity. Be afraid.
- If you don't have a sophisticated alarm system, your home is likely to be robbed and your family ravaged. Be afraid.
- Our country now has more people whose religion, race and nationalities are different from yours. Things aren't the way they used to be. Be afraid.
- Terrorists are lying in wait to attack. Be very afraid.

During the horrors of World War II President Franklin Roosevelt told the nation that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Jesus told us that “fear is useless. What is needed is faith.” Being afraid keeps us tense, on edge, and worried. Fear consumes our energy and cuts us off from others---and most of it is useless. Mark Twain once said that he “worried about many things, most of which never occurred.” Being locked in fear can make every stranger an

enemy rather than a potential friend. We imprison ourselves in physical and emotional fortresses that we think can't be breached. We interact only with people who think and act like us and miss out on the wonderful diversity that God gives us every day. While we think we are protected and secure, in reality we are just frozen in our ways with hands clenched unable to open to receive.

I, for one, don't want to live that way. There is so much good in the world, I don't want to miss one second of it. I'm guessing that many of us feel that way, too.

What if, we took one small step taking a few minutes each day to pray and sit with open hands willing to receive the gift God has for us that day even if it takes us beyond our comfort zones? Let it be willingness at first—or even just the desire to be willing to be willing. God takes what we are able to give and gently invites us to more.

What wonderful opportunities God might open to us! What amazing new friends and experiences! I know that when I've looked beyond my fears of the unknown I've often been surprised and enriched and discovered that people and situations I feared were often phantoms like the Wizard of Oz. I've discovered that people are basically good and what unites us is so much greater than anything that might tend to divide us.

All people come to earth with a unique gift to bring, a special reflection of God's goodness and love and we are all poorer without it. What a great cause for celebration it would be if we recognized this and all lived as loving and merciful brothers and sisters!

- Angela Anno



***“Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.”***

-St. Teresa of Avila