

Called to trust

What it means to rest in God's love



From being thrown about to being cradled with care

A friend and I were reflecting on the passage from Jeremiah in which we hear, "Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." (Jer 18:6) We spoke about the care with which the potter must carefully touch the clay as it spins on the wheel, otherwise it falls apart, and we thought together about what it means to place oneself in God's firm yet gentle care. But then my friend shared something I have never forgotten. She said that she had taken a pottery class once and that as a potter first works with a piece of clay, it has to be thrown onto the wheel, to soften it so that it will become pliable in the potter's hands.



Ah...it does feel like that sometimes in our lives of faith, doesn't it? We feel tossed about a bit, especially at first, until we learn to more readily rest in God's love. As we learn to trust, though, something changes. We more easily recognize the cradling care of our good and gracious God. We are

transformed from being a non-responsive "blob" of clay to being a responsive work of art in the making.

How do we grow in trust of God?

Learning to trust God takes an initial leap of faith, in which we recognize that God has always been with us, and always will be, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus teaches us to trust in words and through his actions. He tells us to remember that if God cares for the birds and the flowers, surely God will care for us; and he reminds us to not be afraid; fear wears away trust quickly and deeply. At key moments in his life and ministry, we are told that Jesus spent significant time in prayer, discerning and committing to the Father's loving will, and he teaches us to do the same.

The challenge: Trusting in God sounds so easy, until we really have to do it. Then we, like many disciples and believers throughout the centuries, find this simple practice is not so simple. Worry, fear, or concern sets in, and no matter how much our hearts tell us to trust, our heads begin to list all the ways in which trusting doesn't make sense. We hear Jesus' words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." (Jn 14: 1) And we understand the importance of following Jesus' lead: rely on prayer; place our cares before God; act in faith even when fear or a troubled spirit reappears. Trust!

Let's get practical. Some of the simplest daily details of our lives are changed for the better when we learn to trust. We will consider practical steps toward living and growing in trustful faith on the reverse of this sheet.

The message

Learning to trust God takes an initial leap of faith, in which we recognize that God has always been with us and will always be.

Let's be spiritual. What we have not really said yet is that developing this sense of trust comes from growing in a deep relationship with God. We cannot trust someone we do not know. Trusting to the point of placing one's life in the hands of another will be possible only to the extent that we have a relationship with that other person. Our relationship with God is like any relationship: it takes time, attention and the willingness to open our hearts and minds to the One who loves us beyond measure.

- Leisa Anslinger

Practical ways to grow as good stewards

Learn from Jesus and Mary

As we read the gospels, we realize that Jesus' call is to love as God loves. Practically speaking, this will change the way we live. Here are some practical steps for living discipleship:

Love God: Putting God first does not come easily to many of us. Doing so will call us to prioritize our time and action: Pray each day; make Sunday Mass our first priority; read the Bible regularly; participate in a small faith community, Bible study, or faith formation process; be open to a living relationship with our Lord.

Love Others: Jesus tells us we must love others as we love ourselves. For some, this means we have to accept ourselves as we are in order to love

others well; for some, we need to focus on others as deserving of our love, even those we do not know and those we consider less important (God doesn't see them that way!).



Love Sacrificially: Jesus gave his very life for us. Taking up Jesus' way with our lives will call us to take up our cross -- in other words, to accept the difficult things in life, knowing that Christ's resurrection gives us great hope, and to give beyond what seems reasonable; that is the way God loves, and we are called to do so as well.

Love Lavishly: Jesus' very life is witness and testimony to the lavish love God has for humanity. Learning to live as a disciple calls us to love and give generously. "In Jesus' teaching and life self-emptying is fundamental. Now, it might seem that self-emptying has little to do with stewardship, but in Jesus' case that is not so. His self-emptying is not sterile self-denial for its own sake; rather, in setting aside self, he is filled with the Father's will, and he is fulfilled in just this way: 'My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work.'" (Jn 4:34 in SDR, 19)

Love Actively: It isn't enough to say we love God and others, we must show our love by acting on it; serve regularly in a parish ministry, soup kitchen, food pantry, homeless shelter, hospital, assisted living facility, with a family member or neighbor who is ill or elderly, or with children. As Blessed Mother Teresa reminded us, we can do small things with great love!



After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (Jn 13:12-14)

HOW ARE YOU A GOOD STEWARD?

We are already stewards, whether we are conscious of it or not. We will always have ways to grow as stewards, too, aspects of our lives in which we don't care or share as readily as we should. How are you already living as a good steward? What areas of your life need attention in order to grow as a steward in the coming year? Use this space to record your thoughts and your commitment for the future: