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# Believe



with the

# spirit

Use of the phrase **“I have great faith in . . .”** implies trust and confidence. Something about the person, the experience, or the object leaves the speaker with no doubt that he, she, or it will come through for them.

When I believe, **I set my heart** on something or someone.

**Have faith.** This phrase is often used to encourage people to stand firm in the knowledge or hope that a circumstance or a situation will turn out for the good.

-  Which of the three expressions above best describes or comes closest to how you experience your faith in the Risen Christ?
-  Recall an experience when your faith in the Risen Christ helped you to stand firm.

## Gathering Rite

### Procession with the Word

*Sing together.*

*We believe, we believe, we believe.*

"We Believe," © 1993, 1994, Bernadette Farrell.  
Published by OCP Publications

**Leader:** Let us pray.

**All:** *Pray the Sign of the Cross together.*

**Leader:** Lord, our God, we gather together as a people who believe in you and your promises. Open our hearts to know you more and believe in you more fully. Guide us to seek and find you as you continue to make yourself known to us through the Holy Spirit. We give you praise and thanks for the gift of our faith and the presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

**All:** Amen.

## celebration of the word

**Leader:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

**Leader:** *Read Matthew 17:14–21.*  
The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Reflect silently.*

**?** What does the Gospel tell us about the power of faith? What image of nature describes your faith today?

### RITUAL FOCUS

#### Receiving a Candle

*Come forward as directed.*

**Leader:** Heavenly Father, at Baptism, we entered into the faith of the Church. We received the Light of Christ. Hear our prayer as we recall our Baptism and seek to deepen our faith. We ask this through your Son, Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** [Name], receive the Light of Christ, walk always as a child of the light and keep the flame of faith burning and alive in your heart.

*Respond: I will.*

## Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** Let us pray.

**Reader 1:** That we will come to a deeper appreciation of the faith we received at Baptism, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Reader 2:** That God will bless us with open eyes and hearts that will come to believe in him more fully and love him more faithfully, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Reader 3:** That we will find, in this community of faith, support and strength to live as children of the light, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Reader 4:** That in faith we will become more responsive to the needs of others, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** Hear us, O Lord.

**Leader:** Let us pray as Jesus has taught us:

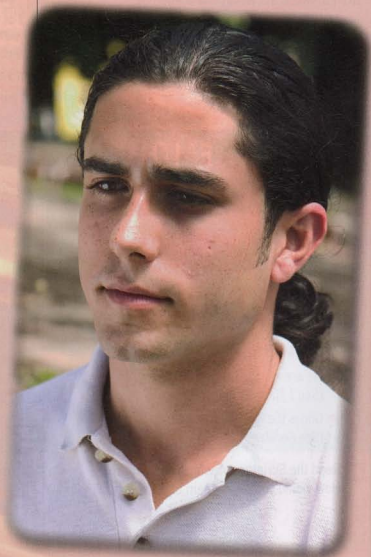
*Pray the Lord's Prayer together.*

## Going Forth

**Leader:** God, our Loving Father, we stand before you in faith. Send your Holy Spirit that we may act as witnesses of that faith to those around us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

*Sing again the opening song.*



# Light of Christ



## ★ Reflect on the Celebration

### Your Confirmation Reflections

Use the following phrases as prompts for reflection:

- \*During the celebration, I was thinking about . . .
- \*The call to “walk always as a child of the light” . . .
- \*The image of faith as a flame . . .

### Faith Sharing


With a partner or in a small group, review the four Prayers of the Faithful from the celebration. Discuss your experiences and thoughts about appreciating one's Baptism and about the need for a community of faith.


## SIGNS OF FAITH

**Paschal Candle** Light is a primary symbol for Catholics. It is used throughout the Scriptures to describe God's presence and to show that believers have the responsibility to be light for the world.

