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Safety and Safe

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Safety and Safe

Some persons store valuable items in a safe. Most of us value much more highly than mere possessions, an abiding sense of being safe. In caring about anyone, including ourselves, we want all to be safe, though what we mean by "safe" might vary greatly depending upon persons and circumstances.

Parents want to keep their children safe from harm, which can include not only their bodily health and well-being, but also their sense of self-worth and their age-appropriate sense of right and wrong. For ourselves, we want some of the same, but we know that we require much more than that for a meaningful life. More than being safe, we might desire integrity, or we might set a higher priority on the care of others than on our own sense of safety.

Safety is often equated with security, so that persons who believe that their secure living environment, accompanied by sufficient financial arrangements, will keep them safe. But if a sudden family or health-related crisis arises, they find, through experience, that being safe cannot be appropriately compared with security. There has to be a way of thinking about "safe" that includes all in life that is beyond our capabilities for planning and organizing.

People might think that they are safe as long as no one can cause them harm. In this world, is anyone really safe according to those terms? While we do not deny the attractiveness of being protected from harm, as in a gated community, we have learned to look to a deeper reality in which we have reason to trust that no matter what happens to us, we can be safe. For example, no one can take away our integrity; Even if our bodies or minds begin to fail, there is no power that can force us to choose despair or hate.

Those who can afford every form of available protection cannot ensure for themselves safety from all negative possibilities, and none of us can avoid the kinds of thoughts and feelings that, however invisible to others, hurt us deeply. Relying on our own powers, we can never honestly or realistically claim that we are entirely safe. However, like those who, from a perch on solid rock can watch huge waves crashing below, we can look to that place within us where we experience the gifted assurance that "all will be well."

Many of us have experienced our deepest sense of real safety when we began feeling most vulnerable, most challenged and not in charge of events around us. For some of us the discovery came through conscious prayer to the One who loves us and who holds us in purposeful being. Others might not speak of any communication with God, but would describe the

experience in much the same way as the former group: a movement from fear or anxiety to relative peace and the sense that they are safe. The safety all of us can access is not something we create, and is certainly not something that we can acquire by any human means, as it is wholly and entirely a gift. But we can stop trying to force things to go the way we want as though we could thereby guarantee our safety. We can allow – hard as it is at times to trust that we will receive it – the gift to arise in the only place where being safe has its ultimate value and validity – within our hearts.

The safety that is available to everyone is a gift for the asking, but for us to know that we are truly safe, trust is required.