



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: The Fullness of Faith



Eucharist Public Domain

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support and catechesis for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of discernment and study to become lay Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Presentation:

There are many who comment that they decided to leave the church because of this reason or that. Some typical examples are because they cannot understand the accent of the priest or that the homily isn't interesting, meaningful, or inspiring. Others say the music or something else is not entertaining enough. There are also those who call themselves Catholic, but for many of the same reasons, they do not seek to receive the fullness of faith which we are offered through the church. Some complain they are not fed by the mass or that they cannot devote time to it because of other things in their lives. The bottom line of whatever excuse offered seems to be

related to something of the effect – going to mass, spending time in prayer, or engaging in the study of His Word just isn't a good use for my time.

Sadly, there was a day that I could be counted in that group. I looked at mass as an obligation rather than an opportunity. Going to mass was Ok, just as long as it did not take too much time. I had things to do, football games to watch, places to go, or people to see. There were days that I just didn't want to get out of bed. Mass was either too early or too late to fit in my day. I joined in the criticism offered by others that because of this or that, I was not inspired or entertained enough. After I became Catholic, I didn't contemplate that there might be a reason for me to leave the faith, but I didn't reach out to its **fullness** either.

I'm glad I became Catholic, but in my earlier years, I must confess, it was a very compartmentalized part of my life and there was such a long list of excuses I could tap as to why we should skip the mass. Oh, and as we approached Holy Week and the mass times lengthened and the number of activities increased – oh my, what an imposition.

What my attitude really revealed is that I was simply going through the motions and I did not have an understanding of the opportunity before me to experience the **fullness of faith** offered to us through the church Christ built upon Peter. The mass is a central component of our faith, but, as I continue to discover more and more about Catholicism, I realize I have been missing out on so much because I focused more on the world than on what God has given to me.

So, let's talk a moment about what the **fullness of faith** means. **Fullness** implies a completeness. If we take away a part, we no longer have a whole. As I have faced criticisms against our **faith**, something I have noted is that the denominations, those who have split off or refined their belief for one reason or another, seem to try to take away some aspect of what we refer to as the **fullness of faith**.

We are criticized for the way we pray or for those we ask to pray with us. We are criticized for our relationship with Mary and our respect for her as the woman, of all the women of His creation, whom the Heavenly Father chose to be the mother who would bring His holy Son into the world. We are criticized for asking Mary to be an advocate for us as if we are somehow placing her in competition with God. I have to ask the critics, do they not know to whom Mary prays on our behalf?

We are criticized for the art through which we remember and share the history of our **faith**; the art which depicts the people, stories, and traditions of our **faith** in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are criticized for the structure of the church and the magisterial responsibilities it has for the dogma and teaching of our **faith** as if the presence of the Magisterium of the Church fetters our faith rather than frees us from heresies and enables the **fullness** of our understanding. Of course, I could go on and on, but we only have what remains of this hour.

Let's take a moment to look at a few examples of what is contained in the deposit of our Faith.

- The canon of the Bible as well as the validation of its translations
- The Commandments of our Lord
- The Traditions (both big T and little t)

- The Creeds of faith
- The Catechism and the Magisterium (the teaching of what we believe)
- The Apostolic succession of the priesthood
- The liturgical calendar
- The liturgy
- The Liturgy of the Hours
- The Sacraments
- Our relationship with Mary and the communion of saints
- The rosary and other prayers
- The art of our faith
- Religious orders
- The Mass
- The body of Christ
- **And what should be most close to our hearts, the real presence of Christ**

Of course there is more, but the key point I would like to make is that we cannot know the **fullness of faith** if we do not study and spend time with it. If we are to understand the **fullness** of His love, then, we must seek to know Him and all which He has poured out to us through His angels, His prophets, His only begotten Son, the Virgin Mother, and all which Jesus established upon Peter. The more we know of God and what He asks of us, the more we know of His love, the more we know of the purpose for which He created us, the more we know of His truth, then, the more we have the opportunity to receive the **fullness** of all which He offers. The question, then, is why would we allow anyone to take any part of it away from us, but more importantly, why would we allow ourselves to deny us the fullness of faith?

Before we ask ourselves this question, let us first consider some scripture:

[Jesus said:] 24 “Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. 26 And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined.”
(Matthew 7:24-27)

(Question: In these words, Jesus teaches us about the need for a firm foundation of faith. Implied in the function of a foundation is that it is both **firm and complete**. The use of the analogy of sand, which is easily eroded, implies that as we are buffeted by the trials of the day or opinions of others, we may be tempted to let go of the **fullness of our faith**. In what ways do we face the buffeting of our **faith**? In what ways may we seek the **firm foundation** so our **faith** is not lost to the world?)

