

Lesson 1

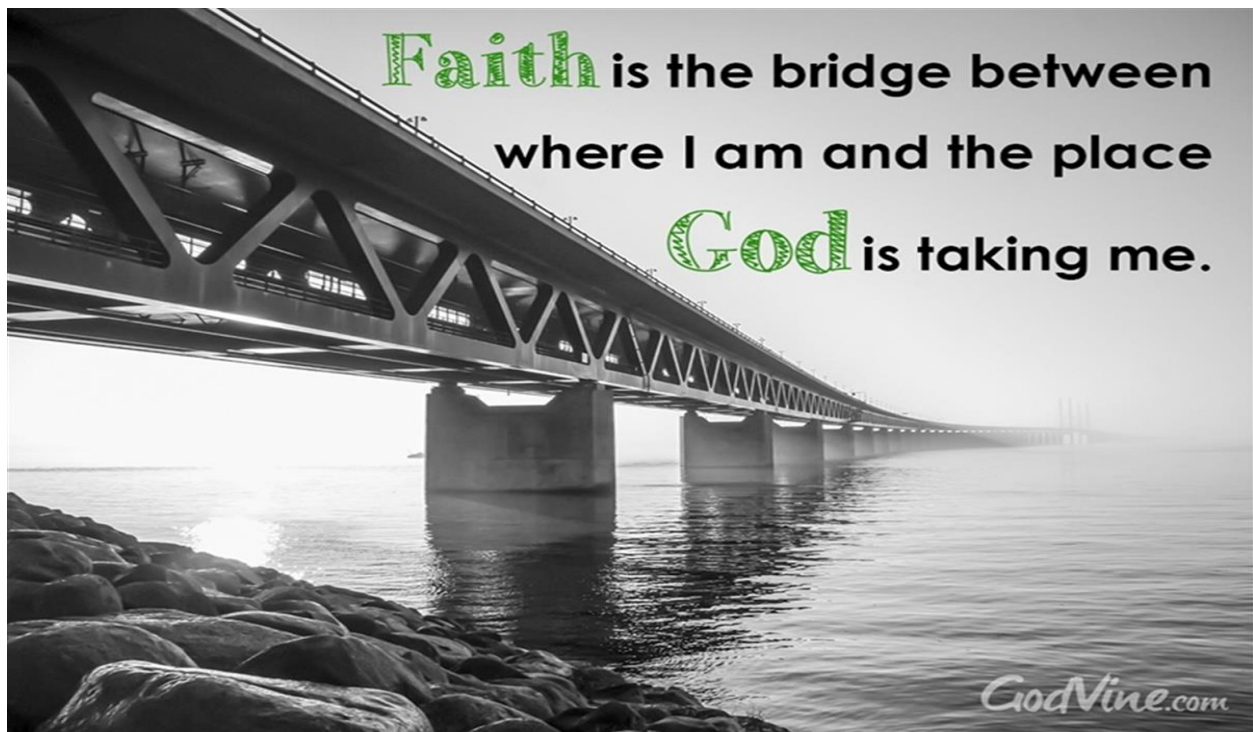
FAITH

What is faith? Webster's Dictionary defines faith as: 1) complete trust or confidence in someone or something or 2) a strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof. In the Letter to the Hebrews, an epistle (*letter*) found in the New Testament of the Bible, faith is described as a "confident assurance concerning what we hope for and conviction about things we do not see" (*Hebrews 11:1*).

In the world of religion, faith has several meanings based upon the content in which it is used. First, it can refer to our trust in God. Second, faith can refer to one's religion, such as what is your faith denomination? For example, are you Catholic, Baptist, Evangelical, Lutheran, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, etc.? Third, faith can refer to the theological virtue that allows us to give ourselves over to God. Finally, faith can refer to one's religious beliefs.

One thing is for certain, when you have faith, you trust or believe in something very strongly.

Faith is a gift of God that helps us believe in Him. We profess our faith in the Creed, celebrate it in the sacraments, live by it through our good conduct of loving God and our neighbor, and express it in prayer. Faith is a personal adherence of the whole person to God, who has revealed Himself to us through words and actions throughout history.



Faith is a gift from God which is freely given and must be freely received. We need to practice our faith so it grows, so we can become confident in it. Faith is a beautiful gift from God that helps us believe completely in Him; however, it is our responsibility to nurture it and help it grow over time. We can practice our faith in thought, word, and action. We can turn to the Church and to Scripture for guidance as we practice and grow in our faith.

Fantastic Adventure In Trusting Him (God)

Faith is also one of the three Theological Virtues: faith, hope, and charity (*love*). A virtue is an interior disposition, a positive habit, a passion that has been placed at the service of the good. God gives us the Theological Virtues; therefore, they are not acquired through human effort. The Theological Virtues are deeply connected to one another. For example, we demonstrate our faith and hope through charity. The Theological Virtues help direct our lives toward God.