- ▶ The Lord preceded the Israelites into the desert at night as a column of fire. (See *Exodus 13:21*.)
- ▶ We walk in the light of the Lord. (See *Isaiah 2:5*.)
- ▶ Believers must let their light shine. (See *Matthew 5:14*.)
- ▶ We are all children of the light. (See *1 Thessalonians 5:5*.)
- ▶ God is the source of all light. (See *Revelations 22:5*.)

Another name for the Paschal Candle is the Easter candle. It is a tall, white candle. During the Easter Vigil, the priest cuts a cross in the candle and traces the Greek letters Alpha above the cross and Omega below, which symbolizes that Jesus is the beginning and the end. Then he carves the numerals of the calendar year into the candle and lights the candle from the Easter fire. While the church is still in darkness, the Paschal Candle is carried in procession into the church as a symbol of the Risen Christ. The candles of the assembly are lit from the Paschal Candle. The Paschal Candle is lit at all the Masses of the Easter season, from Easter through Pentecost, and at Baptisms and funerals throughout the year.

 Read the Scripture passages cited above. How would you relate them to your daily living?

 The lighting of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil tells a story of faith. List what you think are the important parts of the story.

## enlightened by christ

During the Baptism of a child, the priest or deacon refers to the Easter candle, which represents the presence of the Risen Christ in the world, and says, "Receive the Light of Christ." Then one of the parents or godparents lights the child's baptismal candle from the Easter candle. The presider tells the parents and godparents to keep the light "burning brightly." He prays that the "flame of faith" will be kept alive in the child's heart. The more the child comes to know the Risen Christ and grows in relationship with him, the more faith grows and the more he or she sees things through the life and teachings of Jesus.

## faith and light

Light is one of the many images and words the Church uses to describe the mystery of faith. *Faith* is our free response to God, who first shares his great gift of love, and to all that he tells us about himself in revelation. *Revelation* involves God's communication of himself in the Old and New Testaments, and especially through his own Son, Jesus Christ.

We begin to see and understand life better through the light of faith. We can see what we are called to be and do as disciples. Faith is a way of seeing—enlightened by the Risen Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, we grow to see the world as God does. The Holy Spirit helps us see and hear with the eyes and ears of faith. Through faith, we can discover new possibilities for ourselves and new strengths and talents. We see the world in a different way from those who do not believe.

### REFLECT

When difficult or senseless things happen, how does your faith help you see things differently from people who do not have faith?



# Seeing and Believing

## SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

**The Gospel of John** The style of the Gospel of John is very different from the styles of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This Gospel does not have parables or the Sermon on the Mount. In the Gospel of John, Jesus addresses these audiences: the disciples, the crowds, and his opponents. When reading this Gospel, pay attention to whom Jesus is speaking and notice how differently he approaches each group. Seven miracles are found in this Gospel, and five of the seven are described only in the Gospel of John. All the miracles are intended to call forth faith on the part of those who see them. Sometimes the miracles are followed by a debate with some of the Pharisees.

## FAITH FOCUS


What does faith do?

The Gospel of John uses many symbols and images to describe the Good News and the kingdom. Light and darkness are two of these symbols. In the beginning of the Gospel, we hear that Jesus was a light that came into darkness. Later we read that when Jesus instructed Nicodemus about faith, Jesus talked about light and darkness again and referred to himself as the light of the world. In the story of the Man Born Blind, Jesus used light, darkness, and seeing to teach about the mystery of faith. The Jewish people would not believe the man's testimony about Jesus. They drove him out of the town. Jesus found him and said:

✝ *"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."*

—John 9:35–39

Maybe it was easier for the man born blind to believe in Jesus because he had experienced the miracle of having his sight restored. But the Pharisees had seen the *miracle*, and they still did not believe. Faith is a gift of God, but it has two sides. God continues to make known his presence and to call humans to a faithful relationship with him. We must choose to recognize and respond to his presence.

 When have you recognized and responded to God's call to faith?



## faith and fear

The Pharisees were not the only people who had a difficult time believing in Jesus; sometimes the Apostles questioned and doubted.

### REFLECT

What events and/or occurrences in your life have helped you believe in Jesus? What things might have made it more difficult to believe?



