

Learning to Trust Second Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, January 20, 2016
8:15 AM **1 SM 17:32-33, 37, 40-51;** Mk 3:1-6 (St. Fabian, pope, martyr; St. Sebastian, martyr) (In between extremes there is a life when we learn how to depend on God and how to make the proper, prudential, consistent, and relevant contributions to our own wellbeing.)

“David continued: ‘The Lord, who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear, will also keep a safe from the clutches of this Philistine.’”

What this story of David is exemplifying is that **we do not begin with extraordinary feats; we learn gradually how to trust in God.** We learn to trust in God the same way we learn to walk, with little steps, and on the way we fall a few times. That’s part of how we learn how to trust because there are, of course, **two extremes. One is to believe oneself to be totally dependent on oneself,** and this is by far the assumption of most people in our society. We live in a society that stresses individualism and freedom and excess. And along with that comes a sort of isolation of being thrown back upon oneself because there is no one else, there is no fabric in society. We don’t have even strong families. Some few of us do, and thankfully, but many people are not even blessed with that, and so **they depend all on themselves, and often feel isolated and lonely and afraid. God does not intend people to live this way.**

On the other hand, there is another extreme possible. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, the devil took him up to the parapet of the Temple and said, “Throw yourself down; God won’t let you suffer.” Well, that’s **the other extreme. That’s the idea that we don’t have to take any precautions.** We can just live and do as we please, and everything will be fine. In a way, this appeals to a certain sort of adolescent wildness, almost a belief in our own immortality. Well, any immortality we have is beyond the human body we have now; so that’s another extreme. **In between there is a life when we learn how to depend on God and how to make the proper, prudential, consistent, and relevant contributions to our own well-being,** not depending totally on ourselves, not throwing ourselves off the parapet of the Temple, but walking in faith, “not by sight,” as St. Paul says. We don’t see God day to day. We have to learn how to perceive God in the darkness, in the twilight, in the dusk, in the shadows. God is there. **God is always with us.**

David learned slowly how to trust in God. He was a sort of daring person; he had a certain amount of courage, but he also was very wise even as a young man, at least if we can believe the stories about him. But **here he is willing to step up and to confront this bully**, and the king says, “You know, you’re too young; you really can’t do it.” But unbeknownst to the king, David wasn’t that inexperienced because he had been for a long time with the Lord. **He had been anointed some time before; power had come into him.** He had been prepared, and he relied on this power. **He learned how God helped him. Along with that came a real sense, for the most part, of justice.** It didn’t stand by him at every moment of his life, but, for the most part, it did. He had a real sense of what was right and how things should be. He stood up for the weak, for the most part, flawed though he was.

So this is how we all have to learn: one step at a time. Of course **that presumes that we have a steady life of prayer, that we are really seeking God’s help**, that we are asking for God’s help, and not excluding things from God’s concern, thinking that, well, this is my business so God won’t be concerned. No, **God is concerned if it is your business because he is concerned about you.** He is concerned about your family. **He is concerned about everything. It’s just that he will respect free will, your free will and everyone’s free will.** So if the well-being of your family depends upon everyone cooperating and some decide not to, well, again, God will invite them, but they have to respond. The vision that hope offers us however is that **in spite of people’s choice not to cooperate with God**, in spite of sin and rebellion, even in rather major proportions, even whole societies, nonetheless, **nonetheless, God will eventually prevail.** Time will never run out for God. Time may run out for us, but not for God. **God will continue to pursue his plan for all of us to learn how to dwell in God**, how to dwell in peace, how to dwell in love, how to learn to forgive, and so on. But we have to start small.