

Who Do You Trust?

BY MARY BETH NEWKUMET

Several months ago, my daughter received a solicitation in the mail from a new magazine for young teens called *CosmoGIRL*. According to the promo, it is meant to be “juicy and fun,” published by the same people who bring you *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

YIKES!

What struck me about the promotional material was the way the language tried to capture my daughter’s heart. Clearly someone had done some great market research on adolescent girls and their keenly-felt search for deeper union with other people. At this age, they are trying to build close friendships. They are trying to establish identities that are distinct from their parents. But most of all, they are looking for people to whom they can entrust their hearts.

Tapping into this longing for intimate friendship, the young editor of *CosmoGIRL* promised my daughter in her cover letter: “You can talk to us about anything. Stuff you can’t talk to anyone else about. Serious stuff. Guy stuff. Family and friends stuff. You can trust us.” The promo letter is signed “Your Friend” with the editor’s name. In another part of the promotional package, she assures her teen reader that “I really want you to be my friend. And I hope you’ll want me to be your friend, too.”

A “TRUST ME” CULTURE

Of course, I’m picking on *CosmoGIRL*. Frankly, the magazine looks no better—or worse—than any of the other equally impoverished teen magazines for girls. However, the promo made me sad by the very calculating way it tried to imply that my daughter was better off trusting a hip-looking stranger instead of her own family. This magazine, the promo reassured my daughter, “is not written



by someone’s mom.” Phew!

While my daughter is smart enough to know better, *CosmoGIRL* is the perfect example of how the culture beckons our children with the alluring, “you can trust us.”

You can trust us, instead of your parents, teachers or the Church because we know what life is really about. You can trust us to tell you the full truth. We will show you everything “juicy and fun” that the people around you have been withholding with their rules and guidelines for living. You can trust this “trust me” culture!

It is easy to see how the kids can get seduced by this barrage of nudge-nudge-wink-wink-

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Mary, the first
Steward of Christ

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you-can-trust-us that awaits them each day on television, the world wide web, the radio, movies, magazines, etc. Who can blame them for thinking they are missing out on something?

The problem is that the “trust me” culture sets up such big expectations for a “juicy and fun” life, but can’t propose a way to sustain that life. This is easily seen in the articles of hollow joy and false liberation in the grown-up *Cosmopolitan* magazine, which run alongside stories of broken relationships and unfulfilled hopes of security and love. It is evident that the lush, intimate relationships every “Cosmo woman” desires cannot endure for long when they are based solely on the insecure foundation of toned bodies, fashionable clothes, compatible sexual appetites and mutual interests.

TRUSTING CHRIST

It is reasonable to conclude that because we hold such great desires for love and intimacy in our hearts, there must be some way for these desires to be fulfilled—and sustained indefinitely. Clearly, the culture does not have the answer, so who can we trust to show us the way? “Men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable,” says Pope John Paul II, “a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves” (Faith and Reason).

The Church’s proposal is not a “trust me” but a “trust Christ” culture. Why should we trust Christ? Because through his words, his deeds and now in his living presence in the life of the Church, he has shown that he loves us. In your

own life, you can only fully trust people who know you and love you with the heart of Jesus. These are the people who would do anything for you. And so, you trust them with your life.

TRUST IS REASONABLE

Trusting people who have shown they care about you is a reasonable human act. In the same way, “trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason,” teaches the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#154). It is reasonable to trust the One who personally loves us so much that he willingly took all of our sin and humanity upon himself and still wants to give us the gift of himself in this time, at this moment.

Unlike the “trust me” culture, the Church is able to point *with certainty* to life with the One we can trust to give us everything we need. The Church is a witness to the full truth about human life. Only Christ can sustain the love and intimacy we crave. Only Christ—encountered in his Church—can give us an eternal happiness that never ends. Sadly, the current culture still does not know how to point the way to the true fulfillment of each human person. So it is up to those in whom Christ lives to keep proposing the beauty and mystery of life lived with him to a culture that dismisses his presence.

As for my daughter, she knows that her dad and I love her madly and are therefore more trustworthy than the editor of *CosmoGIRL*. As long as my husband and I continue to pursue our relationship with Christ—the One who gives

us an amazing capacity to know and love our daughter well—she will always trust us more than the “you can trust me” culture. “The more one is truly human, the more one is able to trust,” writes Msgr. Luigi Giussani in *The Religious Sense*, “because one understands the adequate reason for believing in another.”

