TRUST IN GOD.  SECTION 2.

If we look at Mary Ward’s life chronologically there seems to have been one unexpected setback after another. Its very context was one of danger and uncertainty and despite all her efforts to discover and do God’s will, she seemed so often to meet with difficulty – whether it was her initial choice of religious order, her imprisonment, or her more personal struggles in persuading her family and friends to understand her vocation. Yet, if we look at her as she approached her death, we see a woman full of serenity and joyful friendship with those closest to her – again despite seeming failure of her whole life’s work. How did she come to this level of trust in God? Perhaps it was precisely through these seemingly never ending difficulties… as she learned to face her childhood anxieties, she clearly grows in her trust in God, learning how to play her part in it and yet leaving the result to God even when there seemed no possibility of things turning out right.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

The Painted Life (c 1650) gives us some wonderfully graphic illustrations of key moments of trust and it might be helpful to use these rather than her words as the basis of our own reflection in this instance.

As you spend time with each picture, allow yourself to imagine how it must have been for Mary and her companions, and then look back into your own life and see if you can recognise moments when God was prompting you to similar levels of trust – albeit through very different circumstances...

As a child Mary faces her house burning down and with great presence of mind collects her two sisters and takes them to the relative safety of the stone chimney breast until her father can bring them to safety. While there the three pray the rosary together. Somehow, even at this early age, Mary was able to do as much as she could and then leave the rest to others in trust...

Can you remember moments when you could do no more and had to leave the rest to God?

Mary’s conviction that Christ was calling her into active religious life meant that she had to leave England with no certainty even of what God wanted, let alone any human security. Yet her belief in God’s calling was so strong that not only did she set out but she convinced a small group of like minded women to come with her. Reflect on times when somehow you had that inner conviction, despite perhaps very different external circumstances, that enabled you to do what you needed to – and may even have been sufficient to convince others to join you...
Throughout her life Mary crossed the Alps, usually in great poverty and danger, to plead her case in Rome and achieve Papal acceptance for her new order. At times, as in this instance, her trust in God resulted in support both human and spiritual as she was given a carriage to ride in and a vision to reassure her of the goodness of her enterprise. More commonly she had neither but still struggled across snow bound Alps and dangerous war torn countryside.

Reflect on an instance [probably less dramatic] when it has felt an equally daunting task to do/say/live what you felt you needed to...