

**Lenten Mission 2024:**  
***Salvation, Faith and Humility***  
**Father Michael Rodríguez**

**What is Faith?**

Faith is a supernatural virtue infused by God in the soul, by which man believes, on God's authority, the truths which God has revealed and teaches through His Holy Church.

There are four main elements to Faith: (note how the reference point is completely **God**, *not man*)

- ❶ It is infused by **God** (the *origin* of faith)
- ❷ One believes the truths which **God** has revealed (the *object* of faith)
- ❸ One believes due to **God's** authority (the *motive* for why we believe)
- ❹ **God** has revealed His truths through **His** Holy Church (the *means* God uses to reveal His truths)

Faith is not primarily about feelings and personal experiences! Rather, faith is about **truths** that are revealed to us from **God!** (the origin of these truths is not “in my heart,” “in my thoughts,” “what I think,” “what I feel”). It is a loving submission (i.e. sacrifice) of my intellect to God—*thou art my Lord and my God!*

★ **Faith is my response to truths that come from God** ★

**Four Qualities of Faith**

In order that our faith be true, pure, and pleasing to God it must possess the following qualities:

(1) First, our faith must be **universal**; that is, we must believe all the truths revealed by God. There can be no exceptions.

(2) Secondly, our faith must be **firm**. It is firm when we permit no doubt to enter into our minds. It must remain unshaken under the most difficult trials.

(3) Thirdly, our faith must be **steadfast**. It is steadfast when once we know what God has revealed, nothing on earth can change our faith.

(4) Fourthly, our faith must be a **living faith**, i.e. we must practice it in our daily lives.

**How can we grow in the supernatural virtue of Faith?**

### **(1) Value the priceless gift of Faith!**

Paraphrasing St. Augustine, *there is no greater wealth, no greater treasure, no greater honor, and no greater possession in the world, than the Catholic faith. It saves the sinner, preserves us in grace, enlightens the blind, strengthens the weak, converts the wicked, and takes us to heaven.*

Faith is like the “pearl of great price,” in Mt 13:46; we must be willing to give up *anything* and *everything* in order to preserve our faith; I must grow in my conviction that I shall *never* give up my faith for anything or anyone!

Faith is the door and the path to eternal life! It is the foundation of our eternal salvation. This is why the martyrs chose to give up their earthly lives instead of denying the one, true, Faith.

St. John Eudes, *“The first foundation of the Christian life is faith.”* Without faith, there is no Christian life!

Pope Blessed Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus* [Inaugural Encyclical Letter, On Faith and Religion, November 9, 1846]:

“Nothing exists more certain, more definite, more settled or more holy than our faith, which rests on the strongest foundations. For this faith is the teacher of life, the guide to salvation; it drives out all vices and is the fruitful parent and nurse of all virtues. Everywhere it shines with the light of a teaching that is from on high; it sets before men Christ’s laws . . . it is enriched with the treasures of the riches of heaven.” (No. 8)

Jesus Christ truly present in the Blessed Sacrament highlights **the all-importance of faith**; we could say that Jesus chose to remain with us in the Blessed Sacrament so that we may believe . . .

“Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.”

### **The Athanasian Creed** (*Quicumque vult*):

“Whoever wishes to be saved must before all else adhere to the Catholic faith. He must preserve this faith whole and untarnished; otherwise he shall most certainly perish forever.” (vv. 1-2)

**The Fourth Council of Constantinople** (869) taught the following, and this was reaffirmed by the **First Vatican Council** (1869-1870): “The first condition of salvation is to maintain the rule of the true faith.”

**(2)** Pray for faith, *Lord, increase my faith* (Lk 17:5). Pray for the grace to preserve your faith and to persevere in the faith, in spite of all the dangers that beset it; implore God's help for the conversion of apostates, heretics, and unbelievers. Pray for the spread of the one, true Faith.

**(3)** Give thanks to God for the faith.

St. Alphonsus Liguori:

Let us thank God from the bottom of our hearts for having bestowed upon us the inestimable gift of faith. St. Francis de Sales once said: "O God, exceedingly great and numerous are the benefits which Thou hast given me! But how shall I ever be able to thank Thee for having bestowed on me the light of holy faith?" And again: "The dignity of our holy faith is so great that I would gladly lay down my life for it." Let us thank God unceasingly for this wonderful grace . . .