### Jesus stills the storm

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm.

They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

—Matthew 8:23-27

-  What is Jesus' message to the Apostles about belief?
-  How can this reading help your faith?

### Share the Word

With a partner or in a small group, select two of the Scripture passages below. Read and discuss what they tell you about faith. Then write a paragraph to complete the open-ended sentence that follows.

Matthew 14:28-33

Mark 4:35-42

John 20:24-29

Matthew 15:21-28

Luke 18:35-43

Acts 3:1-10

Matthew 26:69-75

John 14:1-26

Hebrews 11:1-2

*These Scriptures helped me see that faith and believing . . .*



# Personal Faith

## DISCUSS

What role does belonging and participating in a Church have in a person's faith journey? What about in *your* faith journey?

## FAITH FOCUS

What is the role of the community in faith development?

Faith is a lifelong relationship with God. Each of us has a very personal and unique relationship with him. As your faith continues to deepen, you will see things from a different point of view. You will grow in your trust of God and feel more connected to him and his plan for you and the world. This is what the Sacraments of Initiation celebrate—your new connections and deepening bonds with God and the Church.

## Communal Faith

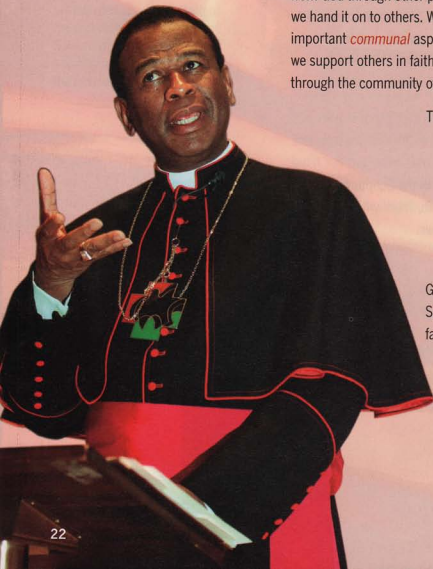
While faith and the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation are personal acts, they are much more than that. They are actions of the Church. Just as we cannot live alone, we cannot believe alone. We receive our faith from God through other people like our parents and family members, and we hand it on to others. We are all links in the chain of faith. Faith has an important *communal* aspect—we are carried by the faith of others, and we support others in faith through our beliefs, prayers, and actions. It is through the community of the Church that our faith is fed and supported.

### The Church

- ▶ teaches us the language of faith through prayer and doctrines (official teachings)
- ▶ preserves the memory of Jesus' words and actions in the Scriptures and Sacraments
- ▶ proclaims and maintains the Mysteries of Faith in the creeds

Guided by the Church and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we grow in both our personal and communal faith through actions such as these:

- ▶ talking to God
- ▶ reading and thinking about the Scriptures
- ▶ participating in the communal worship of church, especially in the Sacraments
- ▶ going out in service to those in need
- ▶ learning more in parish programs



## Completion of Baptism

The Holy Spirit began the journey of faith with you at Baptism. In Confirmation you will again be blessed with the special Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is necessary for the completion of the grace of Baptism. During his homily, the bishop or priest who will confirm you will remind you of your Baptism. He will talk about the importance of your responding to faith in your life.

In these or similar words, he will say the following:

*You have already been baptized into Christ and now you will receive the power of his Spirit and the Sign of the Cross on your forehead. You must be witnesses before all the world to his suffering, death, and Resurrection; your way of life should at all times reflect the goodness of Christ...*

*Be active members of the Church, alive in Jesus Christ. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, give your lives completely in the service of all, as did Christ who came not to be served but to serve.*

*So now before you receive the Spirit, I ask you to renew the profession of faith you made in Baptism or your parents or godparents made in union with the whole Church.*

Rite of Confirmation, 23

The Sacrament of Confirmation joins you more closely to the Church and gives you a special strength of the Holy Spirit, which will help you share and explain your faith with others in word and action.

