

“FIRST GOD, THEN COFFEE!”: JESUS, TRUST AND DIVINE MERCY

Trust. A monosyllabic word. Simple enough to define, yet extremely complex to unfold in the myriad relationships into which we enter on a daily basis. Well, guess what? Neuroscientists agree. Experiments around the world reveal that most human beings are at least **naturally inclined** to trust others, but **don’t** always. And perhaps hormones play a role. **Oxytocin** is the hormone and neurotransmitter most often associated with childbirth. Its functions include both promoting the progress of labor and controlling postpartum complications. But the hormone is also **linked to trust**. And increasingly, trust seems to be a tough sell. Don’t believe me? If I asked if you trust the **television news**, your answer might be, “It depends upon which channel I am watching!” Conversely, think of all the people you **do instinctively trust**: airplane pilots, dentists, surgeons, New York City cabbies...um...well, ah— perhaps three examples is sufficient for our purposes!

In 2017, a neuroscientist by the name of **Paul J. Zak** conducted a variation of an experiment about giving away money. A participant chooses an amount of money to send to a stranger via computer. (Right there, I’d exit the study!) They do this knowing that their money will **triple in amount**, with the caveat that the recipient may or **may not** choose to share anything back. Therein lies the conflict: The recipient can either keep all the cash or be trustworthy and share it with the sender. The scientist, going off previous animal studies about hormones then found that giving people synthetic oxytocin more than **doubled** the amount of money they sent to a stranger. **Oxytocin** appeared to do just one thing—**reduce** the **fear** of trusting a stranger. Read about the [experiment here](#). While science may not have the last word about trust, the study clearly made me think about both my presuppositions and brain processes that may mitigate trust in others.

I’ve been the proud owner of a **Nespresso®** coffee maker that utilizes individual capsules for rich and tasty **espresso**. An accompanying milk frother enables even me to make a pretty decent cup of cappuccino. It is my mid-morning reward— akin to sneaking away to a coffee shop! But after a dozen years, my machine was performing rather poorly. Assiduously following the instructions of the online assistant, the troubleshooting produced no tangible results. Step two was obtaining a descaling kit which arrived several days later. That too made no difference. Then I discovered a **leak** and realized it was **“game over”** for my machine. I called to order a **new** machine. Not so fast— I had three rather frustrating conversations, including being “placed on hold for one minute” that turned into 14, etc. I had to hang up (I hate doing that!) as confessions were poised to start! Coffee help or on-time confessions? God’s people won that battle. ☺

When my promised machine was not arriving and I called for the third time, my **trust** in the company was **waning**. Being a priest, I stayed calm, and simply said “Please know I **love** your coffee, but this has been a bit of an **ordeal**. Twice, I was promised that the confirmation shipping e-mail was imminent.” Now, I was going on two weeks without cappuccino! To those who understand, no explanation is necessary. To those who do not, no explanation is **possible!** The representative on the phone could not possibly have been more sympathetic. She even promised **five sleeves** (50 capsules) to help make up for the miscommunication and I felt much better. Until? Placing me on hold, she returned only to announce, “After speaking with my supervisor...” Uh oh, **now** what? My initial thought, “Was I really **that** rude to her on the phone?” I was mortified!

Whew! Turns out, **no**, I was not. “Sir, you have been a Nespresso member since 2006.” I did not even know that!! “My manager said it is not enough to offer five free sleeves of coffee. We’re sending you the machine **free of charge**, including a new milk frother.” **Jackpot!**



Still, despite 15 years of doing business with a company (i.e., ordering new capsules at least every few months), due to a few unfortunate “miscommunications” I had begun to wonder. My trust was briefly at a crossroads. Trust can be fickle; relationships become strained and turn on a dime. My dominant feelings– for **all those years** the company had been responsive and reliable– yet, I was suddenly questioning it. It made me stop and evaluate where I went wrong. While my coffee machine experience is **truly** a “first world problem,” it is worthwhile to reflect upon the importance of trust in our lives.

While trust may well be linked to hormones and neurotransmitters, it is primarily yoked to loyalty and faith. The message of Divine Mercy Sunday is one of **trust in Jesus**. Trust requires a fundamental decision– a free will decision– to go “all in” with the Lord. When we make the leap, especially when we cannot possibly know what may come our way, we are placing our trust in the person of Jesus. Today’s special feast places the sacred trust in Jesus within the context of the Easter mystery. Our **Divine Mercy** program **begins at 2:00 p.m.** and includes readings, time for Adoration, confessions and the praying of the Chaplet at 3:00 p.m. I hope you can join us. The mercy of Jesus gives us the reason for our hope.

- I am not playing hooky today. I am currently in Rome– **not** for vacation, but for business! **Trust me!** I am attending the Third International meeting of the Papal Missionaries of Mercy. Immediately after landing in Rome, I caught the first train **to Assisi** for two days of quiet retreat before the start of the conference. So, I guess I am partly playing hooky! It’s my **favorite place** in Italy to visit.
- In the Old Covenant–Jesus said to **St. Faustina**–I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to My people. Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My Merciful Heart (St. Faustina, Diary #1588).
- I offer **profound gratitude** to all who provided the beautiful easter flowers. It is quite a chore– though a blessed one– to care for all the flowers in the sanctuary and chapels. Invite your friends to view them during the Easter Octave. Since each day in the Octave is a solemnity, I hope you did not do any **fasting** on Easter Friday!
- On Monday April 25, “Alive: Who is There?” will play at three local theaters (Spanish w/ English subtitles). It is the story of five people who share how the **true presence** of Jesus in the Eucharist has transformed their lives. Bishop Cozzens provides commentary. [Click here](#) for more information.
- **Tidy Travel Tips** (unsolicited) from Fr. Ubel: One dresser drawer is reserved for my oldest socks (with holes), undershirts, and most faded clergy shirts. I store them until an overseas trip. Each day I discard the dirty laundry, thereby producing lighter luggage, room for gifts, and minimal laundry upon return! T.M.I.? Sorry– but, hey it works for me!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector