

Trust. "To go through life without trust," says Arthur Rowe in Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*, "is to be imprisoned in the worst cell of all, oneself."

Our primary vocation as people of faith is to trust the voice from heaven heard in our baptism: "You are my daughter, my son, whom I love, in whom I delight." Trusting this voice is naming what is most real and true about you is the hardest work you will do.

The primary vocation of the tempter is to erode trust: "*If you are God's beloved, prove it.*" The desire to trade trust for certainty, for proof, is the fertile ground of temptation. Who doesn't want proof? Who doesn't prefer the security of knowing over the risk of faith? Jesus' trust is put to the ultimate test on the cross when his cry of abandonment is met with silence.

In the Garden of Eden the serpent erodes trust by suggesting the voice from heaven isn't telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The desire to know, to be certain, plucked the forbidden fruit and partook. The serpent was right: Adam and Eve didn't die, immediately.

What died was innocence, replaced by shame; what died was intimacy with God, replaced by fear; what died was joy in each other, replaced by accusation and animosity.

Learning to trust God's benediction upon us in our baptism is the first and perennial work of the spiritual life. Other voices, at opportune moments, will clamor for our attention, sowing doubt about the voice from heaven and promising greater happiness. When we heed these voices, as we do many times along the way, our hearts harden, our vision dims, and our lives are constrained by fear.

The tempter, wily as ever, challenges the voice from heaven with the voices of scripture. If we desire the forbidden fruit badly enough, reason will produce rationalizations faster than ragweed produces pollen. We can easily quote scripture, like the tempter, to transfigure the forbidden fruit into the golden apple.

Knowing which voice to trust requires a discerning heart. Whose interest is being served and at whose expense? If we are tempted to believe our best interests are not being served by serving only God, we are ripe fruit for the plucking.

We are going to serve somebody, something. Not serving is not an option. Using our gifts in the service of fame, fortune, or power enslaves us, for these masters are never satisfied. A reporter reportedly asked John D. Rockefeller, "How much money is enough?" He responded, "Just a little bit more."

Learning to trust we are enough, we are known, we are loved, learning to trust God delights in us, frees us from the need to howl at the moon, to waste our time and energy trying to prove what can only be known in trust.