## CATHOLIC SOURCES

**Creeds** All Christian creeds refer to the three Persons of the Trinity and are developed from baptismal rituals. These three creeds, or professions of faith, have been used by the Church:

- The Athanasian Creed, which stresses belief in the Incarnation and the Trinity
- The Apostles' Creed, which is the earliest and simplest expression of Christian belief
- The Nicene Creed, which is a combination of the creeds drawn up at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. It summarizes salvation history, and it is the creed ordinarily professed at Sunday liturgies.



## SYMBOL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Cloud and Light** In the Old Testament, the images of cloud and light often appear together when the Lord is revealing himself. With Moses on Mount Sinai (see *Exodus 24:15-18*), the meeting tent (see *Exodus 33:9-10*), and the wandering in the desert (see *Exodus 40:36-38*), the cloud that reveals Yahweh is both radiant and murky. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit "overshadows" the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation (see *Luke 1:35*); at the Transfiguration (see *Luke 9:34-35*) the cloud overshadows Jesus, Moses, and Elijah; Peter, James, and John hear a voice from the cloud that says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (*Luke 9:35*).



Cloud and light are almost opposites. Why are they good images for the Holy Spirit?

# Witnesses of Faith

## JOURNEYS PAST



**Ita Ford**  
(1940–1980)

- 1940** Ita is born in Brooklyn, New York.
- 1960** She graduates from Marymount College.
- 1961** She enters the Maryknoll Sisters.
- 1964** Ita leaves Maryknoll Missionary Order due to health problems and works awhile as an editor.
- 1971** She reapplies to Maryknoll and is accepted.
- 1972** Assigned to the missions in Chile, Ita goes with her friend Sister Carla.
- 1980** In March, Ita and Carla respond to a call from El Salvador's Bishop Oscar Romero—just before his assassination. In June, they begin working at the Emergency Refugee Committee in Chalatenango. In August, while returning a political prisoner to his home, Ita and Carla are caught in a flash flood. Carla drowns after pushing Ita to safety. Maura Clarke becomes Ita's new missionary partner. At a closing liturgy on December 1 in Nicaragua, Ita reads this passage from one of Archbishop Romero's final homilies: "Christ invites us not to fear persecution because,

believe me, brothers and sisters, the one who is committed to the poor must run the same fate as the poor, and in El Salvador we know what the fate of the poor signifies: to disappear, be tortured, to be held captive—and to be found dead."

The following day, Ita and Maura return to El Salvador and are picked up by missionaries Dorothy Kazel, an Ursuline sister, and Jean Donovan, a layperson. After the women leave the airport in San Salvador, several members of the National Guard of El Salvador stop their vehicle and take the four women to an isolated spot where the soldiers rape and murder them.

*"Am I willing to suffer with the people here, . . . Can I say to my neighbors, 'I have no solutions to this situation; I don't know the answers, but I will walk with you, search with you, be with you?'"*

## YOUR JOURNEY

### Solidarity of the Human Family



#### Faith in Action

The Light of Christ in us at age seventeen may not be as bright as Ita Ford's at age thirty-two or when she began her missionary work with the poor in Chile. But "this light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!" Like Ita Ford, we can choose to believe that God calls us to be in solidarity with others who are hurting. We can contact Maryknoll's Office of Global Concerns about their work overseas and find out how we can be in solidarity with one of their projects. Maybe together, with others around the world, we can work with such faith and courage that we will move the mountain of injustice at least a little in our lifetime.

**GO** Visit [www.osvcurriculum.com](http://www.osvcurriculum.com) to discover more about Catholic online social teachings.

# Journeys Today

## Living Witness

I am a doctor at a family clinic for the poor in a large Midwestern city. As I see it, I got here by making small choices. In fact, I see my whole life as a series of small choices.

In high school I was very influenced by the Sisters of Loretto, especially in the way they integrated justice and civil rights. In those years, I began to see that there were no boundaries that separated me from any other human being.

