

Robbed of confidence

By Patricia Davis
NC News Service

I was beginning to feel as if I had a sign on my back saying, "Victim! Rob me!"

One evening as I was walking from my car toward the front door of a local restaurant a young man approached. We met, he grabbed my purse and ran off. My initial reaction was, "Oh no! Not again!"

This was not my first such experience. And, after four purse snatchings in less than 10 years, I knew exactly how to begin to reconstruct my life: Call credit card companies, apply for a duplicate driver's license and library card, buy a new calendar.

That was easy. The hard part was dealing with my tendency to blame myself and my need to rebuild trust in others.

A friend helped with the self-blame by pointing out: "It's not your fault. You have to be out alone so often in the evening. You're vulnerable."

That's true. Moreover, after the first two incidents I grew cautious. When the third purse snatching occurred I was even with someone else.

So I had to seek a balance between caution and a determination not to remain locked in my apartment or to feel frightened at the approach of a stranger.

Having to deal with trust in this practical matter has opened my eyes to subtler ways the issue of trust offers me opportunities for growth.

At midlife, with children grown and gone, I face basic decisions about home, work and relationships. There's a frightening freedom, particularly as I look back and regret some choices.

I've needed to forgive myself for my mistakes, convinced I usually did the best I could, and to trust my ability to make good decisions.

And I've needed to trust others.

Friends usually see me as a strong person, someone to turn to and count on. I've worked as a care-giver — nurse, social worker, chaplain, counselor. Being and appearing to be capable and in control is important to my self-identity.

The trouble is, I often don't feel capable and in control. And it's hard for me to ask for help.

Living alone, looking for a job, even being robbed have made me reach out in ways I would have avoided if I could have.

I've found that needing others isn't so bad; people usually can be

counted on to give me a hand and trusted to think no less of me for my weakness.

Exposure to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous through my work as an addictions counselor at a hospital also taught me about trust. These self-help programs are based on 12 steps which begin with acknowledgment of one's own powerlessness and trust that God working through others can bring health and growth.

That has proven true in my own life.

In a recent workshop, psychiatrist Gerald May identified addiction as "the universal sacred disorder of the 20th century."

He suggested that attachments to chemicals, activities, certain ideas — even to a notion of self-sufficiency and a reluctance to trust others — eclipse God. They are rooted in a false self-image.

Grace often appears when the consequences of an addiction push people toward self-knowledge and a surrender they would not otherwise choose. Some of the most grateful people I know are recovering addicts.

Such recovery happens within a community of trust. There people discover anew their interdependence, the hard truth that they cannot save themselves without others. And it's there that they hear again the good news that they don't have to.

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trust (trust) vt. 1. to believe in the honesty, integrity, justice of; to have confidence in; be open to

An essential ingredient of

By Father John Castelot
NC News Service

When things are going well it is fairly easy to be a trusting person. One has every reason to trust then.

But it takes courage to trust when things seem futile.

There was a point when Jesus was at the end of the line. Death was imminent and he had nothing to show for all his work but a handful of disciples. And they were asleep, oblivious to his anguish.

It was almost more than he could bear. He begged God: "Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me."

Jesus was distressed. "His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

Of course, there was always the chance that something would hap-

pen to change the minds of those bent on destroying him. But it was a slim chance.

Later, Jesus was dying. Darkness was swallowing him up. But even then he could turn to God and actually shout: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (23:46).

It is significant that at this dreadful moment he addressed God as "Father." Therein lies the secret of his confident trust. God was not some impersonal life force, nameless and frightening. God was a Father. Jesus was sure that, despite everything, his Father would not ignore him.

It is also significant that in Luke's Gospel a psalm verse expresses Jesus' sentiments at the moment of his death: "Into your hands I commend my spirit" (Psalm 31:6). For if there is one sentiment that practically

dominates the Psalms it is trust. In the Psalms the people recalled over and over again God's faithfulness, his trustworthiness.

Psalm 117 sums it all up perfectly: "Praise the Lord, all you nations; glorify him, all you peoples. For steadfast is his kindness toward us, and the fidelity of the Lord endures forever."

Another moving prayer is this one of an elderly Israelite: "In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame...For you are my hope, O Lord; my trust, O God, from my youth" (Psalm 71:1,5).

Trust is an essential ingredient of human life. Without mutual trust marriages disintegrate. If parents do not trust their children, households become theaters of war. All personal relationships — buying and selling, business in general — presume a