

*A Missionary Commentary on the  
Sunday Readings*

### Sunday Readings

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Psalm 116:10+15, 16-17, 18-19

Romans 8:31b-34

Mark 9:2

[USCCB link to the Readings](#)

## Get Up! Do Not Be Afraid!

The fourth luminous mystery of the rosary is the Transfiguration of Jesus. In addition, each year on the second Sunday of Lent, the Gospel reading is always a narrative of Jesus' Transfiguration. The episode confirms Jesus' prophecy of his passion; it is also intended to strengthen the disciples to endure Jesus' death with faith. The Father's voice is heard: "This is my beloved Son on whom my favor rests. Listen to him." Then, Jesus speaks to Peter, James and John, telling them: "Get up! Do not be afraid"! Jesus is advising his disciples—and us: *Have faith! Do not submit to fear and doubt!* What beautiful, practical advice!

**Describing Faith.** One may ask: What is the opposite of "faith" in sacred scripture? Is "fear" the antonym of "faith"? Being afraid often means doubting that God is really with us. I boldly assert that "fear" is opposed to "faith." Some examples may clarify my assertion.

In the Hebrew scriptures, God speaks to Abram (Gen 15:1) "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great." In the New Testament, when the angel Gabriel is sent by God and speaks to Mary, he says: "Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor.... You are to conceive and bear a son" (Lk 1:30-31).

**Practical Advice.** Other persons receive the same call to move away from fear and to trust in God's designs. Two well-known examples immediately come to mind: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20). The lowly shepherds hear the angel declare: "Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy" (Lk 2:10).

Jesus himself during his public ministry speaks of the need to have faith. When the disciples were struggling with rough seas, Jesus calls out to them: "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid" (Mt 14:27). During the miraculous catch of fish, Jesus says to Simon: "Do not be afraid; from now on it is people that you will catch" (Lk 5:10). Jesus tells his

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disciples: “Fear not, you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows” (Lk 12:7); “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the Kingdom” (Lk 12:32).

**Living in Faith.** In our daily life, we need to hear Jesus’ voice to realistically face our fears (like Abraham, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Peter, and the disciples). We accept life’s challenges and realistic dangers; we are not naïve. Yet, in spite of many daunting circumstances, we commit ourselves radically to God. With the continual presence of the Spirit, we respond with authentic Gospel boldness. As Peter, James and John discovered, God’s transforming grace is sufficient; we become, in fact, fearless witnesses, authentic evangelizers, and joyful, faith-filled proclaimers of the Gospel. Our motto of missionary discipleship always should be the “4-F” approach: **Forget Fear, Find Faith!**

## **Notes on the Sunday Readings**

### **First Reading**

This reading from Genesis portrays a test of Abraham’s faith; he is called to place radical trust in God’s promises.

### **Psalm**

The psalm expresses faith—even when one is “greatly afflicted.”

### **Second Reading**

Paul writes to his beloved converts in Philippi assuring them that their steadfast faith will ultimately bring them salvation and glory.

### **Gospel**

This Transfiguration scene from Mark’s Gospel shows the apostles’ failure to understand the meaning Jesus’ coming death and resurrection.

*Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James Kroeger, who recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023).*

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