

# LESSON

## 1

# “I BELIEVE”

## BACKGROUND READING



### What Is Faith?

Faith is a gift from God, as well as our free response to believe what God tells us about Himself and about the world He made.

### Faith is a gift

If faith is a gift, how do we receive it? We first receive the gift of faith in the Sacrament of Baptism. The Sacraments are the chief means of receiving of God’s grace in our lives. Thus, whenever we properly receive the Sacraments, we receive an increase in our faith. We must also ask God, in prayer, to increase our faith. “The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” (Luke 17:5).

Faith is necessary for salvation. Jesus tells us many times, and the Catholic Church teaches that “Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation” (CCC 161).

Our faith can be increased, but it also can be lost. We are free to accept or to reject God. We can deny His presence through our fear or doubt, and we can choose to lose His presence by our own mortal sin. God is always calling us to Himself, but He never coerces us. We must

choose to believe in Him and we must live our lives according to His revealed truth.

### Faith is a theological virtue

There are three theological virtues – faith, hope, and love. They are called theological virtues because they come from and point us toward God. “Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself” (CCC 1814).

### Faith is certain

Unlike human beings who sin, or who fail despite their best intentions, God never sins or fails. For this reason, faith is *certain*. We can be surer of our faith in God than we can be in any human knowledge.

Our faith is not a blind leap, even though the truths that have been revealed to us are sometimes not clear to our human understanding. We believe because it is God who has revealed the truth to us. Scripture tells us: “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1).

Since all human beings can and will fail at one time or another, we would be foolish

to place all our trust in any human being. There is only One in whom we should completely trust – God. God can never fail. He alone is completely trustworthy and faithful.

### **Faith requires obedience**

Jesus told us that those who love Him keep His commandments, and it is true that the appropriate response to authentic faith is to obey. If by faith we believe that God is who He says He is, we must respond to that revelation with lives lived in obedience to the truth that He has revealed. St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, calls this “the obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5).

By faith “man freely commits his entire self to God.” For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God’s will (CCC 1814).

### **Faith means the body of truths we believe**

Faith also means the body of truths, revealed to us by God, which we believe.

These truths are summarized for us in creeds. The word creed comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe.”

Creeds, as summaries of our faith, gather together the essential truths that we profess and were originally used as teaching tools for those preparing for Baptism.

In the history of the Church, many professions of faith (creeds) were articulated in response to the different needs of each era. One creed, however, does not supersede or “overrule” another. Rather, each helps us to understand our Faith in a special and deeper way.

One creed has a special place in the life of the Church: the Apostles’ Creed. This creed was not written by the Apostles themselves, but is a faithful summary of their Faith. The Apostles’ Creed is used at Baptism and is the basis of the *Catechism’s* presentation of our profession of faith.