



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Faith

Faith is often described as trust in someone or something without proof. You've probably heard Catholics refer to their religion as "the faith," but religion itself isn't faith. Instead, religion gathers the faith experiences of the followers, assists in interpreting these experiences, and codifies the information into rules and regulations that tell newer members what has been learned about life from these experiences. It is the body in which the faith of the people is incorporated.

Faith often comes as a result of a spiritual experience—a time when the sacred reaches through into the material world, and God's presence is *felt*. Religion is bound on faith, as there is something in the human mind that eventually needs to interpret

and more fully understand the faith experiences. Religion becomes the system by which faith is examined and understood, and action is determined. It involves...

Feeling: experiencing the spiritual.

Thinking: figuring out what the experience meant.

Being: responding with action.

In the beginning, the followers of Jesus had an experience that resulted in a new understanding of God. They came to believe that life on earth could be different. This is what we know as faith. These folks wanted to keep their experiences alive, to share it with others. They did this mainly by getting together, talking about the stories he told to them, eating a ritual meal, and doing good works in the commu-

nity. In essence, they created the early ritual Catholics follow today.

The Church uses ritual to reconnect the original experience of Jesus on earth, and the spiritual experience of his continued presence in our midst—assuring one another that he continues to be involved in our human struggle. Catholic ceremonies are means of creating an experience of the sacred, not something to be proven, but something to be felt. Later the experience is translated into beliefs or doctrine through an analytical process called theology—the science that works out the "how's" and the "why's" of the religion. But faith itself starts as a spiritual experience.

From "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Catholicism", O'Gorman & Faulkner, Alpha, 2003, pg116

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Things to talk about:

- In what ways do you find it difficult to be open about your faith in public situations?
- How have you been able to apply your faith to family issues, community development, and political decisions?
- Who are outstanding models of faith that inspire you to deeper faith and practice?
- How is your faith bringing you closer to God and to a deeper understanding of his message?

Qualities of Faith

Our faith life is a grace or a gift 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.* A personal faith says, "I believe in God." ...But faith is also communal. It is not just

a private act...

2. *Faith seeks understanding and is a friend of reason.*

Faith is a gift from God that makes it possible to gain some understanding of all that he has revealed to us. We never completely understand the divine mysteries, but we often gain insight into them. In this context, faith and reason work together to discover truth.

3. *Faith is necessary for salvation.* The Lord himself [teaches]: "He who believes and is baptized will be

saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (CCC183 citing Mk 16:16)

4. *Faith is a gift of grace.* God not only speaks to us, he also gives us the grace to respond. To believe in Revelation we need the gift of faith.

5. *Faith is a free, human act.* Faith is a gift of God which enables us to know and love him. 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 our response.

6. *Faith believes with conviction in a message.* The message is found in Scripture and tradition and is transmitted to us through the many means such as liturgical prayers and the Creeds. Faith fills us with conviction because God guarantees the truthfulness of what he revealed.

Based on "US Catechism for Adults", USCCB, 2006, pg 37-39



Saint in the Spotlight—St. Ephrem (306?-373)

This Monday, June 9, is the Memorial of Saint Ephrem.

Poet, teacher, orator and defender of the faith, Ephrem is the only Syrian recognized as a doctor of the Church. He took upon himself the special task of opposing the many false doctrines rampant at his time, always remaining a true and forceful defender of the Catholic Church.

Born in Nisibis, Mesopotamia, he was baptized as a young man and became famous as a teacher in his native city. When the Christian emperor had to cede Nisibis to the Persians, Ephrem, along with many Christians, fled as a refugee to Edessa. He is credited with attracting great glory to the biblical school there. He was ordained a deacon but declined becoming a priest (and was said to have avoided episcopal consecration by

feigning madness!).

He had a prolific pen and his writings best illumine his holiness. Although he was not a man of great scholarship, his works reflect deep insight and knowledge of the Scriptures. In writing about the mysteries of humanity’s redemption, Ephrem reveals a realistic and humanly sympathetic spirit and a great devotion to the humanity of Jesus. It is said that his poetic account of the Last Judgment inspired Dante.

It is surprising to read that he wrote hymns against the heretics of his day. He would take the popular songs of the heretical groups and, using their melodies, compose beautiful hymns embodying orthodox doctrine. Ephrem became one of the first to introduce song into the Church’s public worship as a means of instruction for the faithful.

His many hymns have earned him the title “Harp of the Holy Spirit.”

He preferred a simple, austere life, living in a small cave overlooking the city of Edessa. It was here he died around 373.

*Lay me not with sweet spices,
For this honor avails me not,
Nor yet use incense and perfumes,
For the honor befits me not.
Burn yet the incense in the holy place;
As for me,
escort me only with your prayers,
Give ye your incense to God,
And over me send up hymns.
Instead of perfumes and spices,
Be mindful of me in your intercessions.*
(From The Testament of St. Ephrem) .

www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay



Meditation on Faith

“The obedience of faith” (Rom 13:26; 2 Cor 10:5-6) “is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,” and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. To make this act of faith, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving “joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it.” To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts.

From Dei Verbum, no. 5

Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about Faith? Check out the following books and websites for more information:

- “US Catholic Catechism for Adults”, USCCB, 2006
- <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm>
- <http://www.americancatholic.org/UpdateYourFaith/default.asp>

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.