

Chapter 4: Obedience of Faith

“God makes Himself known to us through Revelation in order to both give us something and to draw a response from us. Both this gift of God and our response to His Revelation are called *faith*.” (USCCA)

- * Noah, Abraham, and Moses
- * Mary, Joseph, the Apostles, martyrs
- * St. Francis of Assisi, Mother Angelica of EWTN

“*Faith is a personal and a communal relationship*. ... We have a personal relationship with the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But faith is also communal. It is not just a private act. ... Our personal faith brings us into a relationship with God’s people, and the faith of the entire people strengthens us in our relationship with God.” (USCCA)

- * The Creed at Mass – “I believe” but we all say it together
- * The Sign of the Cross

“*Faith seeks understanding and is a friend of reason*. ... Revelation is a lifelong process. Theology and catechesis help us. We never completely understand these divine mysteries, but we often gain insight into them. In this context, faith and reason work together to discover truth. To ever suppose that human thought or scientific research can or should be in conflict with faith is a mistaken approach because this position denies the basic truth that everything has been created by God.” (USCCA)

“*Faith is necessary for salvation*. ... ‘Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent Him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation.’” (USCCA)

- * But not “faith alone”

“*Faith is a gift of grace*. ... God not only speaks to us, He also gives us the grace to respond.” (USCCA)

- * Peter could see that Jesus was the Messiah (Mt. 16:16-18)

“*Faith is a free, human act*. ... Faith is a way of knowing, just as reason is. But living in faith is not possible unless there is action on our part. ... God never forces His truth and love upon us. He reveals Himself to us as free human beings, and our faith response to Him is made within the context of our freedom...” (USCCA)

- * Peter to Jesus at Capernaum (Jn. 67-68)

"Faith believes with conviction in a message. ... Faith fills us with conviction because God guarantees the truthfulness of what He revealed..." (USCCA)

- * How any relationship is developed

The Faith Pilgrimage

Like any other relationship, our faith communion with God develops in stages. It is a journey, a pilgrimage. On this journey, there will be periods of temptation, worry, shadows, and darkness. Many saints experienced such tests. But Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide us on the way." (USCCA)

- * St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) - "dark night of the soul"

"The ultimate goal of a life of faith is eternal union with God in Heaven. Through the gift and experience of faith, we are able not only to look ahead to what awaits us, but also to experience here some of God's divine life, 'a taste in advance' of our sharing life with Him forever. While living a life of growing in faith might seem like a waste of time and energy to skeptics and non-believers, both because the objects of faith cannot always be proven and because faith often 'produces' little of measureable value, believers know the strength, the wisdom, the confidence and hope that a life of faith gives." (USCCA)

- * Remember this is not our home
- * Wasting time with God (efficiency!)

Challenges to Faith

"The culture of the United States has been strongly influenced by the 18th-century Enlightenment, or Age of Reason. That philosophy coincided with the scientific revolution and was based on the premise the reason and common sense should be our only guides. Its religious counterpart of Deism, which claimed that while God exists, He simply created the world and then left us to our own devices. The founding fathers of our country were influenced by the Enlightenment and the promises of science. Though some were attracted to Deism, they supported freedom of religion and noted the value of religion for the stability of society and the moral order. In fact, they expected that faith would affect the social order." (USCCA)

- * Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association ("wall of separation")
- * the Know-Nothings

"Deism ... has been replaced by an ideological secularism, a belief that we are self-sufficient and self-explanatory and do not need religious faith. ... raising basic questions: Who are we? What is the meaning of suffering, evil, and death? Why has modern progress not eliminated them? What is the value of our country's achievements in light of their cost to human dignity and life? These questions point us to the transcendent origins of humanity..." (USCCA)

- * the 'Nones'

- * our questions help us realize that we are different from the animals

"Our nature, ever since the Fall, tends to go wrong, and if it is to be saved from going wrong, it has to be saved by discipline, by coming up against unpleasant things in life as well as pleasant things. But there is another reason why the Fall makes the world a more uncomfortable place for you and me than it was for Adam and Eve in Paradise. God has given us free will, and that means giving us the freedom to interfere with one another's lives. ... God can't give us the freedom to hurt one another without giving us, at the same time, the opportunity to be hurt. ... There is bound to be suffering in a fallen world where human beings have free will, because they will inflict suffering on one another. ... He lets us do harm to one another, because if He didn't, the gift of free will would become meaningless." (Monsignor Ronald Knox (1888-1957) – *The Creed in Slow Motion*)

FAITH? FAITH IN WHAT? (or WHO...)

(Lord, Liar or Lunatic?)

Why be a Christian?

- 1) Jesus thinks he is God but he isn't;
- 2) Jesus knows he's not God but tells people he is; or
- 3) Jesus *is* who he says he is

We get our information from a selective media who can't totally ignore Jesus so they "reduce" him – he's just a guy involved in a power struggle – he was a revolutionary – he was a prophet (one of many) - a great teacher - a wise man - a nice guy – all about "luv"... But - the authorities would not have crucified Barney the purple dinosaur.

Revelation from the Bible

In the Gospels, the words of Jesus were scandalous to those who heard them - we must learn to hear them as if we had never heard them before:

Matt 5:11 (the Beatitudes): "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account ..."

Matt 16:13 (return of the apostles): "... who do you say that I am?"

Matt 25:31 (the 'final exam'): "... for I was hungry and you gave me food ..."

Mark 2:1, Luke 5:17 (The healing of the paralytic)

John 6:22 (The 'Bread of Life' discourse)

John 8:51-58: "... before Abraham was, I AM." (see Ex 3:14)

John 11:1 (The raising of Lazarus)

Why would I believe? (Life's most important question)

Is it true? Did Jesus rise from the dead? An outrageous claim - but an actual historical event that demands an investigation (critical, reasoned thinking, not "blind faith") – Pliny, Tacitus, Josephus (other non-Christian historians) – Roman ruins are still standing, they weren't stupid people.

- 1) The Romans took the body?
- 2) The disciples took the body?

We are dependent on eyewitnesses. Are they credible? (What's in it for them? What happened to them?) They paid for their testimony with their lives (*and* praying for those who killed them) – extraordinarily good reasons for our faith.

"Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time" ... [Jesus] told people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had undoubtedly injured. He unhesitatingly behaved as if He was the party chiefly concerned, the person chiefly offended in all offences. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded ... I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic ... or the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse... Let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*