So who do you trust: the culture or the Lord of life? ❖

Life After Sunday

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Mutual Trust

All great relationships are based on mutual trust. Through the Mass, we encounter the outward signs that show us how deeply we can trust this great Lord whose love and passion for us never dies. The question becomes: can the Lord trust us? Consider these words that you may have heard countless times at Mass. Before the priest partakes of the Eucharist, he quietly prays, “let it not bring me condemnation, but health in mind and body.”

Do you understand the radical meaning of the priest’s words on behalf of the whole community? How can the Eucharist bring condemnation?

If we receive the Eucharist with estrangement in our hearts, we bring disharmony into the Body of Christ. “It is not true to say that nothing happened when [Judas] received [at the Last Supper],” wrote the mystic and theologian

Adrienne Von Speyr. “The fact is that what would have taken place in the immeasurable grace of union if he had faith, now takes place in the immeasurable estrangement of evil.” Amazingly, Christ took Judas’ estranged

Communion with him to the Cross, conquering its great evil through the Father’s loving mercy.



THIS IS FOR YOU

The Eucharist is the great outward sign of Christ’s personal love for each one of us. It is the ultimate “for you.” Consequently, it requires our most sincere

“for you” right back. This mysterious act of mutual intimacy cannot be taken lightly. Otherwise, it becomes disordered in the same way that a marriage suffers grievously when the husband is completely “for” his wife, and she is completely “for” her self.

The Church teaches that we cannot come to Communion

Getting There

“JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU”

The Sunday after Easter, many dioceses celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, reflecting on the Father’s tremendous mercy evidenced by the sacrifice of his own Son. Divine Mercy Sunday springs from the reported visions of Christ to Blessed Faustina Kowalska, a simple Polish nun who lived in Cracow, Poland, until her death in 1939. The image of Divine Mercy is a picture of our Lord with one hand lifted in blessing and the other hand touching his heart. “Jesus, I Trust In You” reads the caption. Divine Mercy Sunday helps us reflect upon the Lords’ infinite love and mercy for us, sinners. ❖

with Christ unless we are united with him. Yet many Catholics receive the Eucharist even with the obstacle of serious sin between themselves and their Lord. In this way, they take his tremendous mercy for granted and have little access to it. They are no longer fully caught up in the passionate love they have just received and therefore co-exist with Christ without his peace or intimacy—just like the loving husband and his selfish wife.

At Mass on Sunday, have you pursued an intimacy with Christ that makes your Communion a complete union of hearts, minds, bodies and souls? Or is his trust in you misplaced? “In this sacra-

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Trusting You Will Be Heard

Prayer is a right understanding of the fullness of joy that is to come, as well as longing and the sure trust that it will be ours. Failing to have the full joy that has been promised us makes us long for it all the more; but true understanding and love, mindful of our sweet Savior’s purpose, brings with it the grace to trust in him. And in these two workings—of longing and of trust—our Lord beholds us continually; such is our dutiful task, and in his goodness he expects nothing less of us.

— Blessed Julian of Norwich

Trusting His Love

BY REV. ROBERT MORDINO

Deep within us all, there is a natural, God-given need and desire to be someone, to be special, to be loved and recognized for who we are, to simply belong. When these needs go unmet whether out of ignorance (“I never knew you could write poetry”),

inexperience (“My parents never gave me any praise so why should you expect any from me?”) or callousness (“I have better things to do than come to your game”) grave harm can

occur. Even when they are met to one degree or another, they can go unrecognized (“I don’t ever remember you telling me that I was pretty”) or be misinterpreted, (“You said the dress looked good on me when you knew it really made me look fat.”)

Now when you couple these

Trust Prayer

“O Holy Mary, my mistress, into your blessed trust and special keeping, into the bosom of your tender mercy, this day, every day of my life and at the hour of my death, I commend my soul and body; to you I entrust all my hopes and consolations, all my trials and miseries, my life and the end of my life, that through your most holy intercession and your merits, all my actions may be ordered and disposed according to your will and that of your divine Son. Amen.”

