

“Believe in God” – Confirmation – Sunday, May 7, 2023

John 14:1-7

I am often asked to read today’s gospel text by families preparing for a loved one’s funeral. Jesus has just finished sharing his last supper with his closest friends. Before departing for the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus shares these words of promise and hope that he will return to take us to our eternal home. Just “believe in God, believe also in me.”

As we listen to excerpts from our confirmand’s faith statements, we will know they believe in God. Their families and this congregation have fulfilled the vows we made at their baptisms to raise and nurture them in the Christian faith. Today they are prepared to affirm their baptisms in the rite of confirmation.

ALAN LULL: “So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” James 2:17

I believe this Bible verse is trying to say that if you have faith but don’t do anything with it, what good is it? As you read the verses around James 2:17, you can see this. “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith, but do not have works? Can faith save you?” Faith without works is useless. We are God’s hands. We are what God uses to make a change in our world. If we believe but do not act, we are not truly believing. “If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says, ‘Go in peace, keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet do not supply their bodily needs, what is the goal of that?” If you say but not do, are you really helping anything?

I believe that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are everywhere all at once. God is always with us, and I think taking time out of our lives to praise him is important. When we need God,

he is there for us. Even in the smallest battles, God helps us. When I was being bullied by a kid in my school, God helped me through it.

My faith has changed in many ways over the years. As I learned more, I believed more. As I learned about Jesus, I realized how his sacrifice affects me, even today. I know that all of my sins are forgiven, even if I don't realize it, like if I am disrespectful.

When I received my Bible in second grade, I would flip through it to find my favorite stories. Every time, I would find a new one and learn more. In fourth or fifth grade, I took on the challenge of reading the whole book of Mark. Over those weeks, I learned so much. That made me realize how big the Bible is and how little I know. I learned about Judas' betrayal of Jesus and many other things.

My faith helps me in ways I didn't think it would. God is always with me. Even in the smallest, non-important battles, he was there for me. It made me realize how important I am to God and how much he loves me. I believe the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Supper are meant to remind us of who we are. God created us all in his image. I also think they are meant to keep us humble and kind and remind us of who God wants us to be.

JACOB REGOVICH: "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and work for His pleasure." Philippians 2:15 Throughout my life I have played many sports so this verse means a lot to me because believing in God can help you through sports and life. This verse makes me think of when I'm getting ready for a wrestling match or before a soccer game to not be nervous. If you have God on your side and know that he has a plan for all things. Supportive teammates and family are a very important part of sports and God is just as important.

Faith is the belief in God and what he has done for everybody and the faith in the Holy Spirit. A lot of people's faith in life changes and it can change from a lot of things. When I was younger and in Sunday School, I didn't pay attention to much of what was being taught. I was just having fun in class. But as I started to get older, I realized what was being taught and picked up on more things that are being said. I started to listen more to what's going on and think about it more. It is important to build a strong connection with God because it helps you feel closer to him. God holds a lot of power and can do great things for you and guide you throughout your lifetime.

Taking sermon notes on Sunday helps give you life lessons and think about what you do in life and what other people do. It helps tie a bunch of things together and have a deeper meaning. Remembering little things help build your knowledge about God and the Bible itself. Becoming closer to Jesus helps build my faith more and more.

Faith helps me because it gives me guidance. If I ever need help I can always rely on God because he will always be there for me no matter what and I can ask him questions. I can always talk to God no matter the time or where I'm at, he will always be there. Having a strong connection with God means I can always rely on him.

Having a strong connection with God is amazing and can do many things for you and it is important to keep growing the connection with God. I hope that my faith with God grows and continues to grow everyday through my life as a Christian.

JOSEPH PARSONS: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 6:12

I have picked this verse because I sympathize with it too well. My faith is strange. When I joined Sunday School, I didn't even have faith. You expect a newborn to have faith? I thought God didn't do anything just lazed about in heaven.

Sunday School taught me that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are like three people who take shifts helping humanity. When it's the Holy Spirit's shift, it's about guiding people through hard times. Jesus is the guy who helps humans understand one another and God. God is not micro-managing, altering the Rube-Goldberg machine of Creation mid-activation. Instead, God tries to keep people from temptation and to help them show restraint.

Baptism is like a train ticket. You don't have to use it, but if you do, it can take you where you need to go. The Ten Commandments are the guidelines in life. This doesn't mean no one ever breaks them. It only means we should follow them to the best of our ability. The Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed are like the Pledge of Allegiance of the United State to me: important, but recited a lot. When we say them over and over without paying attention, they start to lose their meaning. But when we pay attention to the words, they can help guide us.

PEYTON CLEVINGER: "Let all those who seek you, Rejoice and be glad in you; And let those who love your salvation say continually, "Let God be magnified". Psalm 70:4

What this verse means for me is that you and others that do seek God rejoice and be glad that you do so. One of the sermon notes that I do tend to remember is that you have to be close with God forever, because if you aren't close with him then you won't be able to get into Heaven, and that you'd sin a lot and you'll be in a foxhole.

