

February 2019

## The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5)

### Introduction:

Each one of us is on a journey to know, love, and serve God. This journey is a partnership of God's divine grace and our human cooperation, but it fluctuates because our cooperation blows hot and cold. That is why in these coming months we are going to reflect on Virtues. A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. {CCC 1803}. Growing in virtues helps us to steadily cultivate a deeper relationship with God. In the first three months, we will focus on the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; thereafter, we will focus on the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The theological virtues are infused by God into our soul, but we need to pray and cooperate with them; whereas the cardinal virtues are human virtues acquired through our constant effort, purified and elevated by divine grace to persevere in the pursuit of them. It is hoped that these reflections on virtues will help each Jesus Youth to become more stable and consistent in their spiritual journey and become more like Him.

### Reflection:

Faith, in the tradition of the Church, has been identified as one of the three theological virtues, alongside hope and love. As Christians, what we believe is essential. Every Sunday, we profess our faith, a faith that we hold in common and that binds us together. At the same time, faith is not just what we believe. It is also a deeply personal act, a movement of the heart. So much so, that without this interior act, we would merely be holding onto something intellectual and ideological or to something superficial and sentimental.

Faith is a personal act that involves all of me. By saying, “I believe,” I freely abandon myself with abiding trust. Like Mary, I desire totally, “May it happen to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). Moreover, this



surrender is not directed firstly towards a philosophy about life, a moral standard, or a tradition. I am saying "Yes" to Another, to God the Father, Son, and Spirit. The personal "yes" of faith enables and sustains the living relationship we can have with God each and every day.

The disciples began to exercise faith as they came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. In the Gospel accounts, Jesus' death was apparent to all. The crowd witnessed the disgrace of this man nailed to the cross and his shameful death in that hour when darkness fell upon the earth (Mt 27:45). The resurrection was different. No one witnessed the actual moment of his rising. The great light dawned upon the earth in an unknown and mysterious hour in the night. The resurrection would only be made known to each Christian through personal faith, by the transformation of their hearts from unbelief to belief. Indeed, after Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples still went around with sad faces (Lk 24:17) until they personally experienced, believed, and participated in the resurrection through faith. Then their hearts were burning and they exclaimed, "It is true!" (Lk 24:34).

For us too, faith requires an ongoing, personal adherence to and participation in the mystery of Jesus' resurrection. Though already an apostle, St. Paul continued to yearn for Jesus' resurrection: "I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings..." (Phil 3:10). In our daily lives, exercising faith brings about a radical overhaul of death, of sadness and despair, by the power of Jesus' rising within our hearts. The Spirit, the Sanctifier, reveals to us those places of death within us, tombs into which the light of Christ's resurrection has yet to be appropriated through the act of faith. There, in those dark valleys, Jesus meets us and assures us that no darkness is too great for him. We need only to exercise faith to experience his glory there. Whether in unforgiveness (towards others or ourselves), paralysis and apathy towards life, unbelief concerning the Lord's good plans for our future, or in any other way that darkness reigns, the personal act of faith, the "I believe," allows the Lord to perform marvelous works within us. Then, the very things that are cursed will become springs of blessing, and our sadness will turn into exuberant joy.

The apostles found themselves miserably wanting when he challenged them on the need for witnessing by their lives and ongoing forgiveness. In their desperation, they cried out to him, "Increase our faith" (Lk 17:5). We can and need to make the apostles' prayer our own. Sincere prayer will surely add a new spark to our faith. As St. Alphonsus Ligouri says, "He who prays most receives most". Faith will not grow in us by chance, but only through the way of expectant prayer. Through fervent prayer, we rise above our challenges in faith - above all doubts, darkness, disturbing passions and distractions.

Exercising personal faith consciously and consistently each and every day, we become authentic witnesses to the resurrection. We become co-participants. We begin to know Jesus' resurrection first-hand because it actually unfolds within us. And as we strive to be people of greater and steadfast faith, imitating Mary in her total abandonment to God, the Lord's power of resurrection will transform our hearts until we attain the fullness of new and everlasting life with Him in heaven. For this, let us unceasingly pray, "Lord, increase our faith"

### Saints Quote:

"Faith is like a bright ray of sunlight. It enables us to see God in all things as well as all things in God."  
**St. Francis de Sales**

