

**St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church
Moore Street, Adelaide**

Reflection for the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost: Fear and Faith

Fear is one of our most primitive instincts. It is felt by babies and elderly people as well as by a great cross-section of society. There is fear which is good. This fear can prevent us from tackling tasks which are too dangerous. However, some governments have been known to use fear to bolster a nation to dislike certain people who need or wish to enter Australia or to prejudice the nation against a perceived enemy nation overseas. As well there is our fear over the growing violence in our society.

Nearer ourselves, perhaps, we sometimes feel afraid of someone because of threats or general hostility. At the moment as we all cope with Covid 19 even in our streets or shopping aisles some people appear to be afraid when they approach in the opposite direction – what danger do I pose to their state of health? Future commitments can occasionally make us afraid because of the work or of the possible difficulties they pose.

Some people live in perpetual fear. Every moment of a day is filled with fear about something or someone. The noisy, assertive and aggressive society can cause or fuel such constant fear.

Jesus came among us and told us that there is nothing to fear. How could he say this and what, if any, effect does this have on our state of mind? Jesus assures that we have a God who actually and really cares about us deeply. He knows all about us and, and that means through and through. Even the hairs on our heads are counted by God. (This could make one reluctant to pull one's hair out!)

Whether or not Jesus' words make a difference to us will depend on our level of faith in him. When he says firmly, "Do not be afraid", does this reassure us at all? Someone who believes fervently that Jesus is a friend we can trust and we understand and accept that he knows us through and through and that he loves us, can feel much stronger about the matters of life. It is not that Jesus erases our fears but he does prevent fear from paralysing us.

Every time we come to Mass we are reassured of Jesus' love for us. The remembrance of his death and resurrection proves to us how much of a friend he is to us. It also proves that we no longer need to fear death. This particular fear can be a long-standing fear which troubles us deeply over too many decades of life. Our religion is much about eliminating that fear and containing other fears.

Fr Graeme Kaines.