



FAITH
REVEALED

MICHELLE KAREN D'SILVA

Michelle
KAREN D'SILVA



® FAITH REVEALED

Copyright © 2021 by Michelle Karen D'Silva

Permission is granted to print and reproduce this document for the purpose of reflection and study only. Please do not alter this document in any way. All rights reserved.

Published by Michelle Karen D'Silva.

Unless otherwise directed in writing by the writer, scripture quotations are from the NRSV Bible translation.



CONTENTS

FAITH REVEALED	1
FAITH COMES FROM HEARING	5
ROOTED IN FAITH	8
LIVING FAITH	11
FAITH TO GO FORTH	13
MARY, MODEL OF FAITH	15
RECAP: THREE STEPS TO FAITH	18



FAITH REVEALED



We often hear people say, “Just have a little faith.” But what is faith? Is it a blind leap into the dark? Does it imply believing something without evidence? Is it a substance or a thing to possess? We have heard: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household*” (Acts 16:31). But how can one act upon this truth, unless one knows what to believe? If the way of salvation is by faith, it is important to understand what faith really means.

The Bible defines faith this way: “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1). In a world primarily dependent on scientific methods, where all facts must be tested using observable, measurable evidence; to claim that something as intangible as faith counts for both substance and evidence sounds ridiculous.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for faith is “*emunah*”, which means faithfulness, trusting. In the New Testament, the Greek word for faith is “*pistis*”, which again means fidelity, faithfulness, trust or confidence in someone.



In both these cases, the idea of faith is in something or someone based on established trust. However, we also know that trust immediately points to a relationship with someone.

In the Gospel of John, we read *“But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God”* (John 1:12). To believe in God is only the starting point of faith. Believing does not necessarily involve conviction or commitment to Jesus Christ. Belief in God is profitable, but incomplete.

Perhaps, James 2:19 helps us see this better. *“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.”* How then is our faith different from that of demons? It is different because it implies ‘trust’ and ‘relationship’. As Christians, we are called to go beyond the level of faith exhibited by demons. Demons believe, but they do not seek God, they cannot obey. The Christian faith is based on a relationship with God, strengthened by obedience. Faith is rooted in a person: Jesus Christ, who loves us and who we trust as Lord and Savior.

It is this faith that gives hope and assurance of things not seen, because it is placed in a Person who can be fully trusted to do what He says He will do on our behalf. Hebrews 11:6 tells us *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.”*

In receiving salvation, we place our faith in Jesus and obtain the gift of God which is eternal life. But the God who loves us deeply doesn’t just want us to have faith enough to get to heaven, or settle for mere acknowledgment of His existence. Rather, He wants our faith to lead us into an intimate and dynamic relationship with Him. He wants to bless us and transform us to live a victorious fruit-bearing Christian life.

It is this faith, that has held the church firm through the generations. The life of the patriarchs speaks of their intimate relationship with God and their trust in Him, to go beyond themselves even to the point of death. They were confident that such trust would always deliver and resurrect them to eternal life, because it was based on the faithfulness of God. These men and women are our witnesses - our 'tangible proof' - that a life of faith is possible in a scientific fact driven world.

God has never pushed His dictates on us and He never will. He is our Father who gives us an opportunity to respond to His love. In the words of Saint Paul: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8).





***Grace is God's part in our salvation.
Faith is our response to God's Grace.***



FAITH COMES FROM HEARING



Romans 10:17 and Galatians 3:2 tell us that faith comes to us by the hearing of the Word of God. If that is so, what about reading? What about delving into the literature of the Church, the lives of saints or even the Holy Scriptures themselves?

In his encyclical *Lumen Fidei* (The Light of Faith), Pope Francis directs us to Genesis 12, to Abraham, our biblical model of faith. Here, Abraham does not see but hears the voice of God who calls him to take a leap of faith. *'Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'*" (Genesis 12:1). These are not just words; they are a command to act in faith. Abraham was commanded to step out of his comfort zone and settle in a pagan nation. Such a call demanded courage and trust. Abraham heard the voice of God. The word 'hearing' here implies a deep relationship between God and him; between the one hearing and the one speaking.



