

Pastor's Pen: Humility and Virtue Part 3

Having gone through the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude and their relationship to humility in the Catholic life, I now turn my attention to the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. What differentiates as cardinal virtue from a theological virtue, is the theological virtues require the assistance of God, through grace, to develop and reach their full potential.

What is Faith?

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, section 1814, we read "Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that He has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because He is truth itself. " It is easily evident why we need God's assistance in the development of this virtue. Faith is a response to revelation. Notice, that true faith requires a submission of will to ALL Christ has said and revealed through His Church.

This runs contrary to so much of what we see in our culture that would have us treat Christ and His Church as a buffet of beliefs that are picked over and chosen based on what does or does not accommodate the compromises we wish to make with the Catholic life. Without faith, we will gravitate toward a buffet mentality that will always leave us feeling shorted of the spiritual nutrition necessary to grow in faith.

This lack of faith will lead to a form of syncretism. Syncretism is the participation of a person in more than one belief systems or faiths. Syncretism is the great sin of the People of Israel in the Old Testament. Their lack of faith in divine revelation though the law and the prophets led to both worship at the Temple Mount, making their sacrifices to God, and then go into the Valley of Hinnom and make sacrifices to idols. We will be tempted to such when we ride the fence between the teachings of Christ and His Church and the ever shifting morals of this world. Sometimes we will do it out of a desire to not be called intolerant, sometimes we do for political expediency, however, most times we do it because it requires little to no change of heart on my part.

Why we need divine help in the development faith lies in the fact that compromise is easy and assent of the will is difficult. We need to bring into line concupiscence. Concupiscence is that desire to sin that we battle with every day. Concupiscence looks for compromise to enable sin. Faith does battle with concupiscence. To do battle with a spiritual power requires divine aid.

Faith and Humility

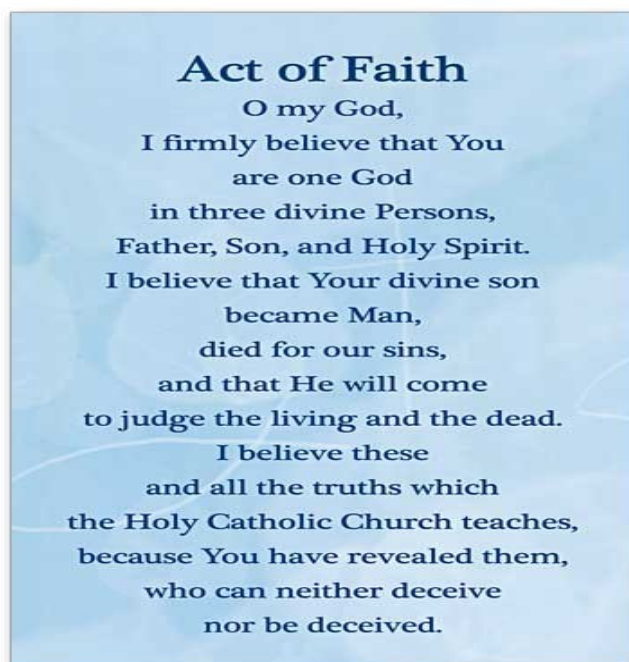
If humility is a deep understanding of the truth about oneself, then it is absolutely necessary in the realm of the development of faith. Humility informs us that we do not have all the answers independent of God. In fact, humility lets us know we have no share of truth independent of God. Humility drives us to seek truth. Humility helps us to admit the selfish motivations we might have in compromising with or rebelling against faith. Since faith requires divine assistance to grow, having

opened our hearts through humility to those places we need to grow, we can now allow the rush of God's grace to flow into those areas we struggle. Without humility, this does not happen.

Humility will also help us to seek avenues to better understand the content of faith. I am a big believer in education as a pastor. I believe the greater access you have to quality teaching on why we believe what we believe; the more likely faith can grow. I believe God's grace moves through the outpouring of truth. This is why I offer adult education classes. This is why I signed us up for FORMED. This is why I am finicky about what materials are used in any and all of our education offerings. This is why I write these pastor's pens.

Education is a part of the necessary development of faith. However, it is not the totality. The sacramental life of the Church is meant to help us grow in faith as well. As we are assenting to a person and not a mere proposition or philosophy of life, we must address the wounds brought about by the compromises and disobedience. We address these through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To make sure we are strengthened in our resolve and ability to cling to faith, we are given the Sacrament of the Eucharist as the necessary nourishment to build ourselves in people of faith. We must have the grace of God to build faith. This is why I have greatly extended Confession times. This is why talk so much about Confession. This is why I speak so much about the Eucharist. The quickest way to kill faith is to absent oneself from the sacraments.

Perhaps a good place to begin is with a simple prayer that can be said every day. To end this column, I leave the classic Act of Faith.



Amen.