



St John's Cathedral 聖公會聖約翰座堂

Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong Island
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

Message of Hope: Do not be afraid

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Hello everyone!

My name is Fr Robert Martin. I'm one of the chaplains here at St John's Cathedral and I'm, also the Priest in Charge of Emmanuel Church, Pokfulam

I think it was the great American president Franklin D Roosevelt who said in his inaugural address in 1933 the famous words; ***The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.*** By these simple, yet profound, words President Roosevelt lifted the spirits of a fearful nation caught in the grips of the deepest economic depression the modern world had ever known. His words brought not only hope and comfort but encouraged recovery and reform in his nation, and in the wider world. But these words are not just historical – they are as wise today as they were 87 years ago - for here in Hong Kong, and around the world, we have become a fearful people, living in fearful times.

Fear is, perhaps, one of the most common driving forces amongst human beings. There seem to be so many things in our lives that we are afraid of. But mostly, we fear for the future. We fear especially for our family, our work and our society. Today we, especially, fear the COVID 19 crisis, we fear the economic depression that may follow it, we fear the political turmoil here in Hong Kong and we fear that new laws may be imposed upon us. We live in fear of so many things.

Yet Jesus says 'Do not be afraid'! 'Do not be afraid', because our heavenly Father who loves us, will never abandon us. If we go through Christian history, we find many faithful people who lived in fear. Some were persecuted, some were tortured and some were even killed for their faith. But, Jesus says, we must not fear those who kill the body alone. Because, even if they destroy our earthly bodies, our finances, our reputations, they cannot separate us from God's love. Whether it be a Coronavirus, an economic meltdown or a dysfunctional government, it ultimately will not triumph over us. This is the message of the martyrs and it is as true today as it has been throughout the centuries. And it sustained the martyrs because they had grasped the simple truth of the gospel.

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells us of the great love God has for each one of us.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

It's so true how often we need to be reminded of this great love our God has for us? This is a constant challenge for us to grow in our knowledge of the depths of his love, of its perfection, of its infinite nature, and of its sheer generosity, and of the fact that **we can do nothing to earn this love.**

I'm curious how often in the Gospels Jesus tells us: Do not be afraid. Have courage, your sins are forgiven. Persevere. So again today, we are encouraged to grow in the knowledge of God's love and not to be afraid. We are instructed to be courageous in living out our faith, even in difficult times.

My brothers and sisters know that God is always with you. Know that God is always faithful. Know that you are precious in his sight. And as God reveals these truths to you in the silence of your hearts, and in the hidden moments of your days - proclaim them throughout your lives.

And when you are fearful, when you despair at the powers that seem to oppress us - just listen again to the words of St Paul, as he encouraged his brothers and sisters in the Church at Rome:

37 In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

My brothers and sisters, do not be afraid, for the Lord is with you!

Amen.