As Pope Francis points out in *Lumen Fidei*, 'Faith is our response to a word which engages us personally, to a "Thou" who calls us by name.' It is this response by which our faith grows. It is only when our soul and spirit can hear the voice of God through the Word, that we establish a connection with divine love. For example, in a teaching series, we receive the audibility of the spoken Word through our ears, but it is the voice of the Father through the spoken Word that renders a revelation or spiritual understanding of that truth. It is such faith that blossoms into love.

Both reading and hearing draw us to God, but hearing allows knowledge to drive us to act in obedience. We hear God, then we trust Him; and upon trusting Him, we act.

The Celebration of the Eucharist is the perfect illustration for both reading and hearing. We hear the Word of God that is read to us in the Liturgy of the Word followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In fact, at Mass we go deeper, wherein we receive the Word being made flesh through the Power of the Holy Spirit in the form of Holy Communion.

The Word of God is a faith-builder. Our spiritual growth is dependent on it. The more you hear the Word, the more encouraged you become in your faith. We need to read the Word over and over again until we hear the voice of God ministering to our spirits. We need His voice that brings conviction, correction, comfort, peace, healing, deliverance, restoration and direction.



***“The word, once accepted,
becomes a response,
a confession of faith,
which spreads to others
and invites them to believe.”***

POPE FRANCIS



ROOTED IN FAITH



Jesus often used metaphors to help us understand the Kingdom of God. He wanted to show us that God's Kingdom was not merely a physical reality but, more importantly, a personal reality.

In scripture, we read the Kingdom of God likened to a seed, which is the Word of God, sown into our hearts. If we receive and cultivate the soil in which it is planted, the seed will yield proportionally to what was sown (Matthew 13:18-23, Mark 4:14-20, Luke 8:11-15). This is the law of harvest. The seed has to germinate, grow into a tree and bear fruit. This tree also becomes a source of blessing where birds can build their nests and a weary traveler can find shelter and rest. In the same way, the Word of God planted in our hearts must result in blessing, not just for ourselves but also in the lives of others.

Think about what happens when a seed is planted in the soil. It has to weather all kinds of challenges such as harsh temperature, uncondusive soil conditions, scorching heat, etc. Yet it wades through these difficulties and perseveres through the storm. So it is for the one who hears and understands the Word.

The key is our partnership with God. God is faithful in doing His part. He does this through His Church, especially in the Mass. We continually hear scripture readings, homilies, and the words of the liturgy. We also receive Jesus in the Sacraments, most often through the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. All through this journey, the Sower never gives up on us! He is always cultivating in us rich soil because His desire for us is a bountiful harvest.



***“Although the life of a person is in
a land full of thorns and weeds,
there is always a space in which
the good seed can grow.
You have to trust God.”***

POPE FRANCIS



LIVING FAITH



Just as a seed is life-giving, so is faith. Our faith must be a living faith. Often times such faith will require us to die to ourselves in the flesh, so that we may come alive in the Spirit (John 12:24). Living faith requires sacrifice and surrender if it must transform the world around us.

The Bible teaches us to live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), i.e., when we walk by faith, we are not dependent on our own perception or knowledge. Often times, Christian believers allow feelings and not faith to determine their actions. The end result is always disappointment. Our feelings come and go. They are not an indicator of our faith in God. We must not let our feelings influence our actions; rather we must trust and rest on the promises of God.

Proverbs 3:5 says *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.”* Does this mean that we discount human reasoning? Of course not. We reason but with spiritual understanding. We reason in light of God’s voice directing us through His Word.



What if we receive a medical report that says it is too late and nothing can be done? How would we respond? We respond by confessing God's Word over the situation. We confess God as the source of our life, our greatest Healer who has taken all our sicknesses on the cross, who heals us by the power of His Name and Word. In this confession, we have placed our trust in God's Word and not our own understanding. We trust that God will do according to His will to bring good out of any situation (Romans 8:28).



