

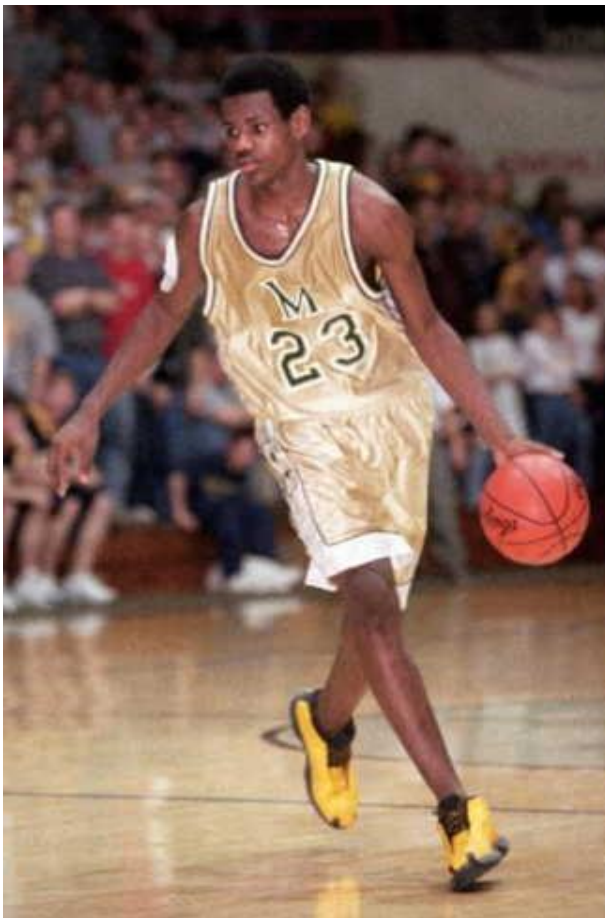
What Is Faith?

“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

Faith

- Word from the Latin *fides*, meaning “trust” or “belief”
- A specific act or human response to Revelation
- An internal surrender of our whole self to God (recall the Greatest Commandments)
- A God-given theological virtue or habit of belief
- Something that must be practiced—with practice comes wisdom
- Building blocks of Christian life
- A journey—with some high points and some low points
- Something you can feel strongly one day and not the next
- A daily response—through daily habits or expressions of faith, it grows
- A grace that opens life to possible realities beyond the present experience

Consider these two images of NBA player LeBron James



What Is Faith?

Describe how these images represent faith.



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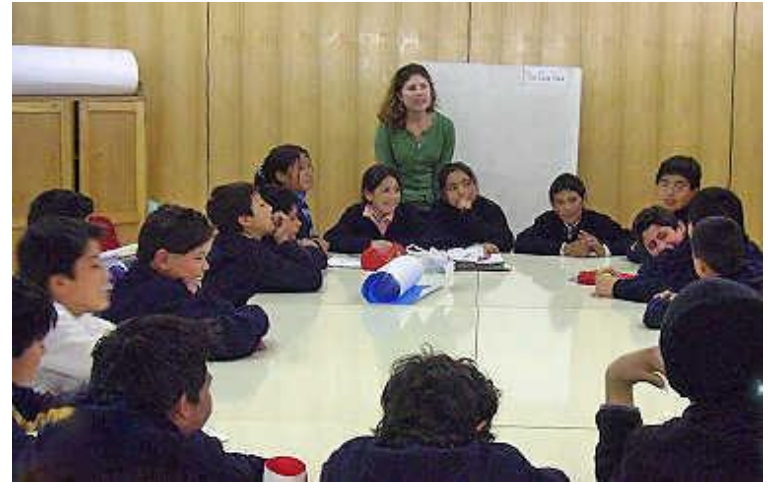


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Expressions of Faith

Faith is expressed in many kinds of beliefs and practices:

- prayer: communal and individual
- Sacraments
- service
- charity
- justice

What Are the Connections?


Faith

Religion

Belief

Religion

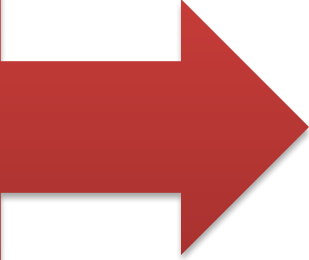
Comes from the Latin *religio*, meaning “respect for the sacred” or “reverence for the gods.”



Refers to the set of practices and beliefs followed by those who believe in and worship God.

Belief

Comes from German,
meaning what is “dear”
or “esteemed.”



Refers to a mental act or
state of mind placing
trust or confidence in a
person or doctrine.

Faith

Latin *fides*, meaning “trust” or “belief”

- A specific act or human response to Revelation
- An internal surrender of our whole self to God (recall the Greatest Commandments [Matt 22:36-40](#))
- God-given theological virtue or habit of belief

Religion

Latin *religio*, meaning “respect for the sacred” or “reverence for the gods”

Set of practices and beliefs followed by those who believe in and worship God

Belief

Germanic origin, meaning what is “dear” or “esteemed”

A mental act or state of mind placing trust or confidence in a person or doctrine

God's Revelation

In faith we accept God's Revelation. We express that faith in our religious beliefs and practices.



