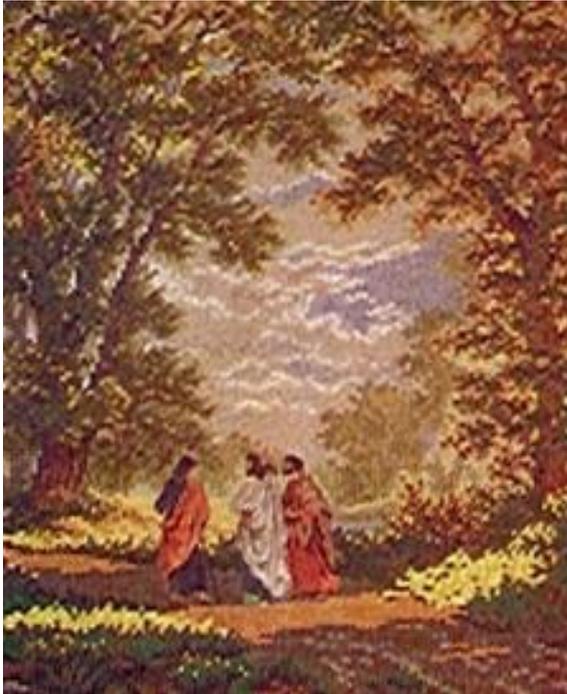


What Does It Mean?



To Lose Faith?

“On whom can I rely? To whom shall I entrust myself? Where is the One who can offer me the response capable of satisfying my heart’s deepest desires?” Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day, Cologne, 2005.

Compiled by Fr. Martin Pitstick, 11/11/2010.

Will Many Be Saved?

Reflect for a moment on the answer Jesus gave to this question:

"And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!' There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out." Luke 13:23-28

*"O my soul, created to enjoy such exquisite gifts,
what are you doing, where is your life going?
How wretched is the blindness of Adam's children,
if indeed we are blind to such a brilliant light
and deaf to so insistent a voice."*

Saint John of the Cross, A Spiritual Canticle

Can We Lose Our Faith?

The following is an excerpt from *Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), Peter J. Kreeft, 29-31 (Bold emphasis added).



“Losing your faith”

No one “loses” his faith, as he loses his watch. Faith is never lost against our will, any more than it is chosen against our will. We choose to believe, and we choose not to believe.

Some of the main causes for the choice not to believe are the following (see CCC 29):

[*Catholic Christianity* excerpt continues on next 2 pages]

Challenges to Faith [Faith's Answers found on opposite page]

1. **Revolt** against evil in the world and against the God who does not act as we think he should to defeat evil as quickly as we would wish;
2. **Ignorance** or misunderstanding of the faith;
3. **Indifference** or laziness;
4. The **cares of the world**, “having no time for religion” (that is, *making* no time for God);
5. **Greed** for riches and the things money can buy, serving “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom 1:25);
6. The **scandal** of bad example on the part of believers;
7. The **unfashionableness** of religion in a secular society;
8. The **refusal to repent** and give up some cherished sin;
9. **Fear of the unknown**, fear of letting go and giving God a “blank check”; fear of trusting him;
10. **Fear of suffering** rejection or reprisals from family, friends, or secular authorities;
11. **Pride**, the demand to “play God”, to be in control, to have our own way;
12. The **difficulty in trusting** God as Father if we have experienced broken families and absent or unloving human fathers.

But all these “reasons” not to believe can be answered.

Faith's Answers [slightly abbreviated from original text]

1. Faith's one-word answer to the problem of evil is: Wait. God will conquer all evil, in time, in the end. But we have to go through the middle of the story to get to the end.
2. A (good) book or the *Catechism* or a wise and good priest can usually clear up misunderstandings.
3. If we knew God as his closest friends, the saints, do, we could never be bored or indifferent to him. If we are bored with Catholic theology, morality, or liturgy... we do not realize that they are the truth about God, the good will of God, and the celebration of the presence of God.
4. If it is foolish to refuse to give up ten dollars to win a million, it is even more foolish to refuse to give up a little time to win eternity.
5. Everything we seek, desire, love, and enjoy in this world, the things we hope money can buy – pleasure, beauty, freedom, power, peace, excitement, happiness – is to be found in God, multiplied to infinity. As St. Augustine says, “Seek what you seek, but it is not where you seek it.”
6. Do we refuse to love because there are some bad lovers? Do we refuse to marry because there are some bad husbands and wives?
7. If you must choose between the two, which is better: to be accepted by God forever and be rejected by some men for a little time, or to be accepted by some men for a little time but rejected by God forever?
8. We are all sinners, sin addicts, sinaholics. We all find it hard to give up cherished sins, even after we believe. But the question is not whether we can, but whether we will, whether we are willing to let God do it in us. We cannot, but he can and will if we let him. And all who have say the same thing: it is joyful liberation, like being freed from a drug habit.
9. Being born, falling in love, marrying, or traveling to a new place are all experiences of the unknown. The greatest joys come from letting go.
10. Jesus promised us: “Every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Mt 19:29).
11. Pride was the first sin, the sin of Satan, who resented being Number Two to God. He would not obey God's will, only his own. (“Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven” – Milton.) This is also a selfish, spoiled baby's philosophy of life: “I want what I want when I want it.”
12. Where there is no faith and trust there can be no joy. We do not know whether our trust will be disappointed again, by God, as it was by man. But we do know that our only hope, our only chance at joy, on earth and in heaven forever, is to trust and to love. If our trust is betrayed by men, that is all the more reason to trust God. It is not reasonable to refuse the only lifeboat that can save us when all the other boats have sunk.

