

Again and again, Jesus is telling His disciples *not* to be afraid –

Even if the world wants to *terrify* us!

I *myself* can grow *worried* over situations *around* me –

Any of us could –

We've started an ongoing *conversation* about the sustainability of St. *Henry's*.

It's wrapped up in worldly circumstances *beyond* our *control*.

The massive demographic *flight* from the State of New York;

The decline in the number of married *families* –

And the decline in the number of *babies* being born,

That aren't acquired from *PetSmart*!

The *aging* of the generations of faith that are the *anchor* of a community –

And the decline of community *itself* –

Whether religious *or* secular –

People *gather together* less –

And people change *jobs* and towns and even *coasts* and *shores* multiple times in a life.

We need to *acknowledge* the reality on the ground –

But we cannot be *defeated* by it.

When *all* I do is look at what *scares* me then that *fear* will defeat me.

Remember FDR? “The only thing we have to fear is *fear itself!*”

Jesus is saying some pretty scary things to His *followers* today.

In the very *next* chapter of Luke, His *Passion* and *Death* will be set in motion.

And He *tells* His followers terrifying *things* that will happen *before* the end of time.

When the whole *world* will *finally* be subject to divine *justice* –

When the bad things will no longer *happen* to good people –

And the *proud* and the *powerful*, who prey upon the *poor* in the world –

Well, their days will be *over*.

But *our* days will *never* really *end* –

Not if we look to the *Lord* as our life.

Jesus tells of false *prophets* trying to *manipulate* our fears –

He tells of *wars*, *natural disasters*, and their own *persecutions* –

But *He* says:

Do not be *afraid*.

That very *same* message came from God when the angels *proclaimed* Christ’s coming –

We’ll *hear* it, come *Christmastime*.

The angel said to them, “*Do not* be *afraid*; *for* behold,

I *proclaim* to you good news of great joy that will be for ***all*** the people.

For **today** ... a savior has been born for you who is **Messiah and Lord.**”

We shall *never* overcome our fears *alone*.

We *need* this *Messiah* to come to us.

He comes in *each* of His followers who serves as a *light* in the darkness –

Those who remain *faithful* in the face of persecution, opposition, or *apathy*.

He comes in the *witnesses* to His love,

When *loving* as *Jesus* loves –

Laying our *lives* on the line –

And *resisting* the world’s *agenda* to snuff *out* this Christ as our King.

So, *in* our fears, do *not* worry so much about what you or *I* need to control –

Because we’re *not* in control.

There’s only *one* choice to make –

Turn to Jesus to supply what we need or *drop* Him in our panic or our despair.

Luke *wrote* this Gospel only a *handful* of years after the Temple *literally* was destroyed.

But as we *know* – our *true* Temple –

Jesus *Himself* – was *raised* from the dead.

And we *also* know that His followers looked to *His* example and power over death

To *withstand* persecutions and terrors –

Keeping the faith – often even singing and rejoicing at their own deaths –

Because the kingdom of heaven was opened *wide* for them.

And it is the faithful witness to *God's* power in the face of death by these *martyrs*

Of the first three hundred years of the Church that set the *world* on fire for new disciples.

Jesus *tells* us:

*“If the world hates you, realize that it hated me **first.**”*

*Blessed **are** you who are hated **because of me,***

*Yours **is** the Kingdom of God.*

In *all* things may we *resist* the temptations of the world to seize *control* –

Trying to beat the enemy to the punch –

To play their *game*.

Nor should we feel *alone* in our worries –

The *only* right answer is to look to *Jesus* to supply what we need –

And to stay *true* to His name as His *church* –

And that light *does* indeed *shine* here at St. Henry's –

A *light* that *no* darkness shall overcome.