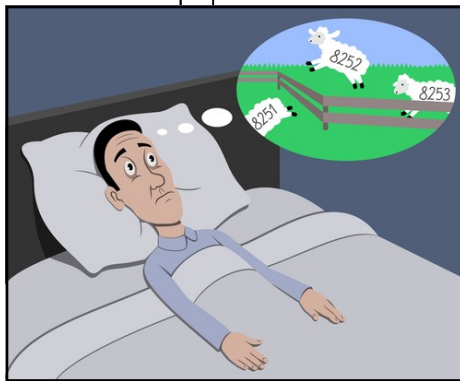


WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

This weekend we begin our new message series (preaching series) called **INSOMNIA - THE LIES THAT KEEP YOU UP AT NIGHT**. This is on the heels of our first series which I think went very well — at least for us preachers!! We are excited about this second series too!!

WHY CAN'T YOU SLEEP?

Our lives are filled with fears of abandonment, change, illness, finances, relationship difficulties, our children and so much more. Fears often hold us back from what we desire to achieve or the people we want to become. But what is behind those fears? Very often our fears are based on lies or half-truths we have come to believe. Overcoming fear requires getting to the root of those lies and finding out the truth about God and ourselves. In this series, we look at some common fears and how to overcome them.



WEEK #1 - THE FEAR OF ABANDONMENT & REJECTION

One of the common fears that we have in our lives is that of not being accepted and being left alone. These fears arise in all stages of our lives. We hope to feel included and accepted at school or in our workplace. We seek affirmation and encouragement from our friends and co-workers. The one big problem is that this doesn't always happen.

I think most of us have suffered from rejection and exclusion. It is a very painful experience. I am sure that most of us have also felt abandoned at some point in our lives. This most often happens when we are standing up for something or when we have made some major mistakes in our lives. The times in which we expected people to be there for us — they simply walk away.

WHERE DOES REJECTION COME FROM?

When I look at my life, I see my fear of rejection come from three particular areas — OTHERS, GOD and OURSELVES.

1. OTHERS

As I have said earlier, most of us are very concerned about being accepted and welcomed as part of a group. We want to fit in, but of course we all have experienced rejection from others. We can be judged by what we wear, where we work and by the way we look.

This is why the major priority of the parish is to be welcoming, loving and truly a family where everyone are friends. We strive to make sure no one is a stranger. This of course takes everyone's cooperation and the time to connect with others at Mass and the other events we have in the parish. We need to reach out.

2. GOD

On the surface, this seems to be something that we shouldn't think of, but many of us at times feel rejected by God. We sometimes believe the lie that God walks away

from us or punishes us. At times we don't seem to feel his presence and experience a sense of unworthiness due to our sins and failures.

The truth is that God loves us for who we are and not who we think we are supposed to be. God offered Jesus on the cross for our salvation showing the greatest act of love. No matter who we are and what we have done God loves us. That love when accepted, transforms our lives!!! The parish is a place of God's love through the sacraments, community and service. We experience God's love, share it with one another and express it in genuine care for those who are abandoned, rejected or forgotten. This is so powerfully experienced in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God's love really does free us!!!

3. OURSELVES

At times we reject ourselves. We sometimes feel inadequate, comparing ourselves to others. We may not like the way we look or what we do and we feel like things cannot ever change.

The truth is that God loves us for who we are and sees each of us as a gift of joy, peace and light. Of

course we need to be constantly reminded of this. Once again, the parish becomes a source of truth, love, grace and hope for us all. Our parish strives to express a celebration of our lives as a gift despite the pains, struggles, disappointments and sufferings.

THE UNDERLYING TRUTH

The underlying truth of our fears is that God is always with us. We need to seek out that presence, love and hope He offers. We too must be signs of hope and love for others. We need to dispel the fears that keep us up at night by caring for those who are in need. I hope this message series can be a reminder of the grace that God offers and which is lived our most fully in our parish.

A PRAYER BY THOMAS MERTON

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."