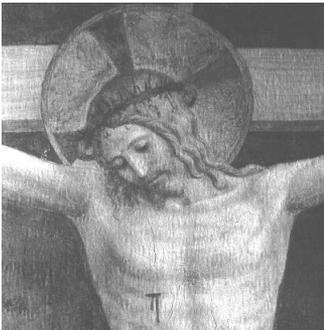
Faith and Christ

[*Catholic Christianity* excerpt continued]

The Catholic faith has one answer, ultimately, to all twelve of these problems; in fact, one answer to all problems: Jesus Christ, the one answer God provided. “God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19)

Every Catholic home and every Catholic believer should have a crucifix. For the answer to all doubts, temptations, and trials is there (in the reality it pictures, not just in the picture of it). For instance, the problem of suffering and injustice. God’s answer is not an explanation but a deed: he did not hover above it like a bird, but came down and shared it as a man, as a victim. Instead of telling us why not to weep, he wept with us (Jn 11:12). Christ is God’s tears. And Christ is the conqueror of tears – and of death.

[end of *Catholic Christianity* excerpt]



“Commit yourselves without reserve to serving Christ, whatever the cost. The encounter with Jesus Christ will allow you to experience in your hearts the joy of his living and life-giving presence, and enable you to bear witness to it before others.”

Pope Benedict XVI,
World Youth Day, Cologne, 2005

“If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation” (Homily of Pope Benedict XVI, April 24, 2005).

Faith, however, must be lived out – for, “what good is it... if someone says he has faith but does not have works?” (James 2:14) True faith is accompanied by the “labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1Thes. 1:3) Faith is nourished by the liturgical life of the Church, by daily prayer and reading of God’s Word. It is expressed in charity, in the context of a moral life that draws its hope from Christ.

Open Wide Your Heart to God!

Pope Benedict XVI speaking at World Youth day in Cologne, in 2005, invited the youth to open their hearts completely to God:

"Open wide your hearts to God! Let yourselves be surprised by Christ! ... Open the doors of your freedom to his merciful love! Share your joys and pains with Christ, and let him enlighten your minds with his light and touch your hearts with his grace."



No matter what our situation, Jesus wants to come into our hearts in a deeper way. He wants to share with us his love and forgiveness. He wants to heal us and make us whole - to give us new hope.

The tragic reality of our world however, is that many don't take the time to think about God or to respond to his saving gift of love to us.

Conversation of the Merciful God with a Despairing Soul [An Excerpt from Saint Faustina's Diary]

Jesus: O soul steeped in darkness, do not despair. All is not yet lost. Come and confide in your God, who is love and mercy.

But the soul, deaf even to this appeal, wraps itself in darkness.

Jesus: My child, listen to the voice of your merciful Father.

In the soul arises this reply: "For me there is no mercy," *and it falls into greater darkness, a despair which is a foretaste of hell and makes it unable to draw near to God.*

Jesus calls to the soul a third time, but the soul remains deaf and blind, hardened and despairing. Then the mercy of God begins to exert itself, and, without any co-operation from the soul, God grants it final grace. If this too is spurned, God will leave the soul in this self-chosen disposition for eternity. This grace emerges from the merciful Heart of Jesus and gives the soul a special light by means of which the soul begins to understand God's effort; but conversion depends on its own will. The soul knows that this, for her, is final grace and, should it show even a flicker of good will, the mercy of God will accomplish the rest: My omnipotent mercy is active here. Happy the soul that takes advantage of this grace.

Jesus: What joy fills My Heart when you return to me. Because you are weak, I take you in My arms and carry you to the home of My Father.

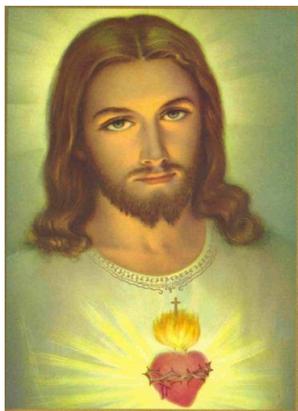
Soul (as if awaking, asks fearfully): Is it possible that there yet is mercy for me?

Jesus: There is, My child. You have a special claim on My mercy. Let it act in your poor soul; let the rays of grace enter your soul; they bring with them light, warmth, and life.

Soul: But fear fills me at the thought of my sins, and this terrible fear moves me to doubt Your goodness.

Jesus: My child, all your *sins* have not wounded My Heart as painfully as your present lack of trust does—that after so many efforts of My love and mercy, you should still doubt My goodness.

Soul: O Lord, save me yourself, for I perish. Be my Savior. O Lord, I am unable to say anything more; my pitiful heart is torn asunder; but You, O Lord...



Jesus does not let the soul finish but, raising it from the ground, from the depths of its misery, he leads it into the recesses of His Heart where all its sins disappear instantly, consumed by the flames of love.

Jesus: Here, soul, are all the treasures of My Heart. Take everything you need from it.

Jesus, I place all my trust in You!

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