

One of my first assignments as an ordained priest was as a chaplain at White Plains Hospital, and of course I wore my Franciscan habit while I was there. You couldn't miss me- when a six foot, two inch man in a brown robe comes into your hospital room, you take notice. And I could tell pretty much right away what kind of reception I was going to get- most of the patients were very polite and allowed me to talk with them, pray with them, whatever for a few minutes, but then they want me out of there- which is fine. And some simply glared at me as if to say "*Don't even bother*"- which is fine too.

And then there were the encounters which blew me away and which inspired me more than I can really tell you. These beautiful people were suffering terribly; on top of that they're worrying about a host of problems connected with their illness- financial, family-related, work-related; and on top of that, there's the boredom, the loneliness, the feeling of being stuck in a place that is not your home and that you really can't get used to.

And with all that, with all those things that they could not control. and which could so easily make them question what in God's name is going on with their lives - with all that, they still had faith that God knows what He's doing and that God does indeed care for them. These good people knew what it means to say that they trust in God, no matter what, and I'm sure they still do.

These people who I met, whose faith has been tried more than I could ever know- they still chose to live their lives with the conviction that God has not abandoned them, that God cares for them, even though the reality of their lives seems to make a mockery of that- they know they can trust in God and that He will provide.

The widows we heard about in today's readings also knew what it was like to trust in God despite evidence to the contrary. Because to be a widow in that world was to live a life that was precarious and uncertain, and it was to live in vulnerability and insecurity.

The widow, in a society where men could often die young of disease or die in battle, most likely was very young and in a world of arranged marriages she probably would never be chosen again as a bride. With her husband dead, she was of no interest either to her husband's family or even her own. Widows had no rights at all according to the Jewish inheritance laws of that time, and so hardly any means at all to support themselves and the children they had, being forced to become scavengers and beggars.

They were susceptible to physical and financial abuse by members of their own society, and they really didn't have recourse to anyone who would protect them, apart from the religious community they were part of, sometimes. It's not for nothing that the Hebrew word for "*widow*" meant "*one who is silent*", in other words one who has no voice.

So with all that in mind- were the two widows simply being generous, giving out of their very poverty; or were they simply being foolish, giving away what they need to survive? Is having trust in God being foolish; or is trusting God the surest way to go through life?

Well, if we think that trust in God means that we don't have to do anything about anything because God will do it all for us- then, yes, it is foolish to trust in God. But if we see trust in God as essentially being about living in harmony with God's will for us, then we're on the right track. We know that God's will for the world, and for each and every one of us, is that we be able to achieve the good that we were created for, to become the person that we were meant to be and to live in the dignity that is ours as beloved children of God. And since God

wants us to cooperate with him in this project, we are responsible in making all this a reality, in whatever way we can, and in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

Trusting in God means letting go- letting go of our control over things to the extent that we no longer than think that we are the only ones in charge of our lives. And that's very, very difficult, obviously- it goes against our individualistic and self-determining human nature and it puts us in a very vulnerable position. For example, the widow who gave the prophet Elijah the last scraps of food that she had by rights should have said no to him, since she didn't even have enough for her and her son. But she let go- what could have been her last act was an act of trust that God knew what he was doing and that he would provide for her through the prophet. And she was richly provided for.

God is never far from us. God is the loving and healing and empowering presence that helps us to get through the difficult times in our lives and to appreciate the good times as well. God is the one who enables us to see the world in a way that goes beyond what we can do alone; God is the one who makes it possible for us to accomplish whatever we are able to do; God is ultimately and assuredly the one who sustains us.

Many times, we can't appreciate this truth in the moment, but look back on your life and you will see that God was there with you, every step of the way, even in the most difficult moments. Hindsight is 20/20 as they say, but it's also more perceptive than we often are in the moment.

Trust in God and God will help you to do the rest.