

ARGUMENT

Faith, hope, and love, these three remain, and though love is the greatest of these, faith is the first. In faith, we hear Truth himself speak, and we know his word is true. In faith, we hear him promise, “I am with you always,” and we know his word is true. In faith, we hear him say, “greater love than this hath no man . . .” and we know his word is true. Faith places before our minds the ground of our hope and the object of our love, and this is nothing less than God himself. In this sense, faith is truly the beginning of the Christian life.

Pope Benedict’s call for a Year of Faith, then, is an invitation to return to the very foundation of our Catholic identity. Challenges to the Christian faith—be they political, intellectual, or moral—abound in every age. Meeting such challenges, then, calls for a constant intention to deepen, intensify, and share this faith we have received. As such, every year should be a year of faith.

Growth in this supernatural virtue does us no violence. Faith extends our knowledge, and as rational animals we have an inborn desire to know the causes of everything we see and experience. Wondering “why?” is part of who and what we are as man, and faith extends the sphere of this desire for understanding.

Yet many of our contemporaries tend to consider only the knowledge gained through personal experience or discovered through scientific inquiry to be reliable. More and more, our culture limits the scope of what counts as a legitimate answer—or even as a legitimate question. But we might wonder with Eliot, “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”

The gift of faith comes from God and cannot be conjured up by any merely human effort. Ultimately, faith adheres to God simply because he is God, the one who neither deceives nor is deceived.

Still, theologians refer to the “motives of credibility” which prepare us for faith. Human evidence abounds to confirm the truth of what is revealed.

Our experiences of friendship, love, and wonder suggest we are more than molecular; rational argumentation demonstrates the existence and attributes of God; the example of the saints—such as the heroic temperance of St. Thomas Aquinas and the bright light of Martin de Porres’s humility—and the magnanimous witness of the one who sits upon the throne of Peter suggest that there is something more than mere fancy to this two-thousand-year-old institution we know as the Catholic Church.

Even the Church’s Marian devotion bespeaks the reasonability of the faith. Just as natural mothers take great pride in their children, so too the Blessed Virgin Mary points us toward her Son. Just as natural mothers care for their children’s needs, so our Redeemer’s mother extends her maternal care to all in this valley of tears: We can be confident, then, that she will show us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus.

What is at stake in all of this? It may be easy to forget that nothing less than the eternal fate of our immortal souls hangs in the balance. Good, evil, heaven, hell: These are not metaphors. The battle which every Catholic wages against principalities and powers is a battle for the person.

We know that Christ has won the battle. With his *Consummatum est*, Christ proclaimed his victory. Yet our place in this contest is not on the sidelines. Knowing God inspires us to love him, and loving God impels us to know him more deeply. Contemplating who God is, what he is like, and how he has acted in our lives and in our world will enkindle within us a burning desire to share the saving truths of the faith. This contemplation prompts us to share the gospel with a world that, despite its scientific advances, seems frighteningly unaware of God’s love. Thus, as members of Christ’s body, we share in the battle as long as human history wends inexorably towards its consummation at his glorious return.

New years contain new resolutions, usually with mixed results. Fortunately, in the life of faith success does not depend merely on the resolve of any human will. The grace of Christ, given through the sacraments of the Church, strengthens and renews us from day to day, year to year.

Each article in this issue of *Dominicana* offers a point of entry into the Year of Faith. To highlight just a few, Br. Joseph Mary and Br. John Baptist present to us the examples of the saints, Br. Gabriel interviews Roger Scruton on man's engagement with modern culture, and Br. Thomas More considers Gregory Wolfe's analysis of art and faith today. Diverse in content, our Winter issue has one goal: nourishing its readers in faith.

By the grace of God, there is no limit, this side of heaven, to growth in faith. It ceases only when the soul in heaven beholds God face to face. May this year be a year of growth in faith for each of us . . . and the next year, too.

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