– St. Aloysius Gonzaga

desires and needs, especially in the case of youngsters, with another natural human instinct we call guilt, you wind up with a pretty potent package of potential hurt and alienation. This, in turn, can lead to a process of gradual retreat into oneself, to isolation and an inhibited personality even into adulthood. At its least worrisome, that might mean some sassiness on the part of kids or the silent treatment on the part of adults. At its worst, it might mean a Columbine massacre for juveniles or a divorce court for spouses.

ONE IN A BILLION

Scripture tells us something pretty wonderful about ourselves when it tells us more than once that we are created in God’s very image. Imagine the implications of that statement. Think this about yourself: “I am the living embodiment of my Creator. I am the product of His creative genius. My very being is the direct result of God’s infinite love for me—yes, for me individually among the billions. I contain within me a spark of the Divine. I am unique and unrepeatable. I am not my own. I am God’s child.

Years ago, when my oldest nephew first went to kindergarten, he was very apprehensive about his first day in school. He was near tears as he boarded the bus for his first foray into the world of teachers and classmates. He was particularly concerned that the other kids might not like him or play with him. But when he got off the bus after his first half day of

schooling, he was a very different kid. He was all smiles and excitement. He said that he loved going to school. My sister soon discovered part of the reason for the transformation. Besides the fact that none of his childish fears had materialized, he had also had a powerful experience of affirmation in an environment where it would be especially effective.

TRUSTING OUR SELF-WORTH

That morning he had learned a simple little song that touched his innocent soul. It was to the tune of that old standby: “Frere Jacques.” And these were its simple substitute lyrics: “I am special. I am special. God made me. God made me. And he really loves me. Yes he really loves me. God made me. God made me.” Did he not already know these things? Knowing my sister, I am sure he did. He sang this little song for days, for any one who would listen and for his own entertainment. In one half day of kindergarten, he had learned a lesson for life, a lesson even some adults never seem to grasp or really trust, right into old age.

You see, we are special. God did indeed make each and every one of us. God does love us. He really does. And accepting this truth and allowing it to animate our sense of self worth is a genuine form of reconciliation with the self. If we come to see ourselves as having real worth, as being objects deserving of love, truly loveable as we are, we can live with true inner peace and live a good and productive life. ❖



Intimate Trust

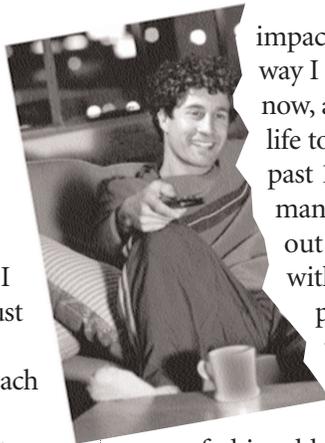
BY JOHN M. CAPOBIANCO

Do you find it hard to really trust your spouse? I don't mean the simple openness of friendship or even the cautious trust of skeptical partners. Remember Ronald Reagan's "Trust but verify"? I mean the deeper kind of trust between spouses where two souls and two bodies trust each other so much that they are really bonded into one heart—a heart that lives, thinks, beats, breathes, loves and longs for the other with a corporeal passion that surpasses human ingenuity. I believe this kind of union is an amazing divine gift. St. John of the Cross describes this intimacy like this: "In the union and transformation of love, each gives possession of self to the other, and each leaves and exchanges self for the other. Thus each one lives in the other and is the other, and both are one in the transformation of love."

Learning to love God by trusting your spouse in this intimate way is one of the fruits of a truly sacramental marriage. It's why marriage is a vocation—a calling and gift from God to begin to live his eternal life here and now. This union in intimate trust, this gift of self expressed through the body, is what John Paul II teaches as his tender vision of marriage known as the "theology of the body."

IS SUCH TRUST POSSIBLE?

Now I am no theologian. I am simply a grateful man who fell in love with a woman who wanted to live her marriage as a true vocation from God. I was also fortunate enough to befriend a priest who understood what this Pope was teaching to lovers today. This combination made an enormous



impact on me, on the way I love my wife now, and on our daily life together for the past 16 years. So many couples start out life together without the intense passion of Christ to bind their trust. It was, and still is, so

fashionable to reduce the Church's passion on how to love your spouse to easily dismissed and outdated "sexual teachings."

WHY CAN'T SHE BE LIKE ME?

