

Ordinary C 27 October 5, 2025 Greenwich

Jesus says, “Have faith.” “Believe.”

I have a confession.

I don’t believe in God’s existence.

Before you report me to Bishop  
Caggiano, let me explain.

I believe in the existence of Antarctica.  
I’ve never been there, but I know people  
who have, I’ve seen documentaries, and I  
trust that evidence.

But I don’t believe Australia or New  
Zealand exist. I know they do. I’ve lived and  
worked in both.

I’ve traveled by train across the outback  
from Adelaide to Darwin. I’ve traversed the  
length of Tasmania. I’ve tossed back an ale  
with hobbits at the Green Dragon Inn!

I know something of Aussies and Kiwis.  
Maybe just an infinitesimal amount; but  
that’s not nothing.

In the same way, when I recite the  
Creed, I’m not just asserting that God exists.  
I’m proclaiming that I know God.

What I know of God, admittedly, is infinitesimal, but I encounter God, real and active in my life and in the life of the world. And that's not nothing.

And you don't "believe" in God's existence either; you have met God; you live and move and have your being in God. Otherwise, you would not be here.

Maybe you haven't always called the Mystery "God," but you have met that Holy One again and again, each time you touched Transcendence.

You've fallen in love and survived that neurotic state!

You have kept the bedside vigil during someone's long and terrible struggle with illness.

You have shed tears because of the empty place at your Thanksgiving table, after Death has claimed a loved one.

Awe at the beauty of sunsets has captured you.

Shooting stars and storms at sea have thrilled you.

Pieces of poetry or strains of a song have transported you outside yourself.

The ache of loneliness, the pangs of guilt, have riven your heart.

Like the prophet Habakkuk, you have even cried out, “How long, o Lord? I cried for help, and you do not listen.”

You have pondered your own mortality amidst that beauty and pathos of human living. And you have come to know, at least inchoately, that while your lives are fleeting, ephemeral, indeed dying, new encounters with Life always await you just around the corner.

All life is a gift, but a hard-won gift. The bruises and scrapes of life are like water smoothing a stone, polishing a gem into beauty. But the bruises hurt, nonetheless. As Dorothy Day reminded us, God’s is a harsh and dreadful love. How Long, O Lord?

Yet those gifts invite us, more and more, to dwell in the eternal amid the temporal, the lasting within the passing. They invite us to dwell in Mystery.

And in the stillness of your conscience, and the cry of the poor, amidst rainbows and ravens' caws, you have discovered the deeper truth: Someone has walked with you every step of the journey.

At least sometimes, in those liminal moments—those times when you stood at the threshold of Reality greater than your own sweet skin--- sometimes you paid attention; and you knew, that God is real, and alive, and here, and in love with you.

I think that's what Christ means when he says, "Have faith. Trust that God loves you, personally and uniquely, amidst the mess."

And even when our faith in God is shaky, God always has faith in us, because God is always faithful, even if we are not. And God's love begins to fashion us into faith-full people ourselves.

When we pay attention to the presence of the Holy Mystery in both the quotidian and the liminal moments of life, we find that genuine joy begins to replace carping complaints, peace is deeper than conflict, hope stronger than death.

Knowing that we are loved, absolutely, makes it safe enough to “have faith,” that is, to step across that threshold, unclench our fists, take off our armor, and be vulnerable to Mystery.

Instead of being merely numbed by pain and sadness, sleepwalking through life, encased in emotional armor, we find the courage to breathe, and feel, and laugh and cry, from the core of our being.

We can stand at the threshold of Transcendence, where we are not in control; and we can glimpse all of Reality shot through with the presence of Grace. We are full of wonder, awe and amazement, and we are not afraid.

Through the daily warp and woof of living, with its challenges and consolations, something is being formed that transcends the moment, which neither death nor loss can destroy.

Our real lives are not passing but lasting; not just dying in this body but coming to real life, life that is not temporary but eternal.

The very fragility of our lives—when we cry out, How long, O Lord?-- in fact gives birth to our deepest hope and faith.

For in the middle of it all---the love and the loss, the wonder and the confusion--- there is God, loving us through all those dark days and years, loving us through each miracle of our noontimes and our nights.

Light dawns and we finally glimpse, how all the parts of our life—the love, the loss, the beauty, the befuddlement--- all fit together.

Amidst laughter and tears and wonder, we began to recognize that we have never been alone or abandoned. Christ has walked with us every step, loved us every moment of life, especially when we weren't able to see him.

And at some point, we say, I don't believe God exists; I know God is real, and alive, and here.

We have faith.

We stake our lives on the truth that at the heart of reality beats the very love of the God. It is our faith, that God's goodness triumphs in the end, overwhelms all pain and loss, fills us with awe and gratitude and hope.

This banquet of Word and Eucharist draws us ever deeper into the Paschal Mystery of Christ. And He, who tells us to "have faith," reminds us that:

We are not called to be fearful;  
We are called to love.

We are not called to parade our holiness;  
We are called to be faithful.

We are not called to be all-knowing;  
We are called to trust him.

We are not called to claim for ourselves;  
We are called to give to others.

We are not called to be victorious;  
We are called to be obedient;

for, unprofitable though we may be,  
we are called to serve and to walk  
humbly with our God.

And the people of God said, Amen.