

The Fears in our Life

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Abstract

To the human eye, this world is very beautiful, but it is also insecure and full of disasters, wars, and diseases. As a consequence, we are living with fears. This writing investigates three kinds of fears and how we can overcome each fear. To answer the research question, I base the writing on the teaching of the Gospel and the Catholic doctrine. In the end, the writing shows that we can overcome our fears if we put our life in God's hands and keep His commandments. I suggest you use this writing to reflect and strengthen your faith in God.

Keywords: fear, neighbor, nature, God

Introduction

Fear is something that belongs to instinct. Animals are afraid of life-threatening dangers. Their first instinct is to run away. People have the same instinct as animals when they are facing those dangers. Their first instinct is to hide or to run away. When they have to face those dangers or when we have no place to hide, we have to try our best to struggle against those dangers to survive. Even those, the fear is in their mind. Catholics can recognize what is scary and what is not scary in their lives. Therefore, they have the instinct to be afraid of "the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."¹

Fear comes from three factors: God, neighbors, and nature. The Bible recounts that God gave Adam and Eva dominion over all species. They live in peace and happiness. Fear only appeared when they ate the forbidden fruit. From this event, three kinds of fear appeared. First, Adam feared God and avoided facing God. Second, Adam feared Eve and wanted to cover his shortcomings to protect himself from being usurped by Eva. Third, Adam and Eva feared nature. In short, fear comes from three factors: God, neighbors, and nature.

¹ Craig Alan Evans, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: Matthew* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 226.

Kinds of fears

The first fear is from God, who is the source of holiness.² Even though many atheists or even many Catholics have forgotten or ignored this fear because they think that God will not punish them or they are far from being punished, this fear exists in reality. Those who commit sins will fear God and his punishments because they feel the state of being different from his holiness and being disgraced to God. God's holiness is perfection that they can not achieve, so they feel they are far from God and his protection. Moreover, it is quite difficult to keep God's commandments, so they fear God when they break his law. This fear is something holy, related to the conscience of people. Strange to say, Catholics do not have to fear God because God is love, so he will not abandon us. In addition, He created us according to his perfect image, so he will not destroy us but leads us to our happy destiny. To overcome this fear, we must always prepare for our death so that when Lord comes unexpectedly, we do not have to be confused by our unworthiness. There is a truth: whichever side a tree leans on, when it dies, it will lean to that side. In the same way, if we are inclined to evil when we are alive, then when we die, we are also inclined to evil. If we are inclined to God when we are alive, then we are also inclined to God when we die. If we can do this, we will be sanctified and share God's glory.

The second fear is from our neighbors.³ Neighbours mean human beings in general. Human beings were created not only with the precious dignity that can not be deprived but also with pride and cupid. Unfortunately, pride and the cupid cause fear in our society. We fear other nations because they can dominate our country. We fear our neighbors because they can affect our life and our benefit. We fear our parents because they can limit our freedom. In history, we have witnessed many sad events: wars, slave possession, trafficking, robbery, and kidnapping. Those are the consequence of human pride and cupid. Luckily, we can also overcome that fear if we keep the commandment of love. When we love our neighbors, we will receive their love in return. Mankind will live in peace and prosperity as a consequence of love.

The third fear comes from the dangers of nature. When God created the universe, He set a natural law in the universe. According to this law, fire is hot, ice is cold, and lions eat pigs. As a result, there are Forest fires, floods, and earthquakes. Many disasters happening in the world make us scared. Once again, we can also overcome the fear of nature because we know that God always protects and preserves all species that he

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 206.

³ Jen DuBos, "Identifying the Three Fundamental Fears: Death, Abandonment and Failure," *Stenzel Clinical Services* (2019), 2. <https://stenzelclinical.com/identifying-the-three-fundamental-fears-death-abandonment-and-failure/>

created. Moreover, he directs all species to their destiny. We call this process Divine Providence.⁴ We just need to trust him and cooperate with him.

On the other hand, many people had overcome fear even when they faced the fear of death. They know their life is the greatest thing in this world, but they willingly give up their lives for a higher value – the kingdom of God. The reason is quite simple: they know that another life is more important than this life. They knew this in the light of the night of the Garden of Olives. Jesus himself, in his nature, was afraid of death, but he did not let fear overcome him. But he dares to say yes to Father's will. He overcame the fear because he knew that Father would raise him and would bring salvation from his death to mankind. The martyrs, too, dared to lay down their lives, to bear witness to their pure faith. For them, living the catholic faith is more important than their lives.

Conclusion

In summary, I think fear comes from three factors: God, neighbors, and nature. Three kinds of fear exist at the same time in our life. My friend, are you afraid of something? Is it sickness, hunger, accident, or death? They are dangerous, but those things "cannot kill the soul."⁵ It is the selfish life, following passions and lusts that are scary things. They are things that we have to fear. But we have divine hope in God, who will help us overcome our fear. Let's trust in God and courageously live as witnesses to the Gospel and also courageously refuse all temptations to sin. We offer God our lives and the fear of mankind in the Covid epidemic, and we trust in God's Providence. May God have mercy on us and save us.

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⁴ Phan Tấn Thành, "Chúa Quan Phòng Là Gì?", *Tinh Dòng Đa Minh Việt Nam* (September 2015), 2. <http://daminhvn.net/hieu-de-song-duc-tin/chua-quan-phong-la-gi-3322.html>.

⁵ Craig Alan Evans, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: Matthew* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 226.

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Biodata

Fr. Peter Vo Xuan Quang is a priest of The Congregation of the Mission (C.M.) which was established to preach the Gospel. He was ordained in 2021 and studying the Master of Theology Program at the Catholic Institute of Vietnam, majoring in Dogma. His priestly motto is “God, my joy and my delight” (Psalm 43,4) expressing his hope of bringing Good News to everybody.