Once my wife and I made the commitment to live married life fully, to live the Church's "sexual teachings," it didn't take long for me to confront my own culturally conditioned view of my manhood—not to mention her femininity. To put it mildly, as a man, I had a rather high opinion of myself and I didn't cotton to the idea of mastering rather than spontaneously expressing my fleeting passion. One night, as she slept, I caught myself wondering in a fit of male superiority and deferment frustration, "Why can't she be like me? I don't have to worry about the changes to my body. I am always ready. I want to enjoy this moment now. Why shouldn't I?" As I looked at her peacefully sleeping, my words caught me by surprise. "Why can't she be like me?" My God! How easily I could dominate her, change and mold her into something like me that satisfied solely my desire. The "trust me" culture practically baptizes my male dominion with technology to do just that. It seemed so chillingly easy. And yet, I knew in my heart,

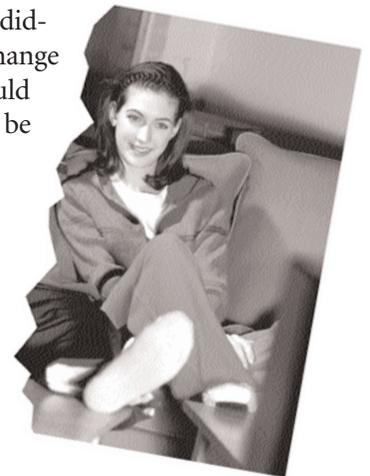
Getting There...

For more information on trusting the Lord with the size of your family, read Mary Shivanandan's excellent book, *Crossing the Threshold of Love*. The Office of Marriage and Family from your Archdiocese can also provide you with additional reading suggestions and local resources.

I loved *her*. I didn't want to change her. Why would I want her to be like me?

Eeeewueh!

I then began to appreciate everything she brings to the party. Making love to her while taking all of her body seriously—which is all the Church really asks—makes the marital act more than a momentary gesture. Taking her body seriously refocuses my attention *away from me toward her*. Suddenly paying attention to her at all times—both when engaging in and refraining from the marital act—becomes a loving intimate gesture that is more powerful and far from fleeting. It makes the future real and the moment eternal. More, it touches the infinite as she becomes my intimate path to the "Lord and Giver of Life" who is the source of intimate trust. "I wish I could tell everyone," says Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, "what sources of strength, of peace and of happiness they would find if they would only consent to live in this intimacy." If you've never trusted your spouse this way, don't hold back forever. Let the intimate party begin. ❖



Trusting Providence

In the past, most people had such an understanding of a generous Creator that the word “Providence” universally meant both God and benevolent gift. Today far too many of us think Providence is simply a city in Rhode Island and a Friday night television drama series!

The *Lives of the Saints* is full of stories of holy men and women who went out on their missions trusting in Providence alone, just as the Lord instructed (Lk 10: 1-12). Jesus has always insisted that his disciples trust in the Father’s will and tender care. St. Francis Cabrini came to 19th century America with virtually nothing. Yet her faith in Providence was so strong that she confidently pursued every avenue available to her, building schools, orphanages and hospitals for the Italian immigrant population. She knew that any success was completely up to the Lord. She was merely his instrument.

Today it seems harder for us to trust in the Father’s providence. In our parish churches and schools, we often place more trust in our development campaigns and feasibility studies than we do in the Lord’s plan for our future. Do we forge ahead without any openness to the Father’s will? Do we forget to pray for the guidance and wisdom to see the Lord’s hand at work in the very practical events that alter our path? “We would do well to remember what the great champions of apostolic activity have always taught,” reminds Pope John Paul II, “namely, that we need to trust in God as if everything