FAITH TO GO FORTH



How can we demonstrate faith? Simply put, by walking in obedience.

Look at Abraham:

God called Abraham to leave his father's house, but He also revealed His plan and promise to him. The Lord had said to Abram, *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12: 1-3).

Abraham went forth to the Promised Land.

Then, God promised Abraham a son, Isaac (Genesis 17:19-21) and through Isaac, innumerable descendants (Genesis 26:4). God revealed His plan to Abraham but God also tested his faith by asking him to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22).

Abraham went forth to offer the sacrifice.



Did Abraham reason with his decision? Yes indeed. But his reasoning was based on the spiritual understanding of God's word. If God had promised him innumerable descendants, then God in His sovereignty was able to raise even his son who he was requested to sacrifice and God did. He saved Isaac. (Hebrews 11:19).

Look at Noah:

By faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. God told Noah to build the ark because He was going to destroy the earth (Genesis 6). He also promised Noah that he and his family and his animals would be saved (Genesis 7). Noah believed even in the midst of a provoking crowd.

Noah went forth to build the ark.

Look at Moses:

When Moses responded in faith to God, he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of God to be of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward (Hebrews 11: 24-26). Moses had heard the voice of the Lord through His word and believed that when God had promised the exodus, He would do it.

Moses went forth to Pharaoh.

MARY, MODEL OF FAITH



The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. At the Annunciation, Mary's fiat - "let it be with me, according to your word" (Luke 1:38), demonstrated her complete obedience to God's will. By faith, Mary welcomed the good tidings and the promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that with God nothing was impossible (Luke 1:37). As terrifying as her future looked, Mary heard, meditated and let the words of the angel penetrate deep into her heart. She did not act out of impulse but as late Saint Pope John Paul II points out, Mary had an interior dialogue with the Word of God, speaking with the Word and letting the Word speak with her.

Pope Benedict XVI also rightly pointed out "Having become pure hearing, she receives the Word so totally that it becomes flesh in her."

Mary's joyful outburst in her Magnificat reflected her knowledge of scripture and, more importantly, her Trust in the Word of God. When Elizabeth acknowledged Mary's singular blessedness at the Visitation, Mary immediately turned the attention away from herself so as to magnify the Lord (Luke 1:46). This is living faith, which ultimately goes beyond oneself, for the sake of others. Such faith always leads to life-long discipleship.



Mary advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, from Annunciation to Calvary and then to the upper room at Pentecost, faithful at every step of the way. In each of these pilgrimages, there was a Cross to bear and a price to pay. Yet, Mary never ceased to proclaim Christ and invite others to “come and see”. Her witness teaches us that the Christian life requires a courageous faith to persevere serenely and joyfully through struggles. Also, it is because of her own sorrowful mystery, that Mary most understands our trials and suffering. Now assumed into heaven, she remains a beacon of Hope and Light for those still on their pilgrimage journey and our intercessor, interceding daily for our gift of living faith.

PAUSE AND PONDER

- **Where in my life do, I struggle to believe?**
- **What kind of faith is God calling me to have?**
- **Do my actions reflect the greatness of God?**
- **Does the demonstration of our faith point others to the joy of the Gospel?**
- **Does my Christian commitment waiver during trials and difficulties?**
- **What does Mary’s obedience teach me about my obedience to God?**



***“And blessed is she who believed
that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”***

LUKE 1: 45, NRSV





RECAP: THREE STEPS TO FAITH

- **HEAR**

I begin by hearing the Word of God. I open my spiritual ears to hear His voice leading me (Romans 10:17).

- **BELIEVE**

Having heard who He is and what He is able to do for me, I believe what I hear - I assent. I believe that He died for me (Isaiah 53:5); that He is able to save me (Hebrews 7:25). I believe His Word, His character and His promises.

- **TRUST**

I hear... I believe... but now I trust! This entails me placing my confidence in Him to do what I have heard and believed He can do. I commit myself to Him and trust Him to save me.