

I sometimes jokingly say that my job as a lawyer is to be a professional worrier. I worry about: What do I do if the opposing attorney argues this? What do I do if my client does that? What happens if the judge won't admit my key piece of evidence?

Of course, in my work, those worries have a purpose; they help me plan and prepare what I need to do. Sometimes, though, in my own everyday life, I can get caught up in worrying about things so that my worries kind of "lead me around by the nose."

Sometimes I get so caught up in wanting to know how things will turn out, that I basically sit down and refuse to budge until God reveals to me exactly what will happen if I do the things God is calling me to do.

When I began praying with today's Gospel passage, I tried to imagine how I would react if I were in Mary's shoes. Somehow I imagine the conversation would go a little differently. Actually, I think the first part of the conversation would be exactly the same right up to the part where the angel starts saying "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High..." And right there is where I would stop listening and start thinking about, "Oh boy, what is Joseph going to say? What is going to happen to me when everybody else finds out? I could get stoned to death for this. Nobody's going to believe I got pregnant because of the Holy Spirit. And if I do give birth to this child given to me by the Holy Spirit, what does that mean anyway? What's this kid going to be like? And ... oh, excuse me, Gabriel, were you saying something?"

Mary, on the other hand, is hanging on every word the angel says, and simply responds, "I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say." Period. End of story.

Mary exemplifies trust. I'm sure she thought about all those same questions I would have had, but she didn't let the questions and worries stop her from following the path she knew God wanted her to take. I think we all aspire to trust God the way Mary did, but how do we do that? I don't know about you, but

I don't usually see magazines out there in the stores with the headline "How to Trust God in Ten Easy Steps."

I think that what we learn from Mary is that trusting God is not a technique or a formula, but it is a way of being.

When I first read today's readings a few weeks ago, I didn't immediately see a connection between the first reading and the Gospel. Oftentimes there is a pretty obvious parallel or link between the first reading and the Gospel, but I really didn't see anything like that with these passages that jumped out at me. But after reading them several times and just sitting with them, a strong connection did seem to emerge.

In the first reading from Second Samuel, God tells the prophet Nathan to tell David, "I will provide a place for my people Israel. I will plant them where they will have a home of their own—a place where they will never be disturbed."

I think that is what Mary intuitively understood. I don't know if she would have put it in those words, but I think she understood, in the depth of her heart, that God had provided her a home, and that her home was in God, and just as important, that God was at home in her. She had an understanding, not so much an intellectual understanding, but more of an experiential knowing that God dwelled within her. We Catholics say that we believe that the Trinity dwells in each of us, but we don't focus on that truth a lot, and I don't think we live as if we believe that oftentimes.

Elsewhere in Luke's Gospel, we hear that Mary "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

She heard what the angel said about what was going to happen to her, she heard what people said about her son, she watched him grow, and even though she had the same questions and worries that we do, she had that basic core of knowledge that she had a home in God where she would never be

disturbed. She pondered the questions, but she didn't let them disturb her. She didn't throw a temper tantrum and insist on having the answers right now. She didn't shut down or withdraw. She simply said yes, and moved forward, confident that she had a home in God, and that God had made a home in her.

I'd like to conclude with one of my favorite writings, by Rainer Maria Rilke, that I think expresses the way Mary lived and trusted. Rilke says:

"I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves, as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answers."