

## **How to Grow in Faith & Trust With the Lord**

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Hi, my name is Reverend Father Jude-Mary Owoh, OP. I'm a Dominican, I'm the Director of Dominican Media, and I'm happy to be with you on this talk on our retreat for this year, and our retreat topic today is How to Grow in Trusting God. A lot of us struggle with trust, not just with God, but even with people around us, and those things are symptomatic of our trust and our trust issues with God.

### **How to Grow in Trusting the Lord**

So, what is it in life that should call us to trust God? It is important to understand that life is unpredictable. There are ups and downs along the way, and many of us want to trust God, we want to, sincerely. But when times are good, it feels easier to trust God, but when times become difficult, it is even more important that we trust God, but that is when it becomes more difficult to do so.

God's unchanging character can give us a firm foundation when things feel unsteady and uncertain. God never changes, and that is where we should anchor our trust. Life can be going along smoothly for a season. For your job is satisfying; your friends and family are doing very well; your goals, your finances, your health, and outlook on life seem to be bright.

Then, all of a sudden, life just happens, as we say in this part of the world, life happens, and things just throw you off the balance. Life throws you a curveball, like many of you would know, and then, you feel like you are down. Sometimes, it is bad illness; sometimes, it's a loss of a job; sometimes, it is the friends and family that you think would stand with you through a difficult time that fail you. What do you do in such times? The things you feel, the things you felt secure in, all of a sudden, feel shaky and uncertain.

How do you trust God, and how do you know that God would understand that idea that God is good in such a circumstance? How do you trust Him when you do not understand what is happening? These are all valid questions, and God wants to help you navigate them.

### **The Definition of Trust**

What is trust, that's the first place we have to start. Dictionary.com gives two definitions to trust. It says one, trust is reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, and surety of a person or a thing. Confidence is another word for trust. The second is confident expectation of something, confident expectation of something. Hope is another word in that case. And there's a third definition. A person, this is about a person now, a person on whom or a thing on which one can rely.

God is reliable, so reliability is also function of trust. Do we trust God, if you say we trust God, it means that we are willing to rely on Him and not on our own strength. Remember the words

from the Proverbs, where it says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path." So, to trust God means we are willing to rely on Him.

## **The Relationship of Trust and Faith**

When faced with the idea of how to trust God, we put our confidence in Him based on His integrity, His strength, His promises, and His surety. The more you put your trust and your faith in God, the more you should grow in trust. The more you put faith in God, the more you grow in trust. Faith grows, trust grows because we see Him working in our lives and in those around us. So, we must be willing to see God in everything, even in those bad situations, even in those times when people betray your trust, when people do not come forward or show up for you, you must see it as God calling to say, you know what, do not depend on people, do not rely on people, rely on Me, trust Me.

Do you struggle with trusting God? I think it is easy to say we trust God when everything is going well, but when life gets challenging or uncertain, trusting God can be one of the hardest things to do. It's during trying times that many of us come face-to-face with the ugly truth that while we have been praying these words, "Thy will be done," what we actually are saying is, "Thy will be done, so long as it is my own will, too."

C.S. Lewis says, *"We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us. We are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be,"* and that's true. Many times, we know that God's will will always prevail, but we always feel like, God's will is always difficult, why is it always hard, why does He have to go through so many meanders and twists and turns in order to get to where we're going to, why doesn't it just be straight, you know, I pray, I say, God, give me a million dollars, and then, boom, a million dollar lands. God has to put us through almost like little stringy changes in order to get to where we're going to. That is what scares us.

When I first read that quote from C.S. Lewis where he says that we, many times, are wondering how difficult it would be to do God's will, I laughed because many times, it is accurate. But we must understand that although we understand to pray this prayer, it is still the best prayer to say. So, if like me, there is room for your heart for improvement in your trust department, let us now look at the issues that we need to deal with in order to understand what trusting God involves.