Faith is the ability to believe in God and to give our lives to Him. Through the Church, the Holy Spirit shares with us the ability to believe. Faith calls us not only to believe in God but also to decide to give ourselves totally to Him. When we give our life to God, we are acting for the good of others. Faith enables us to accept all that God has revealed as true. In short, faith is the virtue that allows us to believe in God.



Faith is a personal act. God implants the seed of faith in our soul, but we must nurture and nourish it in order for it to grow. Like a flashlight, faith sheds light on God's presence in our lives. Hence, faith is the proof of what cannot be seen. Our faith is to be lived out in action; this is why Saint James states in his epistle (*New Testament letter*) that faith without works is dead. Our authentic faith will naturally lead to our charitable acts. For breath is to the body as works are to faith. As a wise person once said, "Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, but faith looks up." Our faith helps us get from who we are to who we want to be.



In the Catholic Church, there is something called the “Deposit of Faith.” The Deposit of Faith is the sum total of the revealed truths given by God. In other words, the Deposit of Faith consists of the Doctrines of the Catholic Church.

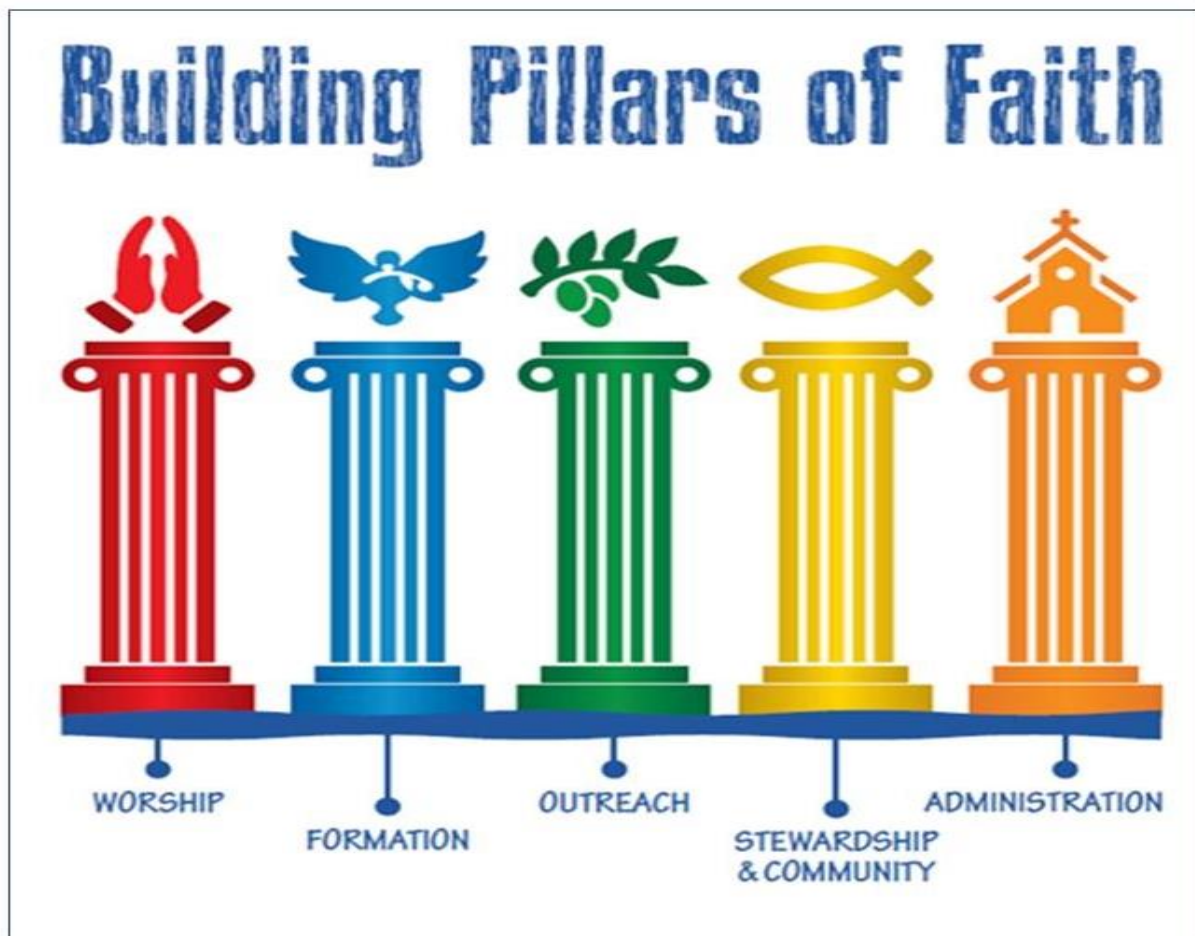
Faith plays a major role in our Catholic development. The three steps to being Catholic all involve faith. The first step is to know the faith. The process of learning the faith is called “Catechesis.” The second step of being Catholic is accepting the faith. This is when we decide to accept the teachings of the Catholic Church. This is why learning the teachings of the Church is so important, so we can make the right decision. The third step of being Catholic is to practice the faith. This means we are called to live the teachings of the Church on a daily basis. Being Catholic means living a totally Christian life and having a Catholic perspective.

