

## A Journey though Fear

Some of us have more problems with fear than others. A vivid imagination tends to fuel fear, so do life experiences, or a sensitive nature. We all know that we can be like lions in some situations and reduced to a quivering jelly in others! This month we are going to share one Sister's journey through fear. What was the fearful thing that she was facing – none other than our very own Sundays at Seven! Perhaps her journey through fear will encourage the faint-hearted.

We were enjoying our lunch one day, chatting away as always, when someone said brightly and almost as an aside, "We have been invited to be the guests at "Sundays at Seven". It was like a bombshell exploding. For years I had thought, one day St Mary's are going to ask us, and I dreaded that day with all my heart. The quivering jelly took over. However fearful we are, there is always one place to go and that is to the Lord and tell him all about it. Although the prayer consisted mainly of – "I can't do it". There was a sense of a loving, understanding Presence alongside. The first word from the Lord came from the reading in Evensong on Holy Island. The words lifted from the page. "I will live in them."<sup>1</sup> The quivering jelly strengthened a little!

Then the question came. Was it God's will that I took part? Sometimes we can do something from a false sense of the heroic, or force ourselves into something because of others' expectations. The answer came very quickly - the words of St Francis de Sales in a much loved book published in 1821: "---- there is nothing, can be nothing, which I cannot do while I put my trust in God, who can do all things. Let a soul thus armed, set herself to execute what God commands in the simplicity of her heart, and God will sooner do a miracle than fail to give the power to accomplish what she undertakes; because by relying solely on him, she makes his power hers." Fenelon was equally as straight, "Do not be afraid; you insult God by mistrusting his goodness; He knows better than you what you are able to bear; He will never try you beyond your strength. So I repeat it, fear nothing".



Fear can be so powerful that, not without reason, we become afraid of the fear itself. Under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit the power of the fear began to lessen. Instead of looking at the fear, words from the Bible became the focus, all given by the Lord. "God's power is very great for us who believe."<sup>2</sup> "I, the Lord, am the One who answers your prayer and watches over you. I am like a green pine tree: your blessings come from me."<sup>3</sup> Two days later

a card came with a picture of a solitary pine tree beside a lake! It was one of those small touches at which the Lord is expert. He loves his children and comes to our aid.

During this time I was plunged into a number of situations where confidence increased. After months of recurring illness I had been going gently, gently! Confidence goes. Another thought came -- Sundays at Seven was not any more important in God's eyes than anything else I did, including accounts and washing up! This was brought home to me the week before when I sat holding the hand of a very sick lady. There were no words, just the love of God. From time to time she opened her eyes and gave me the sweetest of smiles. I knew that whatever praise came to us in any upfront job, the Lord saw things differently. Somehow this cut Sundays at Seven down to size – another job to be done!

I was helped by a friend who had to face his fears of chemotherapy and had come to the place where the Lord said to him, "Enjoy it". He did – the opportunity to talk to others, the kindness of the nurses. He almost made it a social outing. I said to the Lord, "I will try and enjoy Sundays at Seven". The day dawned. I would love to write that the peace that passes understanding took possession of me, but it didn't! I was grateful for all the hugs, as we made our way to the front, thankful that I belong to my family, the community, and we were all in this together, and thankful for such a loving church. I survived and folk were blessed which says nothing about us, or me, but everything about Jesus!

I had learnt much on the journey. There will be other times, other places but the Lord is stronger than all our fears. However afraid we are, we can trust him.

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<sup>1</sup> John 17:26 Century Bible

<sup>2</sup> Eph 1:19 Century Bible

<sup>3</sup> Hos 14:8 Century Bible