

The Virtue of Faith

PREPARATION – LITURGY OF THE WORD

If beginning with a hymn or song, see previous page for suggestions

First Reading: Heb 11:1-13

Response: Ps 146

Gospel: Jn 14:1-6

PROCLAMATION

We believe because of the authority of God who reveals. Our response is a gift of his grace. We must remain steadfast in faith to see God.

EXPLANATION

The theological virtues: faith, hope, and love (charity) (see 1 Pt 1:3-9)

- ✦ These virtues orient us directly to God, who desires eternal fellowship with us
 - ⦿ By faith, we believe in God; by hope, we cling to God; by charity, we love God
 - ⦿ They are the basis for a life lived according to the Father's plan
 - ⦿ They dispose us for eternal life with the Trinity and are thus necessary for salvation
- ✦ They are undeserved gifts from God, infused by God at Baptism
- ✦ They are the foundation of the moral life in Christ and give it its special character
- ✦ They are grown and developed in human hearts by our cooperation with the promptings of the Holy Spirit

Faith: the root of the supernatural life (see Eph 2:1-10)

- ✦ God offers the gift of faith to all; it is ours to accept or reject
- ✦ Faith is more certain than acquired human knowledge
- ✦ The object of our faith is the Deposit of Faith: we find the living Christ in the living Church
- ✦ Faith and reason are always in agreement, for God is the source of both
 - ⦿ Reason prepares us for faith and helps us to see the reasonableness of faith
 - ⦿ Faith is not a blind leap, but is based on knowledge of and trust in God's authority
 - ⦿ Faith does not oppose, but rather enlightens understanding
 - ⦿ Faith yields and reveals truth, exposing reason to ultimate truth and stirring reason beyond its isolation to obtain truth, beauty, and goodness
- ✦ Faith is the basis and substance for our hope
- ✦ Faith is the only true foundation of charity

Ways to lose faith – always a deliberate choice (see Eph 6:10-18)

- ✦ Persistence in ignorance of God or his revelation, or indifference to him
- ✦ Misplaced priorities, such as a love of riches or power (see 1 Tm 6:9-10)
- ✦ Choosing to be influenced by the bad example of some believers
- ✦ Refusal to obediently submit to the Church's teachings, leading to schism, heresy, and apostasy
- ✦ Revolting against God by deliberately doubting or rejecting him, and outright hostility to religion

Ways to obtain or increase faith (see 1 Tm 6:20)

- ✦ Ask the Holy Spirit for faith in prayer
- ✦ Participate devoutly and frequently in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession
- ✦ Read spiritual works, most especially Sacred Scripture, the *Catechism*, and lives of the saints
- ✦ Seek the companionship of true believers
- ✦ Exercise faith by professing it, declaring it, defending it, and doing good works (see Jas 2:14-36)

APPLICATION – SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does the modern culture often seem closed to the possibility of faith in God?
2. Why is faith a gift that only God himself could give us?
3. Why wouldn't God just show himself directly and obviously to us so that we could more easily believe in him?
4. Why is it important that faith be living and active? What can we do to make our own faith more meaningful and active?

CELEBRATION – SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING PRAYER

1. Ask God for the desire to accept the gift of faith that he offers, and the grace to increase our faith daily.
2. Hymn or song (see previous page for suggestions)
3. Pray together Act of Faith (see handout on Well-Known Catholic Prayers from *Participant's Book*)