

In Naval Aircrew training, there's plenty of opportunities to test your limits.

Some people struggled with the obstacle course.

Some people struggled with swimming underwater.

Some people struggled with treading water in full flight gear for a couple of minutes.

Some people struggled with swimming a half mile.

Some people struggled with being dragged across a pool in a parachute harness.

Some people struggled with being strapped to a seat, blindfolded, dunked underwater, and turned upside down.

Like any program, some people made it through, and others rocked out.

All of that to earn a pair of wings.

As bizarre as the water survival training may sound, people made it though. Otherwise, there'd be nobody flying observer positions in any Naval aircraft.

For me, it was treading water in full flight gear. I had plenty of excuses:

I barely floated when wearing full gear. When standing still, I'd sink, and when bobbing in the water, on the highest point of the 'bob,' my nose was barely out of the water.

I couldn't make sense of my rhythm while treading water if I couldn't feel the water on my feet, or my legs, or my hands, or my arms.

But to be quite honest, there was only one thing that kept me failing that test. And it was FEAR.

The biggest thing that seemed to hurt people's chances of completing the program was FEAR.

Eventually I passed, but I had to psyche myself up. I was one day away from being kicked out of the program.

That morning, I told myself that if I didn't pass ... that I would die trying.

And the funny thing was — I did pass.

In today's readings, we hear about fear.

The Jewish martyrs in the First Reading are put in very awkward situations. Mothers are

made to watch their sons die. Sons are shown their mothers weeping. All while being tortured to give up their religion.

In the end, the mother tells her son:

*“Do not be afraid of this executioner,  
but be worthy of your brothers and accept death,  
so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with them.”*

And in the Gospel story of the ‘Talents,’ the man who is most seriously punished used as his excuse to his master:

*“I was afraid of you, because you are a demanding man”*

Fear is often used as a motivator to either get people to do things, or to keep them from doing things.

What are you afraid of?

As sons and daughters of God, we are called to be the light of the world. To live a counter-cultural way of life that brings illumination to a planet that seems bent on its own destruction.

That can get pretty scary.

In the First Letter of St. John, we are told the answer to dealing with fear. And it is quite simple:

*“There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. “*

The answer is LOVE. And not just any kind of love — but the highest love. AGAPE in the Greek means a self-sacrificing love based on making a total gift of self.

That’s the kind of love God loves us with.

And that’s the kind of love that drives out fear.

So, as we approach this altar to receive the sacred Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ; let us ask for the grace to love as God loves. Let us pray for an abundance of that love. And in receiving it, let it drive out any fears in our hearts.