#### **(4) Cultivate the Proper Dispositions in your Soul**

Faith is a free gift of God. Without question, God gives me everything I need to believe, but I must also cooperate with God's grace and believe of my own free will. I have to cultivate the *proper dispositions in my soul* in order to believe, e.g. **humility**, self-denial, and detachment from the world (a worldly way of thinking and acting).

**(5)** Avoid all occasions of sin

**(6)** Mental prayer

**(7)** Confession and Holy Communion

**(8)** Holy Mass

**(9)** Daily Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin Mary

**(10)** Holy prayer

None of the these (Nos. 5-10) make sense to worldly / secular mindset. Performing them requires an act of faith, an exercise of faith.

#### **(6) and (10)**

**Prayer** may be defined as, "*An elevation of our soul to God to offer Him our homage and ask His favors, in order to grow in holiness for His glory.*"

*An elevation of our soul to God* → this is a fundamental exercise of the supernatural virtue of faith.

Mental prayer is a pious reflection on some supernatural truth (or event), united with reference and application to ourselves, in order to thereby excite in us certain pious sentiments (e.g. contrition, humility, faith, hope, charity), and to move our will to form good resolutions conformable to these pious sentiments.

[Mental prayer opens our mind and heart to "divine things," to *the supernatural!*]

Meditation is a great means to salvation. It aids us powerfully in the pursuit of our destiny, to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, that we may be happy with Him forever; it helps us to know ourselves and to discover the means of avoiding and correcting our vices, our faults, and weaknesses; it reveals to us the dangers to which our salvation is exposed and leads us to pray with a contrite and humble heart for the necessary graces to cope with temptations, to control our passions, and to lead a holy life. Mental prayer inflames our hearts with the love of God and strengthens us to do His holy will with zeal and and perseverance.

[Pray for what our faith teaches us to pray for]

Value what St. Alphonsus Liguori teaches us to pray for : (1) the forgiveness of our sins, (2) the love of God, (3) the love of prayer, and (4) final perseverance

### **(5) Avoid all Occasions of Sin and (7) Confession**

St. John Eudes on Sin:

“Sin deserves to be hated and fought to the same degree in which God deserves to be sought and loved. Sin is a cruel murder . . . it is the cause of death, both of the body and of the soul of man. Sin is so full of malignity [because] it transforms the servants of God into slaves of the devil. Sin is the source of all the evils and all the misfortunes that cover the earth and fill hell to overflowing.”

Archbishop Viganò (Letter for Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2024):

“Each one of our sins . . . is a spit in the Face of Christ, a blow of a reed that plunges the thorns of the crown into His Head. Each of our sins is a whip that tears His flesh, a blow of the scourge that rips it open, a blow of a hammer in the palms of His hands, a spear that wounds His side. And those blows, those slaps, those spittings have our name written on them, as do the sharp arrows with which we pierce the Immaculate Heart of His Most Holy Mother, mystically united to the Passion of the Son.”

### **The Act of Contrition**

*O my God! I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all good, and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.*

## **(7) Holy Communion** [*the call to faith!*]

In the Holy Eucharist, **Jesus is truly present**, whole and entire, His body and soul, His flesh and His blood, His whole humanity and His whole Divinity.

When I receive Jesus in Holy Communion, I am receiving within my heart and my soul my God, my Creator, my Savior and my King. Receiving Jesus in Holy Communion is the noblest, most important, most holy, and most divine act which is possible for me to perform. How can anyone live on this earth *without* receiving Jesus in Holy Communion?

### **Preparing for Holy Communion**

#### **Act of Faith**

*O God, because Thou hast said it, I believe that I shall receive the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ to eat, and His precious Blood to drink. My God, I believe this with all my heart. Jesus, increase my faith.*

#### **Act of Humility**

*My God, I confess that I am a poor sinner. I am not worthy to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus on account of my sins. Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof. Say but the word and my soul shall be healed. Jesus, make me meek and humble.*

#### **Act of Contrition**

*My God, I detest all the sins of my life. I am sorry for them, because they have offended Thee, my God, Who art so good. I resolve never, never to commit sin any more. My good God, pity me, have mercy on me, forgive me. Jesus, perfect my contrition and forgive me my sins. Amen.*

#### **Act of Adoration**

*O Jesus, great God, present on the Altar, I bow down before Thee. I adore Thee. Jesus, accept my adoration and make it pleasing to Thee.*