I wanted to be a medical missionary. So I chose to go to medical school. During my residency in the deep south, I became aware of terrible injustices and divides between people because of race and economic differences. It threw me off balance and I realized I could not be a doctor there. So I left and went to an inner city hospital that dealt with a bigger world and confronted the inequity of education, healthcare, and benefits. That choice provided me with wonderful mentors who taught me how to think, solve problems, and be creative when it came to caring about others.

When I finished my residency, I went to Thailand to work in a refugee camp. I was a missionary at last, but I soon realized that it was not my calling. It did not fit me and when something doesn't fit, I have learned it is not what God is calling me to. I made the choice to return to the States and found a medical setting where there were no boundaries that separated the poor from good medical care.

Ann S.



## Christian Decision Making

This is a process of making choices and decisions that are based on faith and the desire to do God's will. It involves being open to the Holy Spirit's guidance and calling on him to lead or enlighten people as to what God wants them to do and be. These are some questions to ask when you are making decisions:

- > Is my choice governed by love of God, self, or others?
- > Does it use or enhance the gifts and talents God has given me?
- > Does it flow from the teachings of the Scriptures and Church doctrine?

Faith Walk

## Respond in Faith

### Your Confirmation Reflections

*\*Think about the people and events of your life as a faith journey and sketch a map or path naming the people, places, rest stops, destinations, and detours that have been part of your journey.*

*\*Write about one thing you learned in this session that you want to pay attention to for your own faith development.*

### Faith Sharing

In small groups discuss the part of this session that

- ▶ most interested you
- ▶ most challenged you

Spend some time in group silence thinking about what this session is calling you to change or strengthen in your relationship with God, yourself, or others. At the appropriate time, share this with the group.

### Closing Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit,

Open my eyes that I may see the events of my life through the eyes of faith.

Open my ears that I may hear the word of God spoken to me.

Open my heart that I may grow more in love with God who has loved me first.

Open my hands and move my feet in faith to serve others.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord.

Amen.





## Respond in Faith Together

### FAITH FOCUS

Discuss the following beliefs together. Focus on how these beliefs have or could have an effect on your lives today. Refer to the lesson if necessary.

- ▶ Faith is based on God's great gift of revelation. Among other things, revelation tells us that God the Father communicated himself and his plan for all creation by sending us his own Son, Jesus.
- ▶ Faith has two sides: God's call and our response.
- ▶ Being a member of the Church strengthens and supports our faith.

### RITUAL FOCUS

During the celebration, the candidates received a candle and were reminded of the call to be children of the light. At the end of your time together, pray together for one another using these or similar words:

*May Christ always be our light.  
May we walk always as children of the light.  
May we see life through the eyes of faith.  
May our journey of faith bring light to others.*  
Amen.

## ACT TOGETHER

At the conclusion of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, the bishop or priest will say these words:

*This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church.  
We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Rite of Confirmation, 23**

Together select two persons from the parish community who are witnesses of faith. Set up a conversation with them to discuss how they nurture their faith and how and why they are proud to profess it in their daily lives.

**Your Plan** Write about your conversation:

- ✎ What surprised you in the conversation?
- ✎ Did you learn anything new?
- ✎ Recall a time when you felt called by God.

# Journey Together

with your sponsor or mentor

## BEING CATHOLIC

**Together:** Discuss these quotes from famous Catholics.

Focus on how they apply to your life.

"Faith is to believe what you do not see;  
the reward of this faith is to see what  
you believe."

—Saint Augustine

"A strong, lively faith is the foundation  
of all virtue."

—Catherine McAuley

"Faith has to do with things that are not seen,  
and hope with things that are not in hand."

—Saint Thomas Aquinas

### Faith Walk

**Christian decision making** Talk about the story in **Journeys Today**.

- ▶ Identify areas in your life where making more decisions based on faith would help you.
- ▶ Discuss how the Scriptures and Church doctrine affect your daily decision-making.

**Together:** Reflect on your own faith journey. Recall the people and events that have been significant in the deepening of your faith.