



Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier

In this polarized world, there are many ways to conceptualize the dichotomy among us. One way is to look at whether people focus on themselves or on others. When survival is at stake, human beings almost automatically focus on themselves -- how will I get food and shelter, how will I protect myself, etc. But people react that way even when the threat is merely imagined or manufactured by someone else. That is why groups (like political parties) will promote fear of others in order to get their members to defend against the threat, even though there may be no real threat. A famous example is when all people crossing our southern border were depicted as murderers and rapists. People in this spot might say "I have to take care of myself because no one else will." Even "religious" people, who purportedly trust God to protect them, will reflect this attitude. But their translation is "God helps those who help themselves." This fear-based view reflects a serious lack of faith in God, in others, and in creation as a whole.

Then there are people who tend to focus on others more often, rather than focusing on themselves. These people find ways to evaluate threats more realistically, and know that true threats to their well-being are relatively few and far between. They also have a deep sense of the connectedness of all creation, and believe that caring for others is really caring for themselves. People who approach life this way tend to have a deep trust in the notion that God created every person and every thing good. And they trust that, even in the face of realistic threat, if they give of themselves to others out of love, generosity, or compassion, God will take care of the rest. This is a trust-based view of life, rather than a fear-based view. It reflects Jesus' parable of the lilies of the field, who God protects just because.

In Lk. 8:50 Jesus says "Fear is useless; what is needed is trust." We get to choose whether fear or trust rules our lives.

Peace,

Fr. Garry