

As Christians, faith is the very foundation of our lives. We live by faith.

Saint Paul tells us, “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”

These are really just two different ways to say the same thing. By saying that “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for.” we are saying that we trust that God will fulfill His promises. We know this for a certainty, even though they have not yet been fulfilled.

“Evidence of things not seen,” means that with faith we have a kind of supernatural knowledge. We know with certainty that all of the things God has revealed to us are true.

We, of course, did not see Jesus rise from the dead with our own eyes. But we still believe, in fact we know, that He is indeed risen.

We cannot see with our own eyes the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. But we know that they are there under the appearance of bread and wine, because we see with the eyes of faith.

“Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe.”

The essence of faith is to accept something as true, not because we see it, hear it, or touch it, but because the person who tells us is trustworthy.

Think about that for a moment. How do we anything to be true? We know that the sun does not actually rise and set as it appears to. We know that, rather, the earth is spinning around the sun and this gives

the appearance that the sun is moving. We know this to be true because we were taught by someone we deemed to be trustworthy.

The Church that teaches us that Jesus rose from the dead, and is truly present in the Eucharist, is trustworthy.

How do we know the Church is trustworthy? Because it has existed for two thousand years. Empires have risen and fallen in that time.

Societies have grown and evolved in that time. Technology has sent us to the moon and back in that time. The Church has weathered two thousand years of storms, world wars, and cultural upheavals. But it continues to teach the same doctrine that it did at the beginning.

We, the Church, continue to celebrate the same sacraments, and we continue to give saints to this world that is in such desperate need of them.

This faith, this “evidence of things not seen” with our senses, is one of God's greatest gifts to us. So let us look at our faith a little more closely so that we truly appreciate this gift.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus tells us what it means to live by faith.

Imagine a large, wealthy family estate, perhaps one of the family vineyards in the Napa valley. It has over 20 thousand square feet of living space, spread out over several buildings. There is the main house, a guest house, a caretakers home, a 20 car garage and a workshop. It sits high on a bluff with magnificent views of the vineyard and the

Napa Valley. The property is surrounded by 220 beautifully landscaped acres and includes the vineyards, gardens, and anything else you can imagine.

A large family lives there, five or six siblings, mom, and one or two grandparents.

The father died sometime ago and now the estate is being run by the oldest son, with the help of maids, chefs, gardeners, landscapers, maintenance people, and of course people to work the vineyard and make the wine. An estate that large requires a manager, someone who has probably been with the family for many years, maybe even generations.

The older son is engaged to be married and the bride's family has rented out the largest, most luxurious wedding venue in the nearby town. When the wedding day comes the son and his siblings head to town for the grand ceremony.

Now imagine all that taking place in a time before smartphones, computers, cars, or even well paved roads. In the time of Jesus people worked pretty much 7 days a week and a wedding was a welcome break in the routine. The music, dancing and feasting could last an entire week.

Meanwhile, back at the estate the manager and the household staff are eagerly waiting for the master's return. After the wedding and the celebration that follows, he will bring his new bride home. Everything

is prepared and ready but they don't know exactly what time the master will be back and so they have to stay ready. The manager especially has to work hard because he is coordinating everything. The family has been good to him and so he wants everything to be perfect for the master and his new bride.

The manager and the staff have faith that the master will return because he told them he would. They know the master and they know he is trustworthy.

As Christians, Christ is our Master. We believe in Him and we trust in His promises. We have faith that He will fulfill all of them. In the meantime, we continue to carry out the work and our everyday responsibilities that He has entrusted to us.

That is what it means to live by faith.

When our faith is strong we are able to weather difficult times.

Our first reading was from the Book of Wisdom. It was written about 50 years before the coming of Christ. Its primary purpose was to encourage and teach people who were being persecuted, often by their fellow Jews. The author reminded them of the glorious things the Lord had done for them in delivering them from Egypt.

Abraham also faced many difficulties, but he faced them WITH GOD, leaning on Him, and not depending on his own strength. As a result he grew steadily in wisdom and holiness, and God was able to advance His plan of salvation through Abraham.

And God continues to work on His plan of salvation to this day, through each one of us, if we have faith. We are called to follow God no matter what, no matter how difficult things get for us, no matter how bleak the outlook. If we have faith, and follow the Lord, He will do wonderful things for us and through us.

But for this to happen we need a strong and mature faith. That does not mean we give up our reason, but it does mean we need to exercise our faith and strengthen it, as we would a muscle.

We need to nourish our faith by prayer and reception of the sacraments. We need to exercise our faith with small, spontaneous, acts of faith, simple prayers everyday in the quiet of our hearts.

When we see a sunset so beautiful that it makes our heart ache, let us say a quiet prayer of “thanks be to God.”

When we visit a loved one who is sick or dying say, pray that God not abandon this person but give them strength to endure.

When we experience life's sorrows or disappointment remember the words of Job, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not receive evil?” Pray that God teach us how to suffer with faith for Him as He suffered for us.

Saint John Paul II said that there are no coincidences, only Divine Providence. When we experience life's joys, great and small, remember that it is just a hint of God's love for us.

When we get that perfect parking spot near the front, in the shade, thank the Heavenly Father for the small favors as well as the large ones and ask Him to teach us how to love more deeply.

When we practice our faith it grows stronger. Every day God provides us with opportunities to say in our hearts, “Lord I believe in you, teach me to follow you.”

Our Lord died on the cross and rose again to convince us that He is worthy of our trust, worthy of our faith. Let us give Him the joy of finding real faith in our hearts, today, tomorrow, and the day after that, and all the days that follow. So that He knows, and we know, that His sacrifice was not made in vain.