

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God....” Isaiah 41:10

Fear. Anxiousness. Uncertainty. Because of the world health crisis that we are experiencing now, these emotions often plagued our days. If you are a parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, godparent, or any type of caregiver of a young child, these feelings are likely overshadowing your decision making, particularly if you have a child who might be attending school this coming fall. It's hard not to have these emotions swirling about our daily lives. As parents, family members, and caregivers, our primary responsibility is to provide a loving and safe environment for children to grow. How can we not feel some level of trepidation and worry when the world around us seems to be slowly succumbing to nothing but sickness and despair?

I won't pretend to have the answer for overcoming these feelings, but I can say that it's important to reach out and seek support and help whenever possible. Now more than ever, we need to be strong for our children and this might mean considering things that we never previously have. It might mean reaching out to others and asking for assistance. It might mean allowing others to share our worries and concerns to lighten our burden even if just temporarily. In doing so, we will likely find that it allows us to handle the fear and anxiety that we are experiencing and be more present for our children.

It is no secret that children can often easily sense when adults around them are uncomfortable, worried, or fretting. We do our best to shelter them from these emotions, but their curious minds and keen observation skills often best our attempts. Although we do not need to burden them with adult size worries, it is important to be honest and sincere in our conversations. Children are very perceptive and often understand more than we think. Being willing to have a conversation and listen to them will not only precipitate calm for them, but likely for the adults around them too.

If parents and caregivers find that they are having difficulty providing answers or addressing questions, there are a multitude of professionals and other resources available that can assist. Arming yourself with information is often a first step. To help our preschool parents feel comfortable and hopefully reduce some of their concerns in order to keep their children's worry levels low, we are working diligently towards the goal of bringing our students safely back to preschool next month. Not only are we considering the health and well-being of staff, students, and families, but we want to do our best to maintain the integrity of what preschool is. While we are carefully following national and state healthcare guidelines to physically keep our students well in body, we are also trying to prepare for additional emotional challenges that might arise such as an increase in separation anxiety.

Finally, we can do all of this to ensure that our worries and those of our children do not overrun us, but it is likely that there will be bumps along the way that are difficult to manage. When we encounter those times, we should never forget about turning to our faith. God is waiting for us to trust in Him and to offer our fears to Him. He is always ready to listen. In reminding our children of this and in helping them learn to talk to God, both in and out of church, we give them the chance to grow in their faith and learn to rely on it throughout their lives. What a powerful 'tool' our faith can be in helping us navigate our stress, anxiety, and fear! As Catholic educators, it is important to us to reinforce this for our children in all that we do.

Let us continue to recognize that when our worries threaten to pull us down and impact our lives with our children, we always can turn to our Heavenly Father who will guide us and never leave us alone.

To learn more about becoming part of our wonderful preschool family and the opportunities we provide, please visit our website at www.preschoolatstfrancis.com or contact Shelley Freeman at: shelley.freeman@stfrancisraleigh.org.

With Joy,

Heidi Hobler, Director

St. Francis of Assisi Preschool