

LESSON 1

“I BELIEVE”

BACKGROUND READING



What Is Faith?

Faith is a gift from God, as well as our free response to believe what God tells us about Himself and about the world He made.

Faith is a gift

If faith is a gift, how do we receive it? We first receive the gift of faith in the Sacrament of Baptism. The Sacraments are the chief means of receiving of God’s grace in our lives. Thus, whenever we properly receive the Sacraments, we receive an increase in our faith. We must also ask God, in prayer, to increase our faith. “The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” (Luke 17:5).

Faith is necessary for salvation. Jesus tells us many times, and the Catholic Church teaches that “Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation” (CCC 161).

Our faith can be increased, but it also can be lost. We are free to accept or to reject God. We can deny His presence through our fear or doubt, and we can choose to lose His presence by our own mortal sin. God is always calling us to Himself, but He never coerces us. We must choose to believe in Him and we must live our lives according to His revealed truth.

Faith is a theological virtue

There are three theological virtues – faith, hope, and love. They are called theological virtues because they come from and point us toward God. “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” (CCC 1814).

Faith is certain

Unlike human beings who sin, or who fail despite their best intentions, God never sins or fails. For this reason, faith is *certain*. We can be surer of our faith in God than we can be in any human knowledge.

Our faith is not a blind leap, even though the truths that have been revealed to us are sometimes not clear to our human understanding. We believe because it is God who has revealed the truth to us. Scripture tells us: “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1).

Since all human beings can and will fail at one time or another, we would be foolish to place all our trust in any human being. There is only One in whom we should completely