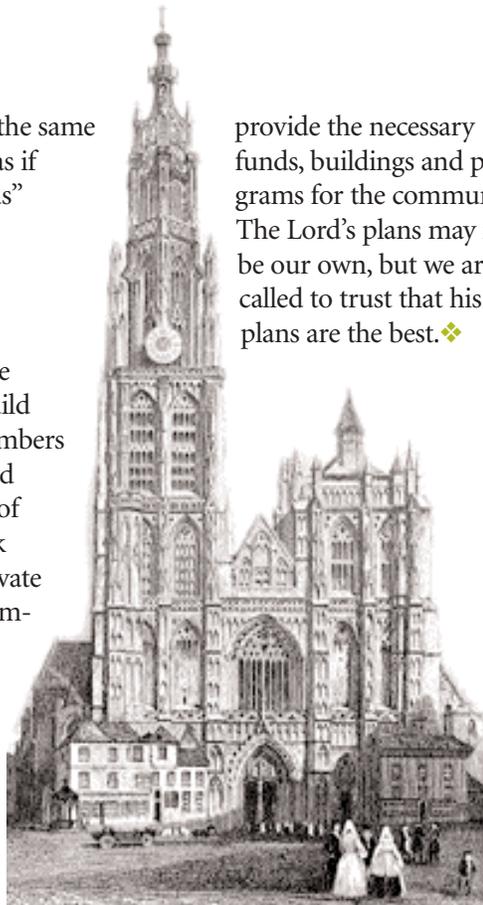
depended on him and, at the same time, to work generously as if everything depended on us” (Vita Consecrata, 73.4).

PRACTICAL PROVIDENCE

When the people of the Middle Ages wanted to build magnificent churches, members of the local community did more than just give some of their wealth and then walk away to continue their private business. They gave of themselves: of their time, their talent and yes, their treasure, too. The very practical methods of gathering resources to build up our parishes and schools are essential as we continue to bring Christ to the people who surround us. Yet, “in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insists on the filial trust that cooperates with our Father’s providence,” says the Catechism (#2830). “He is not inviting us to idleness, but wants to relieve us from nagging worry and preoccupation.” In asking us to work hard to build up the kingdom, the Lord takes up our burden and insists that we depend on him.

Some parish leaders think it is naïve to completely trust in the Lord to make things happen in their communities. Sadly, they miss the importance of the encounter with him. Only after this encounter takes place will they be convinced that this One who loves them – and the local Church where he makes himself present – will also

provide the necessary funds, buildings and programs for the community. The Lord’s plans may not be our own, but we are called to trust that his plans are the best. ❖



GETTING THERE

“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more” (Lk 12:48), Christ told his disciples. If you have been “given much” by the Creator of life, you are called to share it with the people who surround you. So often, we think our parish communities are only looking for our treasure, but much can be done when people bring their time and unique talents to parish programs and initiatives. The Lord is trusting us to share what we have been given to build up his kingdom. Whether it be management skills or computer expertise, cooking or communicating, your parish community can benefit from the gifts that have been entrusted to you alone. ❖

Our Trust In Christ Can Change the World

Mother Teresa trusted Jesus completely when he asked her to see him in the hungry, naked, dying people who surrounded her in the streets of Calcutta, India. She gave herself to Christ *embodied in the person in front of her*. Often, she herself admitted to his “distressing disguise” as she cared for him covered with maggots, weak with hunger or ravaged with disease. Yet, because she trusted Christ’s request to serve him in the people around her (Matt: 25:31-46), Mother Teresa became known throughout the world as a woman of great love. Certainly her complete dependence on him has helped to change the world.

KEEPING OUR DISTANCE

In our own communities, Christ does not trust us to serve him only in the most dramatic examples of human need. He also asks us to see him in the “sick, naked and hungry” people we encounter every day. Often, they, too are in the “distressing disguise” of irritating well-fed, well-clothed, well-educated colleagues and

neighbors. These people who we so often dismiss are the “strangers” entrusted to us by Christ.

Think of someone with whom you are friendly at work or in your neighborhood. You know her name, you chat with her at occasional meetings or gatherings, but for some reason you have failed to form a close friendship. Sometimes it is because of the walls she has constructed against you. Sometimes, the walls are your own. Regardless of who is holding back, neither of you has shown much care for the other. Consequently, there is not much trust.

TRUST FLOWS FROM LOVE

Most of us have far too many relationships like this. Our connections are shallow and easily torn apart. This is especially evident when a colleague or neighbor experiences a crisis on the job, an illness or death in the family. We don’t trust our connections enough to confidently walk into their lives and know just what to do for them. So, often we say or do nothing.



