

## SECTION II

### WHEN FEAR COMPLICATES MINISTRY/SUPERVISION



In *The Courage to Be*, Paul Tillich describes the situation in Europe in the 1930s out of which German fascism developed. There was, first of all, a feeling of fear or, more exactly, of indefinite anxiety. Economic and political as well as cultural and religious security seemed to be lost. A catastrophic breakdown was expected every moment. Consequently, a longing for security was growing everywhere. "In order to avoid the risk of asking and doubting, the right to ask and to doubt are surrendered...Meaning is saved but the self is sacrificed" (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1952, 48). In order to achieve some measure of security in the midst of instability and uncertainty, the ability or freedom to ask or doubt was lost. When no further questions can be asked, then the answers to previous questions are imposed absolutely. In our time of fear and terror, people are also willing to sacrifice freedom for the sake of security. We believe this behavior has consequences for formation and supervision.

It is human to be anxious. We know death is inevitable and life is limited, so an undercurrent of anxiety is part of being creatures of God's creation. Our efforts to overlook anxiety about death lead us away from life and foster neurotic behavior, such as scapegoating those who are different or dominating those who are weak. Fear is also an ordinary and even necessary emotion. Fear alerts us to danger, activates adrenalin, and keeps our focus on overcoming a challenge. Fear may freeze our passions or inhibit our loving. When terror is overwhelming, we may be filled with phobia, unable to step on moving escalators, eat in public places, read our mail, or sleep in the dark.

If we feel overwhelmed by too much terror in the world, it is not because we are weak or lacking courage to cope with all the complexities of modern living. Life is more porous. The proximity of irrational suffering is the result of societies being more violent and porous simultaneously: stress from anywhere in the outside world is more likely to penetrate inside our private space. Even if societies were not porous, we are fearful of being wounded by the air we breathe, the water we drink, the mail we receive, the sun that shines, and maybe even the people we make love to. We are vulnerable, and likely to become more so. We are also more readily overwhelmed

because we do not have the mental and emotional development to handle the cognitive tasks demanded by society in which fear and terror reign.

In this section, we look at ways in which fear enhances or impedes formation and supervision, depending in part on how it is used. We begin this section, however, with a riveting essay about soldiers returning from the war in Iraq. Kent Drescher and David Foy identify moral injuries as well as combat-related posttraumatic stress symptoms in those returning from the war in Iraq. Stephen V. Sprinkle has written a courageous essay as a gay man in supervision about the experience of fear/terror in homosexual persons who are preparing for ordained ministry. Because gay people are so often the targets of irrational rejection and injury, Sprinkle challenges, "we queer clergy are the very people to bring the question of fear in ministerial formation to the table." Scott Sullender explores in a wonderfully honest way the reality of fear for both supervisor and supervisee. Margaret Kornfeld traces her spiritual journey as a supervisor and pastoral psychotherapist since September 11, 2001, away from fear and towards love. This section around the theme concludes by introducing a new feature in *Reflective Practice*. THE FORUM includes the responses of several practitioners to two questions: What qualities of the helping person are needed for care in the context of fear? Are the strategies of care different when fear is all around us?

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