



Patients, Patience and Trust

BRIAN SMITH, MS, MA, MDiv

SENIOR DIRECTOR, MISSION INTEGRATION AND LEADERSHIP FORMATION, CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION, ST. LOUIS

READER 1: We use the word “patient” to name a person receiving care in a health facility. We also use “patient” to describe accepting problems or delays without complaint. It’s ironic that a patient is asked to be patient.

READER 2: Being patient ultimately is an acknowledgment that we are not in control and that we must simply let go and trust in God.

READER 1: Listen to the words of Jesus from the Gospel of St. Matthew:

“Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?”

READER 2: “Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field ... will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?”

READER 1: “So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’ or ‘What are we to wear?’ ... Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”

READER 2: “But seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.”

READER 1: Next time you are a patient, or are asked to be patient, remember the words of the French philosopher and Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who wrote this prayer:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.
Yet it is the law of all progress that is made by passing through some stages of instability and that may take a very long time.
And so I think it is with you.
Your ideas mature gradually. Let them grow.
Let them shape themselves without undue haste.
Do not try to force them on as though you could be today what time — that is to say, grace — and circumstances — acting on your own good will — will make you tomorrow.
Only God could say what this new Spirit gradually forming in you will be.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.
Above all, trust in the slow work of God, our loving vine-dresser.
Amen.

“Prayer Service,” a regular department in *Health Progress*, may be copied without prior permission.