GLOBAL TRUST THROUGH CHRIST

In the new millennium, “it will be fitting to broach the vast subject of the crisis of civilization, which has become apparent especially in the West, which is highly developed from the standpoint of technology but is interiorly impoverished by its tendency to forget God or to keep him at a distance. This crisis of civilization must be countered by the civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty, which find their full attainment in Christ.” — Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, #52. ❖

NO FEAR

Do not be afraid to launch a new relationship with that most irritating colleague or neighbor. Christ will never abandon you in your efforts to serve him! “The little vessel which is your soul always possesses the strong anchor of trust in the Divine Goodness. This mystical vessel will always have Jesus as helmsman and Mary as its beacon. Hence, there is no room for fear,” said Blessed Padre Pio. ❖

Now think of these same surface relationships on a much more global scale. Think of how we co-exist with whole nations and never learn to trust each other. This basic human experience is the same whether it is person to person or country to country. In a crisis, our distrust hampers our ability to reach out and serve the people who need us most.

As Catholics, we cannot be satisfied in surface relationships with people who can become better friends. But we don’t have to care for these people by ourselves. We can trust Christ to care for them through us. United with him, we can bring a new capacity for friendship into our workplaces and neighborhoods. This, in turn, cannot help but radiate out and affect the way communities care for each other, and finally how nations serve other nations. Just one person can change many hearts. In her great witness to the modern world, Mother Teresa has shown us the simple path of trust and dependence on Jesus Christ. ❖



From the Mystical Monsignor.....

TRUSTING HIS FRIENDSHIP

The Body of Christ is the Church, the Church of the Gospels, of Sacred Scripture, of the Sacraments. But the Church—not as an abstraction—but as a concrete reality: this man, this woman, this pastor, this friend. They are the face of the Church, the hands of the Body of Christ, the look of the Risen Lord. The encounter with him always occurs through the Church present in concrete persons. It takes only one, one in whom all are present. That is what the communion of saints means. I am not merely inspired to think that my sins are forgiven, that my fragility is overcome, that my weakness is the last word about me; I actually hear it said, I actually experience it said to me through an embrace, a handshake, a look, a phone call, an e-mail, whatever—through a human friendship. This is the way we come to know and trust Jesus Christ, present today. In *The Origin of the Christian Claim*, Msgr. Luigi Giussani tells us that the apostles’ reaction to their friendship with Christ eventually became a realization that “‘If I cannot believe in this man, I cannot believe in anything.’ By sharing his life, by constantly experiencing the sensation that Jesus was exceptional, it became highly reasonable to trust him. With the passage of time, they acquired incomparable certainty about this man.” In the same way, this is how we grow to trust in Christ in the life of his Church—through friendship with those who know him. —*Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete, U.S. Ecclesiastical Advisor for Communion and Liberation, an international movement in the Church* ❖

Life After Sunday is a great tool for small group discussion!
For leader's guides, visit www.lifeaftersunday.com

Check out our suggested uses for parish life!
www.lifeaftersunday.com/parishlife.html

Ponder In Your Heart

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This new feature of Life After Sunday has been developed at the request of small groups to explore the theme of each issue. —The Editor

Who do you trust? (p. 1 and 2)

- How are you influenced by the “trust me” culture?
- Why does the Church point to Christ?

Do you trust that Christ is a presence in your life? (p. 3)

- When you pray, are you speaking with trust to the One you love?
- Have you ever considered the Sacraments matters of trust?

Do you trust that you are deeply loved by the Lord? (p. 4 and 5)

- Who are the people who bring his love to you?
- Do you trust the life of the Church with the most intimate details of your relationships?

Do you trust the Lord with the future plans for your family, parish community and neighborhood? (p. 5 and 6)

- Read Luke 12:22-34.
- Do you believe this Word is for you personally?

With what gifts have you been entrusted? (p. 6 and 7)

- Do you see yourself as a steward?
- What does stewardship mean to you?

Can you trust Christ to show himself to you in the people who surround you in the world? (p.7)

- What about that person at work who irritates you the most?
- What can you do to bring the trust of Christ to the world you live in?

Mutual Trust continued from page 3

mental sign he entrusts himself to us with limitless trust, as if not taking into consideration our human weakness, our unworthiness, the force of habit, routine, or even the possibility of insult,” reflects Pope John Paul II (*Redeemer of Man*, #20)

After the Resurrection, Christ offered his Church the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that we could always be united with him again in complete mutual trust. During this Easter season, try to come to full Communion with him. Become the loving spouse who is completely “for” the other. ❖