

April 22, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH EASTER

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IT IS I, DO NOT BE AFRAID

By Sister Jane DeLisle, CSJ

I have found strength and peace in Jesus' words, "It is I, do not be afraid" (John 6:20). This greeting in moments of fear, stress, or anxiety appears a little over 100 times in the Old Testament and 44 times in the New Testament ([Catholic Resources.org](https://www.catholicresources.org)). Fear is a common human emotion precipitated by any number of factors depending on the person's psychological make-up and circumstance. Jesus was afraid in the Garden of Gethsemane, until he surrendered to the abiding presence of God to sustain him in his fidelity to all being asked of him, no matter the cost.

While fear for their lives may have caused the apostles to hide after the arrest of Jesus, fear seems counter to the Easter promise of Life forever. Yet, fear arises in the face of potentially threatening uncertain and perhaps surprising happenings. Fear lies beneath many other emotions responding to unfamiliar, threatening, or trying circumstances.

It stands to reason that Mary Magdalene in the garden was filled with both fear and joy as she searched for and then met the resurrected Jesus. In the apostles'

encounter with a storm on the lake of Galilee and seeing Jesus walking on the sea towards them, fear is countered by the gentle strength and compassionate presence of Jesus.

In this Easter season where joy, hope, new life, and endless possibility brighten our way, fear may threaten to thwart our response to God's invitation and promise of new life. Listen for the voice of Jesus, "It is I, do not be afraid." We live in conflicted times that often seem to be contrary to the ways of God. When human challenge seems to disrupt the flow of life and all the good that can be done, there is wisdom in pausing long enough to refocus both vision and expectations. By divine gift, I have within me all I need to address most changing circumstances. When relying on the power and presence of God at work within me and in the world, fear is dissipated. The resurrected Lord at once cautions and promises, "*It is I, do not be afraid*" (John 6:20) and "*I am with you, always*" (Matthew 28:20).



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For Pondering

- When have I been afraid? What causes me to be afraid? What/who eased my fear?

- How do I experience God's abiding presence and gentle strength in the ordinary and sometimes fearful realities of my life?
 - What enables me to listen and embrace God in the daily reality of my life?
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For Prayer

Life-giving God, strengthen me for my life's journey. Draw me to yourself and make me more your own each day. Show me how to live within your gentle strength. Empty me from the fear that threatens fidelity to your ways. Awaken me to hear your voice within my soul, "It is I, do not be afraid." Then with a full measure of your grace, and courage, I can live in fidelity to all that is you and proclaim hope by living. Amen.

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Center for Spiritual Development | 434 A South Batavia Street, Orange, CA 92868 (714) 744-3175

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