## **What Does it Mean to Trust God?**

What does it mean to trust God? To trust God is to believe in the reliability, truth, ability, and strength of something or someone, in this case, God. So, when it comes to trusting God, that means believing in His reliability; in His Word, especially the words of scripture; His ability, the fact that He is God; and His strength. The Bible says that God cannot lie, that He always keeps His promises, that He loves you and that He has good in store for you, He has good things in store for you. Trusting in Him means believing that what He says about Himself, about the world, and about you is true.

Do you believe that what God says about you is true? Trust in God is more than a feeling. Many times, we want to associate it to the feeling, it's not just a feeling; it's a choice to have faith in what He says, even when your feelings or circumstances would have you believe something different. Your feelings and circumstances matter and are very much worth paying attention to, God cares about them both, but those things alone are not reliable enough to base your life on. They can change at any moment, your feelings can change at any moment, even in an instant. God, on the other hand, does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever; therefore, He's worthy of trust, He's a dependable rock.

Trust in God is not about ignoring your feelings or reality, it's not about pretending that everything is okay when it is not. Trust in God is living a life of belief, then this is the point, living a life of belief and obedience to God, even when it is difficult, obeying God, relying on Him, even when life is difficult.

## **Seven Points on How to Trust God**

So, how do you trust God? Now, do we know what it means to trust God, how do we do this? There are seven points I want us to consider in this regard. The first is pray for greater trust, ask God to give you that grace, and remember what Jesus says, "Ask and you shall receive."

So, if you struggle with trusting God's goodness, if feelings ever gets you in your way, ask God for the grace to trust Him more, make it a habit to pray a simple prayer every day, "Jesus, I want to trust in You, help me to trust in You." It's very important that you say that. Desire trust, desire that gift of trust, and God will give it to you. Saint Alphonsus Liguori tells us, "He who trusts himself is lost, but he who trusts in God can do all things."

The second point is to remind yourself constantly, remind yourself constantly, if you feeling hesitant to trust in God, give yourself the reminder of God's goodness and our call to trust in Him by repeating the prayer of trust, a simple one that I always want to say is, whenever I feel tempted, is to say, "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You," always say that, "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You." However small the feeling of trust, place it in Jesus, place it in Jesus. You can even visualize yourself physically handing over a particular area or burden to Jesus, I place my trust in You. You must learn to do that, just say, look this problem, my wife, my husband, my children, my finances, my job, my vocation, I hand it over to You, I trust in You, I trust you with it. Saint Teresa of Avila once said, "Consider seriously how quickly people change and how little trust is to be had in them, and hold fast to God who does not change."

Number three is to share a concern with your community. Have a circle of friends, people that you talk to. Many times, we face our problems, and we want to face them alone, and that is where our problems lie. We want to do it alone, we think that we know the best thing, and then, it's all on your head, and you're worried, and you're overthinking the situation. But if you have a community that you can easily learn things by, it's always very beautiful.

Paul was follower of Jesus and a leader in the early church, he shared this with a fellow believer as encouragement, "I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in

deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Jesus," and these were the words he addressed to Philemon in Philemon 6. Paul reminded his friend that partnership is important to help us have a greater understanding of God and His plan. When you are struggling, share those concerns with other follower of Jesus whom you trust, someone you know is pursuing a relationship with God regularly and who knows God's word. That person can become God's voice to you.

You do not have to share struggles with everyone, that's an extreme, one extreme is not trusting anybody at all, the other extreme is to trust everybody. You must seek out friends with care, carefully. Find those people who will encourage you and share the truth with you, not just tell you what you want to hear. You know, some people will think, well, it's all right, it's all right, it's okay, everything will be fine, no, no, no, don't go to people who try to please you. Go to people who genuine want the best for you and are desirous of your good.

The fourth thing is to go to our Blessed Mother. Our Blessed Mother is very, very powerful. Many times, we don't emphasize this enough, and I want you to get this point. Who better to turn to in our moment of worry than the Good Mother in heaven. You know, somebody once joked, and, of course, it's a reality too, said, "I have two mothers in heaven." When I asked whether her mom was alive, and said, "No, my mom is in heaven, and now, I have two mothers in heaven," her biological mom and our Blessed Mother. So, Mary loves us, and wants nothing more than to lead us closer to God. So, when we struggle to trust God, ask her to pray for you to grow in trust, ask her to help you open your hearts to receive the graces God wants to give to you. Pour out your worries to Mary through prayer.

