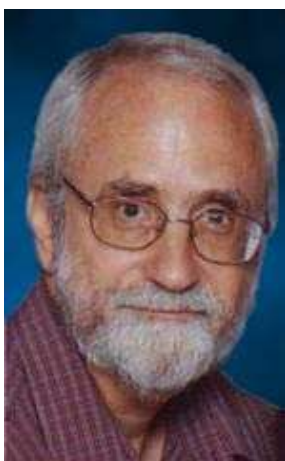




What does it mean to trust in God?

By Tom Cordaro

Last spring, the parish council and staff decided to focus on the challenges and opportunities God might be inviting us to embrace in response to the deep economic crisis occurring in our community, our nation and the world. Now, almost ten months later there seems to be a clear disconnect between what the experts tell us about this worst recession in decades (the numbers say it is over) and what we still experience in our daily lives and what we see in our community.



It is not an overstatement to say that we live in a time of acute fear and anxiety in our country. This economic crisis has rocked us on our heels and has made us second-guess almost every financial transaction we contemplate. And for the first time in many generations we wonder aloud whether our children and grandchildren will experience the same level of economic security we have enjoyed throughout most of our lives.

In the council/staff reflection about this year's theme we stated, "We believe that this crisis provides us with an opportunity to recommit ourselves to God and to those things in life that really matter. This call to trust is not an invitation to sit tight and wait out the current economic storm in order to get back to our normal lives as soon as possible. It is the kind of trust that gives us the courage to leave the familiar and move into the wilderness where transformation can take place; where new forms of community can take shape; and where the cultivation of sustainable and simplified lifestyles can lead us to greater wholeness and health."

What a bold undertaking!

This journey to a new place would be unimaginable if it were not for the fact that Jesus has already shown us the way. Soon we will be entering the season of Lent. These forty days, which ultimately lead to the passion, death and

resurrection of Jesus is ultimately a story about leaving the familiar and the secure in order to enter into the wilderness of uncertainty. It is a story about trusting enough in God to even surrender our lives on the cross in order to give birth to something new and unexpected.

But how can we let go of the life we have to embrace the unknown? Isn't it better to make peace with the demands of fear? Wouldn't it be better to hold tightly to what we know than risking it all on an uncertain future or a promised resurrection? Wouldn't it be safer to just stay where we are and hope for the best?

A Sufi tale tells of a stream working itself across the country, experiencing little difficulty until it arrived at a desert. Just as it had crossed every other barrier, the stream tried to cross this one, but it found that as fast as it ran into the sand, its waters disappeared. After many attempts it became very discouraged. It appeared that there was no way it could continue the journey. Then a voice came in the wind, "If you stay the way you are you cannot cross the sands, you cannot become any more than a quagmire. To go further you will have to lose yourself."

"But if I lose myself," the stream cried, "I will never know what I'm supposed to be."

"Oh, on the contrary," said the wind, "if you lose yourself you will become more than you ever dreamed you could be." So the stream surrendered to the drying sun. And the clouds into which it was formed were carried by the raging wind for many miles. Once it crossed the desert, the stream poured down from the skies, fresh and clean, and full of the energy that comes from storms.



This is another in a series of reflections on our parish theme written by our parish pastoral ministers. All published staff reflections can also be found on our website, www.smmp.com