

A Personal Reflection of Faith

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by Scott Serota

I could start this article by questioning faith. I could start by posing the question of what faith is or means for all of us. The fact is that while each of us may continually question faith through our journey with Christ, we probably find no easy or universal answer. Faith means something different for every person who dares to take that step or that leap into it. It may be easier for some of us, but I find myself questioning whether it *should* be easy.

Faith is often viewed as absolute, concrete, and unshakable. However, that is not how it truly works in my experience. It is a world away from absolutes and far from a steadfast belief that is unquestionable. Faith shifts and questions arise, and they should both be seen as essential. A *faith journey* is one that each of us walks on our own with Christ. The Bible shows numerous instances in which this tandem journey is a relationship. As with any relationship, it takes work, and it is not always easy. It demonstrates moments that run the full emotional spectrum — those that are easy and those that are difficult because it is a personal experience that informs us and defines this relationship.

This does not mean that we must go it alone. Yes, there should be comfort in scripture and in the steadfastness of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, though, we also have spiritual leaders to shepherd us. We have a congregation that is there to support us as well. This is why the congregation renews its own baptismal covenant at every baptism and assuredly reinforces their commitment to help the candidate, much like a family united by faith in their shared commitment and connection.

I am deeply committed and deeply connected to my church and church family. I have become increasingly involved through various ministries, and each one fills me with joy, a sense of purpose, and satisfaction to show up for others.

On Fridays, I go online and lead the services of Evening Prayer and Compline for my parish and others who might be listening. It grounds me and connects me to everyone and everything as it unites us all for a brief amount of time in the chaos of the day. Being able to say those same prayers each week that have sustained us all gives me much comfort. They force me to be present, think about, and reflect upon the words spoken and the prayers offered. I am grateful to be able to speak each name and cause when I offer prayers and intercessions.

I once had a dean who decided to have a group study on The Lord's Prayer. I was the lone person who showed up. Although we touched on the prayer's content, we focused on how saying the same words each time we say this prayer allow us to reflect, think and feel deeply

about what we are truly saying and believing.

In my teenage years, as with many I'd imagine, sleeping late on Sunday held more allure than waking early for church. However, what made me leave the church was seeing people I knew and felt a familial connection with in the congregation simply saying this prayer by rote and without emotion. It was difficult to realize that some in the congregation attended out of habit rather than out of a connection to faith.

The parish I attend has a greeting that is recited before each service:

*No matter where you come from or where you are going,
No matter what you believe or what you doubt,
No matter what you feel or just don't feel today,
No matter whom you love,
You are welcome into this space
To be met by God
Who knows you by name,
Who knows your heart,
Who knows your mind,
And wants to have a relationship with you.*

Now that I am deeper in my faith journey this greeting has greater significance than it would have had when I was a sleepy teenager. There are days when you believe and other days when you are full of doubt; days when you feel connected and some days when you don't feel that connection. Beyond that, a deeper understanding can come with leaning into faith that God is ever-present in everyone and everything. There is a comfort in purpose and a joyfulness in possibility. There are dark days and there is the promise of a new day filled with opportunity and hope, even when it seems to be waning within us and draining from the world we see.

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Christ dwells within each of us and thus is ever-present. This presence allows each interaction to be holy and for Christ to be brought out into the world to others.

Take a moment to reflect on the world of possibility in every encounter, no matter how brief. As we have been changed by that eternal covenant, so can we change others. Even if we do not see the result of that interaction, you have the possibility to make a world of difference for someone else. To the world, you may be but one person. But, to one person, you may be the world.