

“Unless I see the nail marks and put my fingers into the nail marks...”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a movie called, ‘**The Seventh Seal.**’ In one scene, death takes the form of a human and appears to a knight. The following conversation takes place, in which the knight talks to Death about God:

Knight: “**Why does God hide himself? Why doesn’t he reveal himself? Why doesn’t God stretch out his hand and touch us? Why doesn’t he, at least, say something to us?**”

Death: “**But God doesn’t do this, does he? He doesn’t reach out. He doesn’t speak. He remains silent.**”

Knight: “**That’s right! He doesn’t do a thing. He doesn’t touch us; he doesn’t speak to us. Sometimes, I wonder if he’s really out there.**”

Death: “**Well, maybe he’s not there. Maybe he’s not out there. Maybe we’re here all alone. Did you ever think about that?**”

I think all of us can relate to that conversation. There are times when we seem to be all alone in the world. There are times when we wonder if God’s really out there. We long for some sign, some touch, some word to reassure us that he’s really there.



This raises a question: “Is there any way we can become more sure of what we believe? Is there anything we can do to make our faith stronger?” you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

Yes, there’s definitely something we can do to strengthen our faith; something very practical to do.

We all know that, if we don’t use a muscle, it begins to weaken. In fact, it can become so weak that it will begin to atrophy and die.

Something like that can happen to our faith.

If we don’t use our faith, it too, can grow weak. In fact, it can become so weak that, for all practical purposes, it atrophies and dies.

Therefore, one very practical way to strengthen our faith is to exercise it, that is, to live it.

For example: **Once upon a time**, a man was vacationing, alone, in a small cabin in the mountains. He was feeling lonely and depressed. **Some**-thing was radically wrong in his life. God seemed to have deserted him. His faith was flickering and threatening to go out.

In desperation, the man turned to God and promised that he would do anything God wanted ...if God would just give him back his peace of mind.

Then something strange happened. God seemed to speak to the man. God seemed to say to him:

“Start living the Gospel (--the life of Christ). Start living the teachings of Jesus, even though you don’t fully understand them.”

At that moment, the man made a big decision. He resolved, then and there, to live his life according to the teachings of Jesus.

*That decision turned the man’s life around. It wasn’t easy at first. He fell back in to his old ways again and again. **BUT**, that **one** decision ...made all the difference.*

*In an article entitled: “**Living the Word**,” the man says that his ‘cabin-experience’ taught him a lesson that he never forgot the rest of his life. He says:*

“I learned to hear the Word and to act on it!”

For example: Blaise Pascal, born in 17th-century France, was a mathematical genius. By the age of 18, he designed & built several computing machines, pioneers to our modern computers.

Pascal was not only deeply intelligent, **BUT**, deeply religious. Speaking of our faith, he said:

“If you want to strengthen your faith, do not augment your arguments; weed out your passions.”

In other words, the way to strengthen our faith is to live it, put it into practice in our daily lives.

IF we do this, we too will experience a turn around in our life, just as the man in the mountain cabin did.



One final point: Faith is a lot like life, itself.

It, too, has peak moments and zero moments.

It, too, has high points and low points.

It, too, has mountain-top moments and valley-floor moments.

*The nature of faith is such that, no matter how faithfully we live the Word of God, that is, live the teachings of Jesus, there **will** be times that our faith will be like that of Thomas in today’s Gospel. It will seem to flicker and go out on us.*

You see, when we are standing on a mountaintop, our faith seems strong and bright. It’s like a powerful beacon, giving light to the entire world.

BUT, when we are standing on a valley-floor, our faith seems weak and dim. It’s like the tiny flame of a candle, flickering in the wind. I call this time, **“The Doldrums of Faith.”**

To use another analogy, our faith is a lot like the sun. Sometimes it seems big and bright, clearly visible in the sky.

At other times, it can be the middle of the day and we can’t even see it. It vanishes behind layers of clouds, so thick, it seems to have completely vanished from the sky.

Now, we know from experience, that the sun is somewhere up in that sky. It’s just that we can’t see it all of the time. Faith is a lot like that, too.

*When those low points in our faith come, and they surely will, we should not be disturbed by them. Rather, we should use them to show God our love and trust. We should just ‘push on,’ for those un-nerving doldrums **will pass**, often as suddenly and as inexplicably as they arrived!*

With reference to faith’s low points, I close with the words of St. Peter from today’s 2nd reading:

“It may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while ...because of the many kinds of trials you suffer. Their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine (not just ‘mountain-top’ faith). Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so, your faith, which is more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise & glory & honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

And I add—the ‘day’ when you will see him ‘face to face’ and no longer have any need for faith!

*May our ever-faithful and loving God bless you:
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen*