



DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

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Diocese of Portland
Office of Vocations

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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: FAITH AS THE FOUNDATION

The Catechism tells us that Faith is "the virtue by which we believe in God and all that He has revealed." It is not simply a mental exercise or intellectual agreement with a list of doctrines. It is a gift from God that allows us to assent with our whole mind and will to the One who is Truth Himself.

For the priest, faith is the absolute bedrock of his life and ministry. He must believe not only that God exists, but that He is loving, powerful, and present. He must believe that the bread and wine truly become the Body and Blood of Christ. He must believe that the words of absolution in Confession truly forgive sins. Without a robust, living, and personal faith, the sacred actions of the priest are just empty rituals. Faith is the foundation upon which the entire edifice of the priesthood is built.



SPIRITUAL FUEL: THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

The Letter to the Hebrews gives us the classic definition of faith: "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). Faith is the "evidence" that allows us to perceive the spiritual reality that lies behind the veil of the material world.

This week, I invite you to become more aware of this evidence. Take 15 minutes to prayerfully reflect on the following:

- When was a time you felt God's presence, even if you couldn't explain it?
- When was a prayer answered, perhaps not in the way you expected, but in a way that you knew could only have come from Him?
- When have you experienced peace or strength in a difficult situation that was beyond your own capacity?

These are the "footprints" of God in your life. Recognizing them strengthens your faith and assures you that He is always at work.



PRACTICAL DISCERNMENT: THE DAILY ACT OF FAITH

To grow in any virtue, we must practice it. This week, I challenge you to make the Act of Faith a part of your daily prayer routine. Pray it once when you wake up and once before you sleep.

"O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins, and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived."

This simple prayer is a powerful anchor. It consciously re-orientes your mind and heart toward God, reminding you of what is ultimately true, even when the world tries to tell you otherwise.

A SAINT FOR YOUR JOURNEY: ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

If you have ever struggled with doubt, you are in excellent company. St. Thomas, often called "Doubting Thomas," is the perfect patron for an honest, seeking faith. When the other Apostles told him they had seen the Risen Lord, he didn't just blindly accept it. He said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Jesus did not rebuke him for his demand for evidence. He met him there. He invited Thomas to touch his wounds, leading to the most profound profession of faith in the Gospels: "My Lord and my God!" St. Thomas teaches us that God is not afraid of our honest questions. He desires to give us the solid evidence we need to believe.

Yours in Christ,

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CLOSING THOUGHTS

Faith is a gift, but it is also a choice we must make every day. Choose to believe. Choose to trust. Choose to build your life on the solid rock of Christ's promises.

I am praying that your faith may be strengthened and renewed this week. Please know I am here to walk with you.