

Fr. Perozich comments —

Faith is the surrender of oneself, one's desires, one's plans, one's entire life to Jesus in all that He taught and in Who He is. In this, a personal relationship with Jesus begins to grow, an awareness of His presence and love, that He hears and responds to all who approach Him.

In John 17:3 Jesus teaches “Now this is **eternal life**, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.”

Jesus is present now and always. John 14:11ff: “**Believe me** that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, **whoever believes in me will do the works that I do**, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And **whatever you ask in my name, I will do**, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.** “**If you love me, you will keep my commandments.** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate* to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. **I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.**”

Jesus reveals Himself to us always. As a man surrenders his own life, the veil is removed, and Jesus appears more clearly in man's vision.

“We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.” — Joseph Campbell — Then Jesus said to all, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” — Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23-24)

The reception of Jesus in the Eucharist into a clean heart with real faith and a desire to know the Lord brings a clearer vision (John 6:51-58). Repentance is necessary. Communion with saints who went before us, who walk with us now in faith also show Jesus to us, in particular Mary, the Mother of God whose faith was most profound.

Jesus is here now. He is in relationship with us. Prayer, Eucharist, obedience, imitation, scripture study, are all vehicles to our having a relationship with Him where He reveals himself more and more to the one who follows Him as He has told us to do in the Holy Bible.

A Simple Way to Persevere in Our Faith

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We learn an important lesson from **Judas**. He was called and gifted to become one of Jesus' disciples. He received faith to heal the sick and cast out demons. Yet St. John tells us, "When Judas had left them, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'" (Jn 13:31)

What made Judas lose his faith in Jesus and abandon the community of faith? He did so because he was fixated on the money to be gained by betraying Jesus. Though he "had the money box and used to take what was put into it," (Jn 12:6) he still desired more money in a way that was contrary to the will of God for him.

He boldly asked the Jewish leaders, “What will you give me if I deliver Him (Jesus) to you?” (Mt 26:15)

We too begin to lose our faith in God when we continue to want something that God does not want for us at the present moment. No matter how good or necessary something is, we must want it only as God wants it for us if we are going to keep our faith in God alive and strong. This is why **Jesus asks us to act and speak like “unprofitable servants” (Lk 17:10) who obey Him in faith, doing all that He desires of us, and then wanting and accepting only what He gives to us.**

In this life, we are not always successful, famous, healthy, loved, rich, etc. These things are contingent on factors beyond our control and God does not desire them for us always and everywhere. **What God wants from us always is to be His disciples who love others as He has loved us, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you should love one another” (Jn 13:34).**

Such Christlike love towards others demands a strong and lively faith on our part all the time. **Firstly, we must have faith in Jesus Christ** as the “one in whom the Father is perfectly glorified” if we are going to love others for His sake alone all the time. Secondly, we must also **believe in His love for us all the time** if we are going to love others as He has loved us. How can we love others as Christ loved us when we doubt or question His love for us? **Lastly, we must also have faith in His words and promises** because these guide us in loving others like Christ. Without His words and promises guiding our love for others, we will love them in a selfish way, always seeking our own personal gains.

After St. Paul was stoned in Lystra, he recovered and entered the city with a strong message about persevering in

faith, **“He exhorted them to persevere in the faith,** saying, ‘It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God’”(Acts 14:22). He did not lose his faith because of the unprovoked beating he received. He also exhorted his audience not to lose their faith for anything. Without a strong and lively faith in Jesus Christ, we cannot love like Him, share in His love “that endures all things,”(1Cor 13:7) and so endure all the hardships that must be faced on our journey to God’s kingdom. In short, we cannot enter into heaven without a strong and lively faith in Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, there are so many things, persons, or events, in our world today that can tempt us to lose our faith in God. Our faith is usually endangered when we focus only on getting what we want or avoiding the things that we do not want without any sensitivity or openness towards what God really wants of us.

Thus, many people lose their faith today because of failed relationships, the death of loved ones, health problems, money issues, lack of jobs, evil and injustice, scandals in the Church, persecutions, etc. Some people even lose their faith in God because their preferred political candidates did not win elections! In addition, **our inordinate attachment and desire for more money, power, and pleasure eventually lead us to forfeit our faith altogether.**

How then can we overcome these obstacles and endure the many hardships when we give up our faith? Do we realize that **we have received the light of faith for such dark moments** as these? **The light of Christ is not meant to capitulate to the darkness in our world for any reason,** “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”(Jn 1:5)

Our faith is a precious gift that Christ has won for us on the cross and by His resurrection from the grave. He bestowed this gift of faith on us in baptism. He will surely reward us for persevering in this faith to the very end, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away.” (Rev 21:4)

This is why we must have a strong and lively faith all the time. **This is time to cultivate our faith by praying and asking Him to increase our faith while affirming the gift of faith in our lives. We must repeatedly say to Him, “Lord, I believe. Please help my unbelief” (Mk 9:24). Our faith grows through reception and adoration of the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith. Serving others inflame us with greater faith too. Spending time reflecting on the word of God also animates our faith because “faith comes from hearing the word of God”(Rom 10:17).**

Our authentic devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, also allows us to share in her own faith. She is the one who perfectly desired all that God wanted for her, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word”(Lk 1:38). She is the one who invites us to act on His word with faith all the time, “Do whatever He tells you.”(Jn 2:5) Her faith was strong enough to endure the painful passion and death of her son on the cross, “Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother.” (Jn 19:25) In accepting the beloved disciple as her son at the height of her pain and suffering, Mary shows that she can help us to obey God and love others at hard and painful moments. Mary is truly a key to our perseverance in our faith in Jesus

Christ because she will help us to act in faith and to want only what God wants for us all the time.

Our faith will be alive and strong only when we cultivate it constantly and begin to want what God wants for us all the time – that we love others as He has loved us.

Glory to Jesus! Honor to Mary!