

Reflections

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Our Christian Faith

What is needed for the Christian faith to take deep roots in a person and for it to stay strong and healthy? The experts tell us that three forces must cooperate so that a person may reach faith and in addition grow and mature in it: **God**, the **person** himself/herself, and the **Community** of believers.

1. God. We know that God through Baptism gives the initial grace so that faith can be born in and grow in a Christian. This faith received in Baptism is a seed. The seed has been made to produce a plant and the plant has been made to produce fruit. For the seed of faith to grow in the soul, God has to continue giving His grace.

Throughout our long life, how can we obtain that grace of faith? I think God gives us a fundamental condition for it: He wants us to ask Him for that grace with humility and childlike confidence. The Apostle James tells us in his letter: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (4:6). The Lord Himself teaches us in the Gospel to ask with confidence: “When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for” (MK 11: 24).

2. The person himself/herself. Faith is a gift from God, but it is also a personal response from the man/woman himself/herself. He/she can and should collaborate in the growth of his/her faith. It should be lived and fulfilled in his/her daily life. He/she should test it with deeds and acts of concrete faith. The seed which is not tended to or nourished cannot mature; it withers and dies. I believe that is the reason for the weakness and even the disappearance of faith in many of our contemporaries.

A sage from India, after traveling through Europe, said: “In Europe, I found a Sunday Christianity and a daily heathenism.” Faith which does not inspire daily work, contact with others, or the joy and suffering of each day.....cannot grow; it diminishes and dies sooner or later.

3. The community of believers. The third basic condition, in addition to the grace of God and human collaboration, is the Community of believers. Faith can only take roots in a person when he/she is part of a Christian community because faith is not a private matter.

In the community, he/she receives revelation from God and he/she renders a response of faith. Therefore, St. Paul says: “And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed?” (Rom 10:14): But it is not enough to only preach with words. It is more important and more fruitful to preach with a life of faith. Life is only born of life; and a vital faith is only born of a vital faith.

I believe this is another reason why so many people today cannot believe: Many educators and preachers of faith – parents, priests, teachers, etc. – do not embody faith in their persons or in their lives. They only speak of faith, but do not live from it. Therefore, their message is not convincing or uplifting.

Here enters, with much force, the importance of our Christian communities and our Christian groups.

What is most fundamental and decisive for being born into and growing healthily in the faith are our Christian families, the first faith communities. The parents are not only the great educators of the faith for their children, they are also reflections of God Himself to their children. By means of the relationship with the parents, the child experiences the relationship with God the Father and with the Heavenly Mother, the Blessed Virgin. Thus, in a natural and spontaneous way, a personal attachment to God comes forth.

The essence of faith is not believing in certain truths or articles of faith, it is believing in a person, it is believing in a personal God. Maturing in the faith means deepening my intimate attachment to Christ and to the Triune God.

Therefore, let us ask God to grant us the grace to grow permanently in the faith and to grow in personal attachment to Him, and may our crises of faith only be crises of growth. Let us also ask the Blessed Virgin, Mother and model of faith, that she strengthen us and accompany us on our journey to the House of the Father.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I consider myself a Sunday Christian?
2. Do I consider myself a person of faith?
3. As a person or as a group, how are we different from the rest? _____

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