



***PRESENTATION TO  
FIRE FIRE  
CONFERENCE 2023***

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## Fire Fire Conference 2023

*"But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?"  
(Luke 18:8)*

Beloved in the Lord, blessings on this Pentecost weekend. I rejoice in the opportunity to share some thoughts with you on the verse from Luke 18:8 "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?"

(A brief prayer of anointing)

*In stillness and in silence deep as night,  
be my soul before you, Holy Spirit.  
Come down upon each of us, soft as the starlight;  
close around me, closer than my breath;  
refresh me and renew me,  
as dew-fall and rain-fall renew the earth. Stay with me Lord throughout this  
day And as at the dawning of a new day,  
be you an even brighter sunburst  
in my soul.  
Amen.*

To properly understand Jesus' reference to faith in this instance we must reflect on the context in which it was spoken. The passage from which this verse is taken in Luke 18 is about prayer and the need to pray earnestly, consistently, sincerely, and perseveringly. In it, Jesus tells us that our prayers will be heard, and justice received speedily; Luke 18:8. As always, however, Jesus uses this opportunity to teach us something important. It is that in his Divine Love and Providence he would always hear our prayers and answer them, but it is faith, not answered prayers, that would lead us to the communion with Him that is our salvation and redemption. "If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:9-11 ). In other words what we say with our mouths in prayer must reflect what is in our hearts through faith. There is an essential relationship between God's response to our prayers and the nurturing and maturing of our faith and relationship with Him. Prayer is about relationship with God, and in that relationship, faith is nurtured and matured. But more importantly, prayer is also about continued conversion in our relationship with God (CCC 1434).

So, if we are to talk about faith we must first talk about prayer in the context of a personal conversion to faith in God. Our relationship with God is perfected through our faith in Him. This faith calls us to a radical love for the One who first loves us. Jesus is asking "but will the world believe in me (have faith) even if I answered all their prayers?" Prayer, in this sense, is relationship building, the consequence of which is faith in God.

Jesus is effectively saying "What I want is faith because it is your faith that would save you." What is important and lifegiving is God Himself in Jesus Christ, not the temporary things he can give you, but eternal life through your faith in Him. When Jesus asks if he would find any faith on earth, he is saying those who have all that they want, think they have no need for God. It is in the most prosperous parts of the world that people are losing their faith. It is

in the self-satisfied cultures that people imagine they have no need for God or religion, and even if they do, their God is self-defined to meet their needs. Which means they have little or no faith.

What is faith? “By faith man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer ... (this is called) ... ‘the obedience of faith’ (CCC 143). In the scriptures, Abraham is the model of such obedience, and the Blessed Virgin is its most perfect embodiment “Let it be done to me according to thy word.” (Luke 1 :37-38)

Faith is believing in God alone. It is a personal adherence of the person to God. It is an assent to the whole truth that God has revealed and differs from putting our faith in any human person. It is entrusting oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature.

Because of humanity’s rapid advancements and achievements, many persons and societies have begun to put their faith in men and women’s abilities and intellect and push the notion of God and religion to the periphery of life here on earth. The flourishing of human minds and creativity as wonderful as they are, remain only temporal realities with temporary, earthly outcomes if they are not infused with the life of the Spirit and oriented towards God’s Kingdom. Faith and reason are not at odds with each other. When the human intellect reaches its limits, it is faith that takes us into the transcendent.

I wish here to briefly state the Characteristics of Faith:

Faith is a grace which means ‘*Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him*’ ( CCC 153 ). When Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus declared, “it is not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16: 17).

Faith is a human act but only possible by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. 'No one says "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). 'Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace' (St. Thomas Aquinas) (CCC 155). Again, regarding Faith and Understanding, what moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible by the light of natural reason, but because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived himself because he is Truth. So that our faith may be in accordance with Reason there are many external Proofs of God's Revelation that work along with the internal graces of the Holy Spirit e.g., miracles, prophecies, the saints, the church's growth in holiness, stability etc. The assent of Faith is by no means a blind impulse of the mind (CCC 156). In view of the history of Christianity, it is in fact far more unreasonable to not believe than it is to have faith.

Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. Revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but the certainty that the Divine Light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives' (St. Thomas Aquinas).

Faith seeks understanding. The Holy spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that revelation may be more and more profoundly understood. The consent of faith is what opens the door to understanding what in fact I already believe, not the other way around. In other words, I cannot expect to have full knowledge and understanding in order to believe, as in a scientific observation, because believing (faith) is what opens the way to spiritual knowledge and understanding of what cannot be observed by the senses. Ultimately then, a life of prayer, worship and the sacraments is absolutely necessary for us to grow in relationship and communion with God in Jesus Christ from which we will receive the gift of true faith.

My dear friends it would be remiss of me not to share a few thoughts on the action of the Holy Spirit regarding faith on this

Pentecost weekend. One cannot have faith and believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to humans who Jesus is. 'No one can say "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 12:3) who 'searches everything, even the depths of God ...'

The Christian's spiritual life is precisely that- 'spiritual'; that is to say, a life lived in the Spirit, who has made a home in us (Romans 8:9). It is this Holy Spirit living in us and in whom we live through Baptism who enables us to call God our Father (Romans 8:15), to proclaim 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Corinthians 12:3), put an end to the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8: 13) and prays within us when we do not know how to pray (Romans 8 :26).

Christ our Lord, the Son of God, was as man, led by the Spirit of God. It was by the Spirit that he was led into the wilderness to be tempted (Matthew 4: 1 ), that he cast out the powers of evil (Matthew 12:28), that he spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4: 14-18) and that he chose his Apostles (Acts 1 :2). What is true of Jesus is true of all God's children. St. Paul tells us 'They who are children of God, are led by the Spirit of God' (Romans 8:14). This means two things:

(1) that we, who have been adopted by God as his children, have the right to call upon the Holy Spirit to come to us, to lead us, to enlighten us, to teach us, to love us, and to give us the gift of faith.

(2) that being children of God, we have the duty and the responsibility to show in our lives the gift of faith we have received and the Holy Spirit being our Guide.

My dear friends it is by exercising our faith through the grace of the Holy Spirit that it in fact grows, matures, and expands into something beyond our imagining. Let the Lord look no further than your heart to find the faith he comes in search of. To God be the glory in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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