9 For we know partially and we prophesy partially, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. 12 At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I

shall know fully, as I am fully known. 13 So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:9-13)

(**Question:** If we are to know the **fullness of faith**, then, we must also seek to understand the **fullness** of God. Of all He teaches, love is the basis of all the prophecy and all the law. Matthew 22:40. In what ways do we seek to experience the **fullness of the love of God?**)

Catechism:

(CCC: 5) “Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the **fullness of Christian life.**”

(**Question:** Notice that in this statement of the Catechism of the Catholic Church that, “Catechesis is an education in the **faith** of children, young people, and adults. Too often, Catholics look upon the sacrament of Confirmation as a graduation of sorts – that after this sacrament, no further education is required – but learning about God and His holy Word is a life long journey. The question for those who go no further in their Catechesis, then, is are we robbing ourselves of the **fullness of faith** by not seeking continuing education in the **faith**? Of course, for the listeners of our show, we are preaching to the choir, so to speak, in asking this question, because by your listening, you have an opportunity to learn – so, perhaps, for those of us who do continue in our learning, we might ask: How do we encourage others to continue in their learning and therefore, increase in the **fullness of faith**?)

(CCC: 185) Whoever says “I believe” says “I pledge myself to what we believe.” **Communion in faith** needs a common language of **faith**, normative for all and uniting all in the same confession of **faith**.

(**Question:** It is partially by our unity in faith that we may share in the **fullness of faith**. Obviously, the evil one seeks to sow division so that we are distracted in our relationship with God and the relationship He desires we should have with one another. It is the nature of our being to be inquisitive and to analyze, but what is our analysis if we do not find the path God seeks for us to find, which is the path to Him? So let me ask, what benefit do we derive from a common understanding of our faith?)

(CCC: 186) From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed and handed on her **faith** in brief formulae for all. But already early on, the Church also wanted to gather the essential elements of its faith into organic and articulated summaries, intended especially for candidates for Baptism:

This synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. And just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith

encompassed in a few words the **whole** knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and New Testaments.

(**Question:** Our creeds provide a brief summary of our faith. When we recite the creed, we should also reflect upon what is found within it. How might we open the door to the fullness of faith by reflecting upon our common creeds?)

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

(CCC: 830) The word “catholic” means “universal,” in the sense of “according to the **totality**” or “in keeping with the **whole**.” The Church is catholic in a double sense: First, the Church is catholic because **Christ is present in her**. “Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church.” **In her subsists the fullness of Christ’s body** united with its head; this implies that she receives from him “the **fullness** of the means of salvation” which he has willed: correct and complete confession of **faith, full** sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession. The Church was, in this fundamental sense, catholic on the day of Pentecost and will always be so until the day of the Parousia.

(**Question:** We are the body of Christ. Christ is the head of the church He established upon Peter. (Matthew 16:18-19) **As we come together as Catholics, what is our opportunity to share in the fullness of faith?**)

(CCC: 844) In their religious behavior, however, men also display the limits and errors that disfigure the image of God in them:

Very often, deceived by the Evil One, men have become vain in their reasonings, and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and served the creature rather than the Creator. Or else, living and dying in this world without God, they are exposed to ultimate despair. To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the **Father willed to call the whole** of humanity together into his Son’s Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and **salvation**. The Church is “the world reconciled.” She is that bark which “in the full sail of the Lord’s cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world.” According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah’s ark, which alone saves from the flood.

Consider the following scripture:

For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will **stop listening to the truth** and will be diverted to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

(**Question:** The evil one does not care how we miss doing the will of God, only that we do. In what ways are we able to recognize the deceptions of the evil one? If we fall into a snare of the evil one, how might we free ourselves?)

Quotes:

"...since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity." --*Novo Millennio Inuente* — Pope John Paul II

"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for **fullness** that will not let you settle for **compromise**; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle.

It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal." — Pope John Paul II

"Courageously follow the path of personal holiness and diligently nourish yourselves with the word of God and the Eucharist. **The holier you are, the more you can contribute to building up the Church and society.**" — Pope John Paul II

Final Thoughts: The blessings of our church is that it brings to our lives the blessings of the **fullness of faith**. It not only teaches, but offers us the opportunity to put our faith into action; to grow deeper in our knowledge and love for our Creator as well as experience the love we may share with one another. We must make no mistake that the evil one will continue to scheme and plot in how he may separate us from God and sow divisions among the people so that we will not approach one another with the blessings of love, rather, that we shall fall to the temptations of selfishness which so easily opens the door to the deadly sins and all the evil such sins may bring.

As we examine the direction of our faith, we should begin with the question, do I understand what God asks of me? Do we understand that He has given us His church so that we might experience the **fullness of faith** in Him? As I mentioned, if we do not know our **faith**, we cannot experience the **fullness** which it offers. As we endeavor to grow within our **faith**, we should also ask whether we seek His church of **truth** or the church of "feel good?" The church of "feel good" may elevate our mood for a moment of time, but it is the church of **truth** which offers the **fullness of faith** and opens the door to Him and all the blessings of love which He offers. Let us, then, reflect upon what we seek and allow the **Holy Spirit** to lead us away from the evil day. Let us ask ourselves, will we deny ourselves the **fullness of faith** and the love of God, for we must recognize we can lose it only by our choice?

Wrap Up: So, once more our hour is up. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we discuss the important role of **parents to teach the blessings of faith to their children.**

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation,** and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Parents Teach Your Children