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Faith and Religion

- Two sides of the same coin
- Cannot have one without the other
- Faith without religion = fades away
- Religious practices without faith = “going through the motions”
- Faith requires willingness.



Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word.”
(Luke 1:38)

Faith requires willingness but
it does not have to be perfect.

The Scriptures and Faith

“Simon Peter said in reply, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God’” (Matthew 16:16).

“[Peter] said to him, ‘Lord, I am prepared to go to prison and to die with you.’ But he replied, ‘I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows this day, you will deny three times that you know me’” (Luke 22:33–34).

“And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).



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The *Catechism* and Faith

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit” (179).

[CCC](#)



The Holy Spirit

Peter, Mary, and all the faithful allow God's Holy Spirit to work in their lives:

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim” (Acts of the Apostles 2:1–4).



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The Mustard Seed

“And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ The Lord replied, ‘If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to [this] mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you’” (Luke 17:5–6).



Strengthening Faith

Ways to strengthen faith:

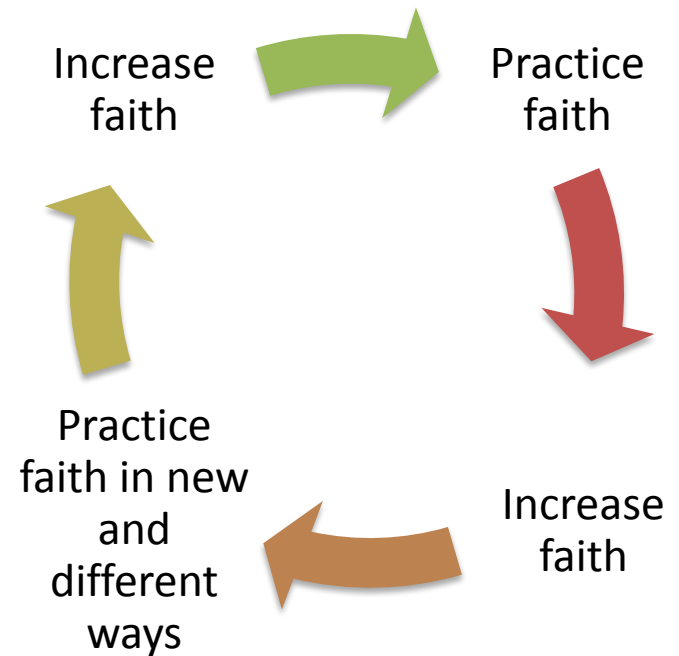
- prayer: communal and individual
- liturgy
- Sacraments
- service
- charity
- justice

Continuous Cycle

Faith is a continuous cycle. The more you practice your faith, the stronger it will grow. The firm foundation of faith will sustain you even in difficult times.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock”

(Matthew 7:24–25).



How will you build your foundation



FIVE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN

FAITH

START EACH DAY WITH A PSALM

The psalms are God's book of inspiration. There are 150 of them, and each one is filled with spiritual power. Start each day with one of these treasures of the Bible to develop your spiritual fitness. You can find the psalm from the Mass of the day here:

<http://usccb.org/bible/readings>

30-DAY LORD'S PRAYER CHALLENGE

The early Christians made it a practice to pray the Lord's Prayer three times a day — in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Try adopting that practice for yourself for the next 30 days. Use a physical calendar to mark off every day that you meet the challenge. It's harder than you think!

THE JESUS PRAYER

The Jesus Prayer is very simple. Just say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." Then repeat. And repeat. And repeat. Or instead, you might say: "Lord Jesus, have mercy." Or: "Lord, save me!" Or just: "Lord!" What makes the prayer potent is repetition and focusing your mind and heart on Jesus. Pick a set time of the day (put it in your calendar) to spend five to fifteen minutes praying this ancient prayer. Try to make this a daily habit. To learn more about the Jesus Prayer, go to:

<http://www.orthodoxprayer.org/Jesus%20Prayer.html>

PRACTICE A WORK OF MERCY EVERY DAY

In 2015, Pope Francis launched a jubilee year of mercy. Just because the year has officially ended does not mean we can stop being merciful. Pope Francis intended the year of mercy to remind us that we are always called to be merciful. To see some practical ways to do that, go to:

<https://blog.aquinasandmore.com/how-to-practice-the-works-of-mercy-during-the-year-of-mercy/>

FAST

Catholics are only obliged to fast two days out of the year — Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. More often, we *abstain*, usually from eating meat. We are only obligated to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday. However, fasting or abstaining are effective spiritual practices we can use at any time. Try fasting from meat every Friday, for example. (Older Catholics used to do this all the time.) Or try fasting as part of your prayer when you have a big decision to make. For more about fasting and abstaining, go to:

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/fast-abstinence.html>