

Excerpt from ***The Way of Trust and Love*** by Fr. Jacques Philippe

In every trial it is essential to ask oneself questions along these lines: What act of faith am I being invited to make in this situation? What attitude of hope am I being called to live by? And what conversion in relation to love, leading to a love that is purer and truer, am I being summoned to undertake? If we ask ourselves these questions honestly, we'll always find an answer. We'll discover some kind of call from God at the heart of our trial, and that will give it meaning. What enables us to overcome a trial is not a magic wand that solves everything, but the discovery of what call it is that is being addressed to us, how we're being asked to grow. In understanding and responding to that call, we find new strength, enabling us to get through the trial and make something positive of it. Every trial can become a path of life, for Christ has risen from the dead and is present everywhere, sowing the seeds of new life in every situation. Even in those that seem most negative and most desperate, God is present.

On the basis of that principle, let's ask ourselves what is necessary in practice to "make it work," so to speak. What attitudes do we need to be able to move forward positively through a trial. First, we must accept it. As long as we rebel, rejecting the situation in which we find ourselves, we won't be able to go forward. We need to say yes. That can take time, and it's normal that it should. Sometimes years are required to accept a death or a serious sickness. But we must set off on this path of acceptance, which isn't fatalism or resignation, but an act of consent. Trusting God, I trust life.

Next (even though there's no rigid chronological order that must be followed and all sorts of variations are possible), we need to ask ourselves the right questions. In a

time of trial, a thousand questions can arise. Why has this happened to me? What did I do wrong to deserve this? What mistake did I make? Sometimes people say, “What did I do to God to deserve this suffering?... One of the commonest questions is, whose fault is it—my own or other people’s? Who’s to blame?....

Instead of insisting on answers to all our questions, we resolve to accept the partial darkness and ask ourselves the real question. We accept the situation as it is, without understanding it entirely, and ask: What does God want of me here? What is the right way to live through this? Which part of the Gospel am I called by this situation to put into practice now? What acts of faith and hope, what progress in love, am I being asked to make today? What good can be accomplished in this situation which depends on me?...

The results are very beneficial. First, meaning is restored to what we are living through. Before, we felt everything was absurd and chaotic. Now we are aware of a call we can respond to—we can act, make choices, move forward. Things begin to make sense again. Perhaps it’s only for now and not for the next fifty years, but that doesn’t matter. Day by day, we understand which direction to go in, which call to answer. Our lives recover meaning and orientation, our peace of soul is restored, as well as a certain confidence in the future....Above all—and this is the spiritual reason—every time we respond to a call from God, we receive grace and are interiorly strengthened. Because God is faithful: if he asks us to take this or that step forward, he comes to the aid of our weakness. We are still little and fragile, but we receive a certain courage that enables us to go forward. God supports our steps.