

Before Vincent and I got married, we had to take a pre-marital course. Because we lived in different cities, we came together in Edmonton for a weekend. I was raised in a small-town United Church with a devout, but anti-Catholic mother and father. Vincent was a city boy raised in a devout Catholic family. What lived in my consciousness was that everything Catholic was bad, wrong or evil. At 19 years of age, I found out that weekend, that any children I might have would be raised Catholic. I had to agree to this. For me, this was a real struggle.

After hours of mental resistance and internal debate, I felt a deep trust in the Spirit. I had experienced God's goodness and love and had received a gift of someone to love who loved me, so, in that trust and joy, I let go of the control to have things my way, and in a gesture that felt like a significant sacrifice, I was free to say yes. What freed me was my trust in a higher power of love.

Trust creates the necessary connection to help us break through barriers of prejudice. My sacrifice, that "yes", was the start to many more yeses for me. In trust, I could let go of my way of church to open to a way I did not even know.

And how do we know Holy Love, a living Love that can draw us close enough to trust her? The reading from Isaiah describes how. There's a feeling of the generous—a lavish, steadfast love that comes to very difficult circumstances represented as a mountain.

Trust might start with the mountain, which for many cultures represents difficulty, struggle, or work—like grief. On that mountain is *exactly where* the Holy Source of All Being is offering a banquet of the best food and drink—on our mountain of trying to overcome pain and despair. The promise is that the Holy One will lift the darkness, the shroud of those who mourn. Where we are broken, our Creator will make us whole. There are such wholesome promises of the best kind for accompaniment through the pain. This idea of God meeting us where we hurt most, rings true with Paula D'Arcy's comments. There is something about grief that can help us see differently.

D'Arcy's story is one of deep loss. As a young pregnant mother, she survived a car crash that killed her husband and two-year-old daughter. She describes horrific despair and into her anger and depression occurred one loving encounter after another with the presence of the Spirit. She says that "Pain began to shift into sight: I found myself thinking, Maybe love appears in endless form, not just in one or two individuals to whom I cling. Maybe that's the point. Maybe we should be drunk with love all the time."¹ Her sense of God's presence was so strong that it became for her, a point of deep trust, that she could carry on—from finding meaningful work, to giving birth to the child that she carried, to a career based on writing and giving retreats based on her journey of this devastating grief.

When she says in today's reading, that "the big arm of grief wipes away the superficiality of our lives," she recognizes that so much of her energy, before the death of her family, was spent worrying about what others were thinking and how to make the perfect life. "When all the illusions are shattered," she says, "we sometimes find what really sustains us."

And what is that? What is it that really sustains us? The good story of the blind beggar in Luke's gospel, who could be any of us, suggests one answer. The beggar has had sight taken away and everything comfortable and caring in his life disappears with his vision. People scorn him, tell him to shut up and so, with the sound that day of the energized crowd rustling by, he senses deep within himself something hopeful has come his way. In trust, as *Creator Sets Free* approaches, he pursues the possibility for healing, felt in his gut. The name itself is a promise.

¹ Paula D'Arcy "When People Grieve" *Spirituality and Practice*,
<https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/books/reviews/excerpts/view/14867?id=14867>.

The beggar's trust serves as a direct line to Jesus, who picks up the persistence in the man's voice crying out through the crowd. Not only does the beggar want to see, he wants *to be seen* again, to be valued, to have a purpose. Like D'Arcy, the beggar wants to experience a meaningful life again. In a statement of deep affirmation, Jesus himself points out to the beggar, that that feeling of trust which caused him to yell past those who would shame and stop him, is itself a connection that has healed and resulted in the beggar's vision restored. "Your trust in me has healed you."

What seemed a big sacrifice to me, forty-six years ago, to let go of the most meaningful activity in my life, my church's expression of worship, led to a trust that opens me over and over again "to be drunk with love" for so much and so many—sometimes without even seeing the reason why. I close with a poem by Wendell Barry.

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We travelers, walking to the sun, can't see
Ahead, but looking back the very light
That blinded us shows us the way we came,
Along which blessings now appear, risen
As if from sightlessness to sight, and we,
By blessing brightly lit, keep going toward
That blessed light that yet to us is dark.

Thank you for listening.
What did you notice in the liturgy today?
What sustains you in times of grief or struggle or despair?