#### **Act of Love and Desire**

*Sweet Jesus, I love Thee. I desire with all my heart to receive Thee. Most sweet Jesus, come into my poor soul and give me Thy Flesh to eat and Thy Blood to drink. Give me Thy whole Self, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, that I may live forever with Thee.*

## **After Holy Communion**

### **Act of Faith**

*O Jesus, I believe that I have received Thy Flesh to eat and Thy Blood to drink, because Thou hast said it and Thy word is true. Jesus, increase my faith.*

### **Act of Adoration**

*O Jesus, my God and Creator, I adore Thee, because from Thy Hands I came, and with Thee I am to be happy forever. Jesus, accept my adoration and make it pleasing to Thee.*

### **Act of Love**

*Sweet Jesus, I love Thee; I love Thee with all my heart. Thou knowest that I love Thee and wish to love Thee daily more and more. Jesus, inflame my love.*

### **Act of Thanksgiving**

*My good Jesus, I thank Thee with all my heart. How good, how kind Thou art to me, sweet Jesus! Blessed be Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Remain with me, O Lord, be Thou my true joy.*

### **Act of Humility**

*O Jesus, I am but dust and ashes, and yet Thou hast come to me. Jesus, make me meek and humble.*

### **Act of Offering**

*O Jesus, receive my poor offering. Jesus, Thou hast given Thyself to me, and now let me give myself to Thee: I give Thee my body, that it may be chaste and pure. I give Thee my soul, that it may be free from sin. I give Thee my heart, that it may always love Thee. I give Thee every breath that I shall breathe, and especially my last. I give Thee myself in life and in death, that I may be Thine for ever and ever.*

### **Prayer of Petition for Grace**

*O Jesus, wash away my sins with Thy Precious Blood. O Jesus, the struggle against temptation is not yet finished. My Jesus, when temptation comes near me, make me strong against it. In the moment of temptation may I always say, "Jesus, mercy! Mary, help!" O Jesus, may I lead a good life; may I die a happy death. May I receive Thee before I die. May I say when I am dying, "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I offer you my heart and my soul."*

**(8) Holy Mass** [*the call to faith!*]

In every Mass the stupendous Mystery of the Incarnation, with all its infinite merits, is repeated as truly as when the Son of God first took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

As He was born in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ is truly born on the Altar each time Holy Mass is offered.

Holy Mass is not just a memory of Calvary; it is the same Sacrifice as the Sacrifice on Calvary—the same sacrificial gift, the same primary sacrificing priest; the only difference is how the sacrifice is offered.

**(9) Visit to the Blessed Sacrament**

St. Alphonsus Liguori tells of the Countess of Feria, who became a nun of the Order of St. Clare. She was never wearied of remaining in the choir in the sight of the tabernacle; being asked one day what she was doing so long before the Most Holy Sacrament, she answered with surprise: “What do I do before the Blessed Sacrament? what do I do? **I return thanks, I love and I pray!**”

Jesus in the tabernacle says to every soul, “Son, give me thy heart, give me thy faith.” “I have given thee My body and blood, My soul and divinity, and wilt thou not give Me thy faith?”

**(11) Study and read, e.g. the Catechism, the Lives of the Saints, Books on the Mass and Holy Communion**

**(12) Avoid and reject Dangers to the Faith (which are Dangers to salvation):**

[Most of the dangers to the Faith which I will now list are sinful in and of themselves.]

- (a) Ignorance, and not learning the teachings of the Church
- (b) Ignorance, and not learning the worship of the Church
- (c) Not resolving involuntary doubts that one may have about the Faith
- (d) Voluntarily doubting the truths that God has revealed through His Church
- (e) Reading bad books or other literature that are contrary to the Catholic Faith
- (f) Bad companions, associating with people who scoff at and belittle the Faith
- (g) Almost all schools
- (h) Neglecting one’s religious duties, e.g. failing to pray
- (i) Worldliness and committing sin
- (j) Attending non-Catholic worship services
- (k) Not practicing the Catholic religion
- (l) Indifferentism
- (m) Marrying a non-Catholic
- (n) Pride

**(13)** Fight against the three terrible enemies of faith: **ignorance, pride and sensuality.** **Ignorance** → we have to study the truths of the faith. **Pride of intellect:** we presume our intellect is sovereign and we refuse to accept what lies beyond our comprehension. We must strive for humility and recognize that our human reason is weak. If we accept the authority and expertise of scientists, doctors, engineers, psychologists, and other professionals, should we not place confidence and trust in Infinite Wisdom Himself? What would the merit of our faith consist of if we only accept what makes sense to us? it were only about known or, at least, comprehensible truths? Faith is the homage that our reason yields to the infinite Wisdom and Truthfulness of God. **Sensualism** is excessive devotion to sensual pleasures. If one does not dominate one's passions and desire for sensual pleasures, these will choke and dissipate one's faith, because one is being driven to live for sensual pleasures.

