

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)
Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Session Six (Wed, 4 June 2003):

Faith

- The seeds of faith have been planted in us at birth. At the *human level*, we practise faith in our everyday lives. When our friends tell us something we don't see with our own eyes, we, nonetheless, believe and trust in them, taking what they claim to be true.
- We read from textbooks and watch films that tell us the world is round and we believe that it is so, though many of us have never actually seen it firsthand.
- At the *religious level*, it refers to our belief that there is a God who guards and guides us everyday of our lives.
- Faith is a gift from God that we develop. It is a sharpening of our spiritual sight. If we have no faith, we are spiritually blind and see things only at surface level.
- Because God is Truth, faith means submitting ourselves freely to His Word and believing in what He says although we do not see it with our own eyes.
- We have faith in the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Spirit), three persons in one God, although logically it is inconceivable for three persons to exist as one entity. We believe that with God, anything is possible.
- Faith is a gift and a grace from God. In Matthew 16: 17, Jesus asks His disciples who they think He is. Simon Peter answers:
 - "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." Jesus said to Him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father."
- Jesus explains here that faith is a gift from God the Father. This faith that God gives should be nurtured and manifested in us.
- Faith is also a human act. We use the other gifts and talents from God to nurture these seeds of faith. To build faith, we use our faculties of *intellect* (the gift of reason and intelligence) and *will* (the gift of free choice).
- Faith is complemented by understanding. This is why we read the bible to learn more and to know more about our God. Our God is a God of *truth* and *love*. That is why we have to know Him and to experience Him.
- Although we should use our gift of intelligence to learn more about God, we must remember that reason can only help us to a certain extent because God is beyond all human wisdom. He is a mystery to men. He extends beyond human intellect, reason and logic. We will never fully understand Him with our minds in this lifetime.
- Faith should not oppose science. We should not constantly search for empirical evidence to explain God. The greatest evidence that God exists is that we have the gift of life.
- Science should not make us atheistic (non-believers). We should not play "doubting Thomas". Thomas, a disciple of Jesus did not believe when his friends had told Him that Jesus was arisen. He told them that he would believe only if Jesus appeared physically in front of him. Jesus did so and said, "happy are those who do not see yet believe". This

reminds us that we should never seek to test God and to try and find proof or scientific evidence for His existence based on our own intellect and wisdom.

- God gives us freedom of faith. That is, He gives us the freewill to choose to believe in Him and to live in His love.
- Faith is not a feeling. It is not based on emotions or whether we “feel” the presence of God in our lives. Rather, it is a decision, a commitment to believe and love Him more each day despite how “distant” from Him we feel.
- Faith should be accompanied with good works. If I believe and love Jesus, I believe that what He teaches is true. If I believe in Jesus and believe in what He teaches, that I should live my life like Jesus lived His too.
- If God is love, I should be loving too. I must do good to others. By responding to the call of my neighbour, I answer to the call of God.
- Jesus said: “when you do these to the least of my brothers, you do it unto me”. When we love our neighbour, we love God
- Faith is necessary for salvation but God is merciful. People may not know, love or believe in Jesus but they may live a life of love. We believe that God will still grant them salvation in heaven. God and God alone knows who is worthy of His kingdom.