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# Daily Reflections

*Journeying through Easter*



Center for Spiritual Development

## THE POWER OF DOUBT

By Elisabeth Beall

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### A Quote

*“He who trusts in himself is lost. He who trusts in God can do all things.”*

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

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### Reflection

Discernment isn't easy. How can you be sure you're hearing God's call – and not the echo of your own thoughts and hopes inside your head?

St. Alphonsus Liguori puts his finger on the crux of this challenge with his quote above. I wonder if his thoughts would be clarified by adding the word “only?”

*He who trusts **only** in himself is lost. He who trusts in God can do all things.*

Surely that is true. From the Psalms and the words of the prophets all the way through the New Testament, we hear the reassurance again and again:

*Do not fear: I am with you;  
do not be anxious: I am your God.  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*

**ISAIAH 41:10**

*My help comes from the Lord,  
the maker of heaven and earth.*

**PSALM 121:1**

*I can do all things through God who strengthens me.*

**PHILIPPIANS 4:13**

And yet, we must also have a certain amount of trust in ourselves – in our ability to hear God’s voice speaking to us, in our ability to follow where God leads us.

My family recently watched the movie “Conclave,” and afterward – as is my habit – I looked up reviews of the movie to see how many people agreed with my reaction to it. Many mentioned a quote from Ralph Fiennes’ character, one that is featured prominently in the movie trailer:

“There is one sin which I have come to fear above all others: certainty. If there was only certainty and no doubt, there would be no mystery; and therefore no need for faith.”

One commentator said this philosophy is “absurd,” and runs counter to everything the church has taught – after all, Jesus did not tell his disciples to follow him in doubt, but urged them to believe.

That’s a fair point, but also a possible misinterpretation of the character’s quote, especially when taken in context. I think what the movie’s fictional cardinal is saying to his brother cardinals is that they may have too much confidence in their own stances, their own philosophies, their own world views. It sounded to me, as I watched the film, as though the character were urging those listening to him to open their hearts to God’s desire, and to place less emphasis on their own. I wonder what our world would be like if more of us could do that – turn up the volume on God’s voice, and turn down the volume on our own certainties about the way things should be?

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Photo by Natali\_Mis

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## For Pondering

- Reread St. Alphonsus Liguori's quote: *He who trusts in God can do all things*. Repeat it to yourself. What rises up in your heart? If you relied on your trust in God, what could you do or accomplish?
- What is the role of doubt in your relationship with God? Do you talk with God about your doubts?

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## For Prayer

*O help me God! for thou alone  
Canst my distracted soul relieve;  
Forsake it not – it is thine own,  
Though weak yet longing to believe.  
O drive these cruel doubts away  
And make me know that thou art God;*



*A Faith that shines by night and day  
Will lighten every earthly load.  
If I believe that Jesus died  
And waking rose to reign above,  
Then surely Sorrow, Sin and Pride  
Must yield to peace and hope and love.*

FROM "THE DOUBTER'S PRAYER" BY ANNE BRONTE

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