My faith has grown while attending Divinity. Sunday School has shown me a lot more and has given me insight of what my faith brings. My faith helps me get through some tough times that have come as of late. The faith that I have has helped me understand the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Without Baptism I wouldn't have become a child of God.

JACK BOSWELL: Going up against adversity can be very tough and frustrating. Sadly, a lot of people in this world try to bring you down. They don't want to see you succeed and love when you fail. It is important to block out this "Hate" and if you don't, it may be hard to succeed in whatever you are trying to do. Although it may not be easy to block out the hate it needs to be done. With the help and strength of God within you it is a lot easier to block out the hate. Before I grew my faith and trust in God, I would let everyone get into my head. God acts as a shield against the hate and allows you to focus on what you are trying to succeed in. Since growing in trust in God almost no one gets in my head and brings me down anymore. God is more powerful than anything in this world. If I am ever feeling tired, God lifts me up. The Holy Spirit keeps God and I tied together. Jesus allows me to be forgiven for all of my sins. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for all of us people and that should not be taken for granted. I feel like we have all taken it for granted at some points in our lives and we need to do better. Another way we can be better, is keeping the 10 commandments in mind at all times. You should always be trying to not break any of the commandments. People don't realize how much God guides and strengthens you. He is with you at all times. You should always give him credit for your success and achievements in life because without him you would not succeed at all. A few years back I broke my collarbone playing football. The whole time it was healing I prayed to be able to play basketball that year. It ended up healing a week before the

first game that season. After this my faith with God grew a lot. Always remember to thank God for everything he does in your life and that he is always with you. Never lose faith and never stop believing!

CHANCE APATHY: “1Peter 5:6 “humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.” This bible verse has a special meaning to me because it reminds me to stay humble, not arrogant. When I hear this verse I think of me, my friends, and family. They all humble me and keep me modest. Sometimes when you get really good at something you don’t think you need practice for it, that is when God will humble you.

I always remember when I thought I was so good at baseball since I thought I didn’t need any more practice. I didn’t train for a month. My next game I struck out twice and got very humbled. God was with me in that moment, and he taught me to stay humble. I truly believe my faith in God has improved since I was younger. I became a better person and a more honest person. My faith helps me whenever I get nervous or when something Bad occurs. God guides me through all the obstacles I will face in my life.

MIA SUCHAN: The verse I chose is 1 John 4:19, “We love because he first loved us”. To me, this means we should choose to love each other over hatred. God created us and put us on earth for a reason. To laugh with our friends, to dance around with our family in the living room, but most importantly to love each other.

I believe that God is capable of anything. If you are in need of his help he will help you. He makes miracles happen. He created our world and created the creatures, plants and people in it all for us. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. He died on the cross so that we could be forgiven for our sins. We believe in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Jesus talks to us through the

gospel, the bible, and prayer. God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit keep us under one true faith and grace.

I started Sunday School in second grade. Before then I wasn't as close with God as I am now. I only prayed every once in a while, before dinner. I wanted to grow that relationship with God much stronger. I got my bible that year and I have continued to go to Sunday School and attend services to this day. Since then I have made my relationship with God strong and I'm glad I did.

Around six years ago my grandpa passed away. I was young enough where I didn't really know what death was. It finally hit me when me and my family were looking at his gravestone. I would see little signs from God that I believe were ways to tell me he was okay. I would see cardinals everywhere, which I believe to be loved ones coming to visit me. But I would also have dreams of him. In these dreams I would be crying while hugging him. And every time I had this dream he would always say, "I love you. I'm okay and happy. Tell your dad that too." Once he said these words I would get this sense of calm and love. All the sadness I felt had gone away. Ever since then I look for all the small signs from God that put me at peace.

Faith helps me when I need it most. It can either be when I am laying in bed after a long day at school or when I am happy running around outside. I could be down in my room and not happy with myself but then I will remember God made us perfect the way we are and nothing can change that.

Being baptized means you are getting blessed with God's word. This brings forgiveness of sins, eternal salvation, and redeems us from death and the devil. The Lord's supper was the

night which Judas betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ. The bread becomes his body and the wine becomes his blood. The Apostle's Creed is a prayer that states we believe God created us and that we believe in Jesus Christ. We can't believe in Jesus and God without the Holy Spirit. We also understand the stories shared of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Prayer is a prayer given to us by God to help us express our faith. With this prayer we get a better understanding of what we believe in. The Ten Commandments are a list of rules from God. We follow them to show our faith in him and our faith in our church.

One sermon that stuck out to me was the sermon titled "Foxhole Faith". When we get scared we tend to fall into our foxhole, a place where we can feel safe. But it's not comfortable in a cramped space like that. If we go to God we will live a happier life away from the danger. Sometimes I get sad and I fall down but we have God to lift us back up on our feet and help us start fresh. God is always there for us when we need it the most.

I am ready to get confirmed and have close faith with God. Thank you to all my confirmation teachers, Ms. Rachel, Mrs. Hearld, and Pastor Doug for teaching me all I know about God. And also thank you to my classmates, my friends and my family to help prepare me for this amazing journey with God. I can't wait to see my faith grow even more.

May the peace of God . . .

Hymn #532 Gather Us In