## **The Memorare**

One prayer that I favor a lot is the Memorare, *"Remember, O Most Gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection implored your aid or sought intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of Virgins, my mother, our Mother. To you, I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful, O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petition, but in your clemency, hear and answer me, Amen."* You see how fluidly I say it because I say it every single day, so many times every single day, and it's a very, very powerful prayer. So, I encourage you to look for it, the Memorare, and pray it daily.

The fifth point is read God's word and stories from the gospel. The gospel stories are the good news of God's goodness, mercy, and love. If you are struggling to trust in God, spend some time reading the Bible stories of Jesus' life, find out about the people He helped, the people He healed, and those He forgave during His time on earth. Read the words of reassurance and love He spoke as He taught the needy, as He taught the broken people that He met. Let His words speak to you, and let it speak to your heart and your situation, and I know it will definitely transform you.

The sixth point is to look for good things to be grateful for. What are those things that God has done in your life lately that you are grateful for? Many time, we suffer an amnesia when it comes to things that God has done for us, and we're more focused on the things He has not done. But if you remember, if you try to call to mind the things that God has done, it will give you that grace

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and that impetus to continue to trust Him. There is a song that sung here in this part of the world, and it's an English song, and it's a very important reminder to always trust in God. It goes thus. *"When I remember what the Lord has done, I will never go back anymore. When what the Lord has done, I will never go back anymore"* It's a very wonderful reminder of what God has done, and it helps us, it's a like a reset button for me whenever I find myself worrying about the things that I am faced with, and I remind myself, God has done great things in your life, be grateful for those things, call those moments to mind, and then, it reassures you that even greater things will follow.

The final point is to remember past worries and how they worked out. Yes, even when we're worried about present difficulties, remember past worries, and how God delivered you from them. It's the same thing has remembering what God has done, but this time, it's not just that God gave you \$1,000, how did God do it. It's not just that God gave you a job, how did God do it. What was in your mind when you were struggling to get that job, and you were making applications, and you were calling people, and you were making moves, and all those things were not working out, what changed, how did God change that situation?

Well, I was ill, and then I went to so-so person, so-so person prayed with me, I got so-so jobs, so-so person gave me such a recommendation, and then, everything worked out well. How did that happen? It's important to remind yourself of the process of the goodness that God has already given to you, and then you see that everything always starts with a problem, and then God comes in with our own cooperation to give us what we are looking for.

So, is there a situation where you are finding yourself, now you are worried, you are worried sick, and you're asking yourself, "How am I going to get out of this?" The problem is that many times, when we find ourselves in situations of worry, we forget everything that God has done, we forget, we just suddenly suffer an amnesia, we just go blank, and all we can think about is what is happening right now, all the problems, all the problems, all the problems.

We have to learn to live above our problems, and living above your problems, basically means that you try to remember, especially from a verse of scripture what God Himself has done. So, keep a journal, that's another beautiful thing you can do, keep a journal of how God speaks to you daily, how you go through your difficulties each day, and how God delivers you from them, so that whenever you find yourself in difficulty, you can easily go back and you read through and say, "Oh wow, look at what God did for me."

A good reminder that our lack of trust is an offense to God, and we must also remember that our lack of trust is an offense to God, okay? God is so good and cares for us. It is important that we try to always remember what God has done. And so, ask yourself in what areas of your life are you in need to learn to follow God, to trust God? Where in your life do you need to grow in your trust in God? Is it in your finances, is it in your marriage, is it in caring for your children, is it in your personal goal for holiness, is it for your struggle for a particular sin? These are all places where we must learn to trust God and say, "God, You have led thus far, You're not going to get me down now. I know that You want to lead me to greater things. Help me to walk with You, to join with You, to trust You," and greater things will follow.

## **Closing Prayer**

Let us pray. Lord, all things work together for good, for those who trust in You. Help me, help us, to trust You through the good and the bad times, in joy and in sorrow, always. We make our prayer through Christ, our Lord. The Lord be with you, and Almighty God continue to bless you through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.