

In today's Gospel, "The Apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'" What *is* "faith"? Our contemporary secular culture seems to think that "religious faith" is some naïve and superstitious belief in something one doesn't know anything about! We might hear from some in the culture that "faith" is this "immature and irrational credulity"—this "blind acceptance" of something one doesn't understand at all, for absolutely *no reason*. Brothers and sisters, such a cultural stereotype of "faith" could not be farther from the Truth.

In our Catholic understanding, "faith" is most definitely *not* a naïve "blind impulse of the mind." Rather, "faith," is the human response to God, Who lovingly reveals Himself to us in order to invite us into an intimate relationship with Him. Faith is the human response to God's Revelation, which is fully and perfectly contained in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is *through Christ*, that the Triune God invites *every* human person into a loving relationship with Him.

And since "faith" is the *human* response to God, then such a response *must* incorporate the two basic human faculties of intellect (also known as the mind or reason) and free will. And so to further

clarify the meaning of “faith” from a Catholic perspective, we must state that “faith” is the free and complete assent of the intellect and will to God and all that He reveals to us. It is a firm confidence and trust in God and this is primarily how “faith” is understood in Sacred Scripture, especially in the Gospels. So when the Apostles say to the Lord, “Increase our faith” they’re seeking a greater trust in Christ.

Most importantly, faith is a *gift* that God freely and lovingly gives to us in order to save us and draw us close to Him now and forever in Heaven. Faith is a gift that we must freely receive from God, Who desires our authentic happiness, freedom, and salvation.

Now on a very human level, “faith” is entirely reasonable and natural given that as human beings, we practically live by faith in our daily lives. One could cite *many* examples to demonstrate this. One example is whenever we go to a restaurant: when we sit down to eat, we have *faith* that the meal served to us is not poison that’s immediately going to kill us! We don’t sit there and personally test each piece of food to determine its safety. We have a basic trust and confidence that the food we’re about to eat is safe to consume.

Now *why* do we have faith when we go to a restaurant? There are probably many reasons why: prior experiences, word of mouth from other people, restaurant ratings, safety regulations, public health inspections, etc. In other words, there are *reasons why* we place our faith in restaurants. And so our natural, human faith in restaurants is not a naïve or blind impulse, but rather a reasonable faith based on evidence, facts, persuasive reasons, prior experiences, etc.

Similarly, divine or religious faith in the Catholic context, is also entirely reasonable given its nature and defining characteristics. For example, unlike a natural faith in human beings that we would tend to have in daily life, *divine faith*, or the theological virtue of faith, is meant to be *absolutely certain*. In fact, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, such faith is “*more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie.*”

Therefore, the Church is really saying here that it’s even *more reasonable* to have faith in God, Who is Truth, Goodness, and Love itself, than in human beings, who are fallen, weak, and sinful, and yet we still *rightfully* have a natural faith in human beings on a daily basis.

Again, such religious faith in a Catholic context is certainly not blind, but absolutely reasonable, given that *we too have our reasons* for adhering to the Catholic faith. The Church's theological Tradition calls such formal reasons, "The Motives of Credibility." These may be characterized as the reasons *why* one can reasonably embrace the Catholic faith in all of its fullness. The motives of credibility are all accessible to human reason and can be fully grasped by reason.

Therefore, *through reason* and an examination of all of the available evidence: scientific, philosophical, historical, and scriptural, one can discover that God exists, that God is Truth itself, that in human history God has revealed Himself to the human race through Jesus Christ, and that the Catholic Church *is* the Church established by Christ to bear God's Divine Revelation. Such motives of credibility constitute *the evidence* as to why one can reasonably embrace the Catholic faith and receive the theological virtue of faith.

The famous British author and convert to Catholicism G.K. Chesterton put it this way: "The difficulty of explaining 'why I am a Catholic' is that there are ten thousand reasons all amounting to one

reason: that Catholicism is true.” Brothers and sisters, I’m not Catholic because every single Catholic on the face of the earth throughout history has been a good person and done good things. If my Catholic faith depended solely behavior of others, I would’ve left a long time ago. I’m not Catholic because I get all these “fuzzy-wuzzy” feelings inside. There are many things that can make us “feel great,” that are not objectively true or good.

I’m Catholic *solely* because *Catholicism is objectively true, and not only that, but it is the fullness of Truth!* I’ll be completely honest with you: if none of this is objectively true, then I’m packing my bags and moving to Tahiti first thing in the morning. But it *is* objectively true! As I teach my 8th graders, we should *not* embrace a religion because of our *feelings*, which are unstable and can change at a whim—but we should embrace a religion *based solely* on whether or not it is objectively true! In our pursuit of Truth, we must seek facts over feelings, evidence and persuasive arguments over baseless claims!

Brothers and sisters, as Catholics, we do not and should not “check our minds” at the door and become irrational creatures. To the contrary,

God has given us the great gift of reason, which enables us as human beings to discern and grasp the truth! God wants us to use our gift of reason to go deeper into the liberating and saving Truths of our Catholic faith! St. John Paul II wrote, “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth...”

It’s important to keep in mind that “faith” is *not* blindness! Rather faith is a type of sight! Supernatural faith is *spiritual sight* and a powerful form of spiritual sight that enables us to “see as God sees”—to see with the eyes of our heart and mind. And so today the Lord is inviting us to examine our faith and to deepen our faith *in Him* and in the mission and identity of *His* Catholic Church.

Are we protecting and nourishing our faith through daily prayer, frequent reception of the Sacraments, and good spiritual reading? Are we *living* our faith through a life of virtue and love? Am I responding to God’s grace to deepen my faith in Christ and His Church? Am I seeking out resources in the Church to help me to learn more about my Catholic faith so that I can actually explain to people *why* I am Catholic? On our parish website, if you click on my name on the left-hand side, you’ll see

a link on my page for an awesome list of Catholic websites and free online resources for anyone who has questions or doubts about the Catholic faith and would like to learn more. I encourage you to check out these websites and resources and share them with any family and friends.

As we prepare to worship and receive our Lord Jesus, Who is Truth Incarnate, in the Most Holy Eucharist, let's thank Him for the great gift of our Catholic faith and humbly make the same request His 12 Apostles made: "Lord, increase our faith."