As Catholics, there are several things that help us on our faith journey. The first is the Scriptures (*the Bible*) because they contain the Word of God and tell us about Salvation History (*the story of how God saved all mankind through the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*). The Tradition of the Church is another thing that can expand our faith. The Tradition of the Church refers to the customs and ways that the Church community has lived out the teachings of Christ. These Traditions are often not recorded in the Scriptures, but have been handed down to us through the apostles and the Church. Canon Law (*the law of the Church*) gives us the rights and obligations of the faithful within the Church. These laws guide the faithful to live in the freedom of God’s love. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a great tool to assist us in our faith journey because it gives us a beautiful summary of the Catholic Faith.



Our faith life is a grace that brings us into a personal, loving union with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This grace enables us both to hear the Word of God and to keep it. The qualities of faith listed here remind us of the basic ways in which we express our belief in God and that challenge us to apply our faith in our daily lives:

1. Faith is a personal and communal relationship. “Faith is first of all a personal adherence to God. At the same time, it is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 150). A personal faith says, “I believe in God.” This is an act of belief in the one, true, and living God. It is as though we gather all that we are, and gratefully give our hearts and minds to God. 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. In the assembly of believers at Mass, we profess our faith together and join our hearts as we experience ourselves as the Body of Christ. 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.



2. Faith seeks understanding and is a friend of reason. Faith as a grace from God makes it possible to gain some understanding of all that He has revealed to us, including the totality of His plan as well as the many mysteries of our faith. Growth in understanding God’s Revelation is a lifelong process. Although theology and catechesis can help us

grow in our knowledge and insight, we never completely understand the totality of divine mysteries of the faith. Therefore, 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. Scholarly and scientific research that is carried out in a manner faithful to reason and to moral law will not conflict with truth as revealed by God (see CCC 159).

3. 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” (CCC 161). Jesus teaches: ‘He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:16).

4. Faith is a free, human act. Faith is a gift of God which enables us to know and love Him. Faith is a way of knowing, just as reason is. But living in faith is not possible unless there is action on our part. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to make a decision to respond to Divine Revelation, and to follow through in living out our response. 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.



The 10 Hallmarks of the Catholic Church:

1. **Papacy:** Jesus founded the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church upon the apostles, in particular Saint Peter whose successor, the bishop of Rome (*the pope*), is the chief leader.
2. **Mary and the Saints:** Jesus is our brother which makes Mary both the Mother of God and our mother. She and all the saints are our family who continue to intercede for us.

3. **Eucharist:** The Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. It is the source and summit of Christian life; it is an extension of the Incarnation (*the Son of God becoming man*) and the most intimate way to encounter, adore, and receive Jesus in this life.
4. **Mass:** Jesus perpetuates his eternal sacrifice through his Passover meal as the perfect offering to our Father in praise and thanksgiving for man's redemption through his Death and Resurrection.
5. **Sacraments:** Jesus instituted seven sacraments (*sacred signs of the New Covenant*) which grant us a share in the Divine Life of the Trinity.
6. **Bible:** The Catholic Church has always venerated the full canon (*73 Books*) of God's written Word which she preserves and teaches.
7. **Tradition:** Jesus revealed the love of God through his words and deeds which were passed down by the apostles to the Church to be lived and practiced.
8. **Prayer and Devotion:** Through the daily Liturgy of the Hours, Mass, prayers, and various devotions (*like the rosary*), the Church never ceases to faithfully intercede for the world.
9. **Seasons and Feasts:** The seasons and feasts of the Church's year (*such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time*) draw us into the mysteries of Christ's life made present in the liturgy.
10. **Works of Mercy:** The Church is an ambassador of God's justice and mercy. She reaches out in acts of charity to meet the physical and spiritual needs of all.



everyday
faith

A graphic featuring the words "everyday" and "faith" in a purple serif font. "everyday" is in a smaller size and positioned above "faith", which is significantly larger. To the right of the word "everyday" is a stylized clock face with a single hand pointing towards the top right. The entire graphic is set against a light yellow background.