

# Overcoming Failure: What Struggles in your life have made you stronger?

**Objective:** Failure can seem like an overwhelming roadblock. In those times, it may seem like success is an impossibility, be it through our own limitations, through difficult circumstances, or the hurdles placed by those around us. In these situations, we are often called to press through. Even if success is not possible, meeting challenges with faith can mean that much more can be accomplished than we can envision.

**Song Suggestion:** Though The Mountains May Fall (Blue 486, Red 595, Music Issue 435)

## Bible and Catechism Readings:

### 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10

Therefore, that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

### Isaiah 52: 13-15

See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him – so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals – so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

### Catechism 164

Now, however, “we walk by faith, not by sight”; we perceive God as “in a mirror, dimly” and only “in part.” Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it.

**Saint/Vignette:** – Alfred was orphaned at 12. He suffered from chronic stomach pain and couldn’t hold a job because of his illness. He couldn’t read or write, even at age 25 in the late nineteenth century. He joined a Franciscan monastery and after a year was not accepted into the order due to poor health. He begged a bishop for an extension and was finally admitted.

His work was simple, acting as porter, sacristan, delivery person, and barber for a boys’ school. Through his humble work, he maintained a devotion to Jesus and St. Joseph. In his devotion, he wished to build a chapel to St. Joseph on the mountain near the school but was told that he had to build with funds he had as the diocese could not take on any more debt. For years, all Alfred could afford was to build a small structure 15x18 feet. It took 50 years, past his own lifetime, but a basilica was built.

In many things, Alfred, now known as St. Andre Bessette, started with failure, crushing failure, failure without any realistic expectation of success. All he had was his faith. But that was enough.

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Describe a time in your life when it didn't seem possible that you could overcome what was facing you? Job loss? Marital struggle? Loss of a child? Financial stress?

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During Andre Bessette's ministry, an epidemic hit his community. Andre Bessette had little education, let alone medical training, but he felt called to serve. He was met with skepticism from his superiors and scorn by medical professionals. He did what he could, visiting those sick, anointing them with oil, and spreading cheer. Have you experienced a time when you felt you could do good in a situation but were afraid of failure? What did you do?

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Andre Bessette never got to see the basilica created. His faith in Jesus and his devotion to St. Joseph inspired others to give and share in his mission.

Have you experienced a time when you were inspired by someone else to continue or contribute to their mission?

Have you shared a calling with your family so they can share in a mission/goal/calling with you?

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Do you believe that sharing your "victory" over adversity lacks humility? Do you believe that sharing your "defeats" is too much of a humiliation? Why?

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## Action Plan:

Pray about a goal for which you are afraid of failure. Talk to someone about the hurdles you see and ask them for help in finding ways past those hurdles.

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