

When I was in grade school we went to the pool almost every day during the summer

I'm afraid of heights - however, I pushed through my fear and looked straight out so that I could go off the high diving board
I pushed through my fear of heights because we all know the best way to attract and impress girls is by making a big splash
How often do we act out of fear rather than out of love?

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter addresses the people - Peter reminds them that Jesus is the same
God as the God of Israel, the same God we worship today - Peter says, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and
the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus..."

Why did God the Father glorify the Son, Jesus? - because of the great crime they had committed - Peter tells them they had
Jesus handed over - they denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released instead

Peter tells them they put to death the author of life - why did they do all of this? - out of fear - fear that Jesus would upset
their understanding of the Messiah - fear that they would have to change their lives if Jesus is who He said He was
However, Jesus did rise from the dead - Peter and many others were witnesses to Jesus' resurrection - all of this was to fulfill
what God had announced through the prophets; that the Christ would have to suffer

So what should we do? - repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away - in other words, be sorry for your sins
- going to the Sacrament of Confession is a great way to be sorry for your sins - and be converted - change your ways
- strive to not sin again - strive for holiness - strive for virtue

Sometimes I feel that we don't really believe in sin anymore - that what we used to call sins are now not sins - and what we
used to call mortal sins are now venial sins

However, again, we should strive not sin - we often make light of our own sins and make a big deal out of the sins of others
John, in his first letter, our second reading, starts today's pericope with, "My children, I'm writing this to you so that you may
not commit sin." - so it should be our constant goal not to sin

However, if we do sin, not all is lost - John tells us that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus the righteous one
Jesus, by His death and resurrection, became not just the expiation for our sins, but the sins of the whole world

John says the evidence that we know Jesus is if we keep Jesus' commandments - Remember, Jesus said the two greatest
commandments are to love God with all your mind, heart, and soul and to love your neighbor as yourself

As I have asked before, if it were illegal to be a Catholic Christian, and we were on trial for being a Catholic Christian, would
there be enough evidence to convict us? - do we love God above all things and do we love our neighbor as ourselves? -
do we act differently than those who are not Catholic Christians? - do we act differently than those who do not have a
relationship with Jesus?

Again, do we let fear of missing out on the things of the world drive our actions or do we let the love of God drive our
actions?

In the Gospel we see this fear versus love play out in a grand way

Remember how Jesus appear to the two disciples as they were traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus - remember how they were sad that this Jesus who they thought was a great prophet and person of God had been killed - their hope that Jesus would change the world had died with Jesus' death - and as they were walking and talking and being sad, Jesus joins them, but they do not recognize Him - Jesus then gives the top two Bible studies of all time - Jesus explains how the Christ would have to suffer and die, and then be raised on the third day - and they finally do recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread - they recognize Jesus in the Eucharist

Even though it was past suppertime, they run back to Jerusalem - the seven miles that took them all afternoon to walk, they now cover in a very short amount of time

The two disciples run back and tell the eleven Apostles what had happened to them on the way to Emmaus, how Jesus had opened the Scriptures to them, and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread

As they were talking, Jesus Himself appears - He says to them, "Peace be with you."

Luke records the opposite happened - Luke records they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost They were filled with fear rather than love

So Jesus says to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have."

At this they are finally filled with joy and amazement - their friend, their Savior, is alive and not dead

And because ghosts, at least at the time of Jesus, are not able to eat solid food, Jesus asks them if they have anything to eat - Jesus eats a piece of baked fish as further proof that He is not a ghost

Then again, for the second time that day, Jesus gives the other top two Bible studies of all time - Jesus again explains to them how the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem

Is it easy to be a witness to Jesus Christ? - no - I would argue it is getting harder and harder

However, as I said earlier, are we acting out of fear or are we acting out of love?

When I was chaplain of the Newman Center, some of the students were asking big life questions - and college is the season for big life questions - you are choosing your career, your vocation, and maybe your life-long partner

I would tell the students to make sure they are moving towards something out of love and not away from something out of fear

So maybe I would ask a guy if he was dating Susie out of love or was he dating Susie out of fear that God might be calling him to the priesthood?

I think if we take a little time to reflect, we act out of fear a lot - I know I do - we need to pray, come to Mass, eat our spiritual food, the Eucharist, so that we can boldly act out of love for God and our neighbor - we need to act of love and the salvation of the world - if we do, we will continue the mission of preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the nations - so pray for the grace to act not out of fear, but out of love