**(14)** Read the Gospels with loving attention, happy to follow Jesus step by step, to relish His maxims, to contemplate His examples in order to imitate them.

**(15) Conformity to God's Will.** Accustom yourself to see all things, to judge all things from the point of view of **faith**. Grow in the *conviction* that all is ordained or allowed by God—even what appears to be or is evil—with a view to our salvation and perfection.

Let us endeavor to resign ourselves entirely to the holy Will of God in the sufferings of this life—sickness, poor health, sorrows, poverty, loss of property, loss of friends & family, persecutions, and all that is disagreeable. Let us invariably look on the trials of this world as signs of God's love for us and of his desire to save us in the world to come.

**(16)** Strive to be led in all things according to the principles of faith—what do Christ and His Church teach? Examine your thoughts, words, and actions, and ask yourself, are these inspired by the example of Christ and His saints?, or am I animated by selfish interest and a wordly way of thinking?

**(17)** Strive to spread the faith to others through your words, actions, and prayers; **we love the faith**, thus we must extend it to the ends of the earth!

**(18)** Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

St. Louis de Montfort (1673-1716) tells us that one of the wonderful effects of Perfect Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is: *Participation in Mary's Faith*.

“Our Blessed Lady will give you also a portion of her faith, which was the greatest of all faiths that ever were on earth, greater than the faith of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and saints put together. Now that she is reigning in Heaven, she no longer exercises this faith, because she sees all things clearly in God by the light of glory. Nevertheless, with the consent of the Most High, in entering into glory she did not lose her faith. She kept it for her faithful servants in the Church Militant. The more, then, that you gain the favor of that august Princess and faithful Virgin, the more will you act by pure faith.”



Twelve simple ways to practice **Devotion to Mary:**

1. Pray a *Hail Mary* in honor of the Archangel Gabriel, who brought this prayer from heaven to earth.
2. Pray three *Hail Marys* in reparation for the blasphemies uttered against the Blessed Virgin Mary.
3. Pray three *Hail Marys* for the virtue of holy purity.
4. Receive Holy Communion or make a spiritual communion doing your best to unite yourself to Mary's dispositions at the Annunciation.
5. Mortify your sight, once or more, in honor of Mary's modesty.
6. Make a visit to a shrine, altar or image of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
7. Burn a blessed candle before her image or picture.
8. Give an alms specifically in honor of Mary's poverty.
9. Perform an act of kindness with inconvenience to yourself in honor of Mary's charity.
10. Pray seven *Hail Marys* in honor of Mary's Seven Dolors.
11. Pray nine *Hail Marys* in union with the nine choirs of angels who are ever praising her.
12. Before going to sleep, pray the *Litany of Loreto*, and imitate the Infant Jesus by placing yourself spiritually in Mary's arms.

**(19) Devotion to the Cross**

Fr. Jean Nicolas Grou (1731-1803), was an 18<sup>th</sup> century French Jesuit priest and mystic, who lived through the horrendous French Revolution. He teaches:

“Meditate on [Christ's] Passion. Remember that His sacred Passion is the foundation of the whole of our faith. The crucifix is, and always will be, the dearest book of devout souls. The crucifix invites sinners to do penance, causing them to realize all the malice and enormity of their crimes. Spend some time every day before the crucifix. Gaze at it, hold it in your hands, pray to Jesus hanging on the Cross, and ask Him to be your master and director. Tenderly kiss His hands and feet, press your lips to the wound in His sacred side. Your soul will be moved, and torrents of grace will flow into it, and with joy you will draw waters out of the wells of salvation. (Is 12:3)”

**St. Paul of the Cross (1694-1775):**

“Happy the soul which detaches itself from its own pleasure, from its own will, from its own understanding. This is a sublime lesson, and God will teach it to all those who place their happiness in the cross of Jesus Christ.”