

RCIA

The Experience of God / Faith

Week # 3

Faith: Both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed. It is this revelation of God which the church proposes for our belief, and which we profess in the Creed, celebrate in the sacraments, live by right conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity, and respond to in our prayer of faith. Faith is both a theological virtue given by God as grace, and an obligation which flows from the first commandment of God.

***Catechism of the Catholic Church
(#’s 26,142,150,1814,2087)***



THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH – GOD

HUMAN CREATURE Genesis 1:26-28 2: 15-17 3:7 – 16-24

Unlike other creatures, humans have knowledge of good and evil. They have a moral awareness of consequence to their choices. Humans have a self-consciousness and can feel embarrassed, frustrated, restless etc. Humans have a choice of work and may exert competence, creativity and find fulfillment by the work they do. We find love and relationships complicated that involves a choice for commitment. Human beings are aware of mortality with knowledge of limited time so we take life seriously, setting goals for ambitions, which are unique and individual. Unlike any animal, humans can change themselves. We can question, alter relationships, give meaning to life and possibly move beyond our circumstances of birth.

Unlike any other creature humans are **CREATED IN THE DIVINE IMAGE**. We are born with a deep consciousness of God and a deep desire to be in relationship with the creator. It is our choice to develop that consciousness or to deny it. **HUMAN DIGNITY** rests on the fact that humanity is called to communion with God, it's creator. The invitation to converse with God is given to the human at the moment of their conception. From birth humans have a free will to make choices and determine their own destiny and seek or reject the deep desire to acknowledge God or reject God.

God is an infinite mystery. God is the creator but not part of creation.

In the modern scientific methods and technical progress of our world some humans tend to discount God. Scientific methods of investigation are incapable of penetrating to the deepest nature of things but are often taken as the supreme. Science cannot arrive at the deepest truth.

There is a further danger that in the excessive confidence in modern inventions people may think they are sufficient unto themselves and abandon the search for higher values, ignoring the deep desire in their soul. Is God silent or are we rejecting our deep desire for relationship with the creator?

God does wish to communicate with human kind. God desires a relationship with each person. "God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world, by the natural lights of human reason." We must choose to discover God and seek the depth of relationship we desire.

HOW WE DISCOVER GOD - OUR OWN FAITH

Belief in God (Faith) is a response to God's relationship with humans throughout history. God has been communicating with and relating to humanity from the dawn of time. God continues revealing Himself to people today. Thus,

Faith is a presentation (proclamation or preaching) of the history of God relating with humanity. Faith is the memory of God from all time.

SOURCES OF FAITH EXPERIENCE

In the Old Testament of the Bible Abraham recognized God as something which was reliable, one which fulfilled his promises, and did not disappoint. The God of Abraham proved himself worthy of such faithfulness. God tested Abraham's faith. Abraham chose to remain faithful. Through this faithfulness God acquired a people for himself and to them he revealed himself in words and deeds as the one true, living God. This people learned by experience God's ways with humanity and by listening to the voice of God speaking to them through the prophets.

In the New Testament, Jesus embodies faith in God. Like Abraham, Jesus is tested, and God proves that faith in Him will not disappoint. Jesus and other prominent characters in the bible are catalysts for others faith. Their lives and stories call us to faith in God. The ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, his death and resurrection become the grounds for others faith in God. Therefore, if we believe in Jesus, because of His teachings and actions, we enter into the faith of Jesus in His Father, God.

There are common elements of "experiences" for each person who comes to faith. An individual accepts the work, and words of God and believes in the promises of God. Coming to faith involves letting go of our own security. We risk abandoning all to God. This choice to risk abandoning ourselves must be followed by our choice to be obedient and surrender to the call of God. This is following the WORD of God. We are responding to God by these choices but not due to our own effort. We are able to respond due to the gift of God, which opens our self to SELF (*our oneness with God from the beginning*). As our SELF grows and develops, we must share this in a community.

Just as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, Peter, Paul and the apostles did in history, the memory of relationship with God must be proclaimed in community.

HOW HISTORY / MEMORY IS PROCLAIMED

Throughout history God has enlisted individuals to help in the proclamation of his relationship with his people. Prophets through the ages and faithful believers have preserved the memory of God's revelation in history. This is Divine Revelation. *"It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will."* (Eph 1:9) *"We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."* (Jn 1: 2-3) It has been put down in sacred scripture as the word of God. This sacred scripture is different from dogma. Another way of proclaiming God in the world.

DOGMA is a doctrine or body of doctrines concerning faith or morals formally stated and authoritatively proclaimed by a church. The Catholic dogmas reflect conscience, accountable moments of faith which clarify God revealing himself in human history. The Catholic Catechism explains: "When the body of bishops define a doctrine, they do so in conformity with revelation itself, by which all are bound to abide and to which they are obliged to conform. This revelation is transmitted in its entirety either in written form or in oral tradition through the legitimate succession of bishops and through the light of the Spirit of truth it is scrupulously preserved in the church and unerringly explained." (#25) Simply stated, in the Church, the memory of God in History has been carefully preserved and passed on through scripture and tradition as dogmas of faith.

This collective memory of God preserved in the Church is only part of the mystery. God enters into each individual life and the Spirit reveals God to each person. Sometimes gently moving you to faith or perhaps with tremendous urgency driving an individual to a more intimate relationship. This is God at work in your own personal history.

EXAMPLES OF "EXPERIENCE"

Abraham:	Genesis 12: 1-7, 15:2, 17: 23-24, 22:1-19
Moses:	Exodus 3:7, 4:17
Jesus:	Phil 2:6-9 The Gospels
Mary:	Luke 1:26-38, 2:19, 2:51
Peter:	Luke 5:1-11
Paul:	Acts 9:1-30
YOU:	what moves you to faith at this moment? What is most difficult about faith at this moment?

This dynamic of the experience of faith is CONVERSION. This conversion is usually a process or journey of growth, learning and repenting. Repenting is a sailing term, which means to turn away from, turn around. In conversion we are called to turn our life toward God. It is a lifelong journey involving constant readjustments, recollections, discovery and commitment to the experiences of God in our life.