

I BELIEVE IN GOD

by Jerry Johnson

In the coming months, we will examine the Apostles Creed, the prayer that expresses the basic beliefs that we adhere to as Catholic Christians. The very first words of that Creed are "I believe." The meaning of those two very important words really defines how the remainder of the prayer applies to our lives. When we say we believe *in* God, what do we really mean and how does this belief affect how we live? First of all, when we say we believe, we are implying a certain faith. The catechism describes faith in paragraph 26 as "man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life". In summary: we search, God reveals, we respond with faith. Our search is actually inspired by God to begin with. The catechism tells us that a desire for God is written on our heart; that we are created by and for God who never ceases to draw us to himself. In speaking to the Greeks at the Areopagus, St. Paul explains that God ordered all creation "so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him, and find him". (Acts 17: 27) To believe in God, we must first be seekers. Jesus himself said: "...seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you". (Matt 7:7) So as we seek, God

I believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
Creator of Heaven and
Earth...

↪ First Line of the Apostles Creed

reveals. He reveals himself, his purpose in creating us, the ultimate meaning of our lives. But, as the catechism goes on to describe in par. 30: "this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart," as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God." Seeking God takes a determined effort on our part. It is personal, but also requires the assistance of others. We aren't in this alone.

As we seek God, we then come to know him. He reveals himself to us in many and varied ways. St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, states that God can be clearly perceived in his creation. As human beings with an openness to truth and beauty, a sense of moral goodness and a longing for the infinite and happiness, the catechism explains that we discern signs of a spiritual soul within us which must have its origin in God. These reflections and observations can enable us to come to a certain knowledge of God, but they can only take us so far. To come to really know him personally and intimately, God wills to give us a deeper revelation of himself and the grace to recognize this revelation. We are led to live in communion with God and find the happiness we were created for. In the words of St. Augustine: "When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will

be complete".

We find this culmination and the fullness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ his son. Jesus is revealed to us primarily in the great "deposit of faith"; Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition as handed on and protected by the Magisterium of the Church. In the Church and the Sacraments, we enter into God's kingdom and come into the deep, personal relationship he desires to have with us. Jesus comes to us personally and intimately. We experience that communion with him as he sends his Holy Spirit to actually abide within us! This is our reason for existence, the fulfillment of our desires!

In order to enter into this relationship, this communion, we must respond to God's invitation with faith. "By faith, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, "the obedience of faith." " (CCC 143)

This is what it means to truly *believe in God*. We must give ourselves totally and without reservation to the God who reveals himself to us; the God who offers us his very life! We must offer our *fiat*, as Mary did. Yes Lord, let your will be done in our lives. If we truly do believe, how could we do any less!

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The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for. (CCC 27)

When he listens to the message of creation and to the voice of conscience, man can arrive at certainty about the existence of God, the cause and the end of everything. (CCC 46)

By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation.¹ Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 50)

By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life. (CCC 68)

Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith, the People of God as a whole never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply, and to live more fully from the gift of divine Revelation. (CCC 99)

By his Revelation, "the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company." The adequate response to this invitation is faith. (CCC 142)

Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. (CCC 179)

THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

1. Am I seeking God in my life? How?
2. How is God revealing himself to me personally?
3. Does my response to God show a true "belief"?

Sacred Scripture

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph 1:9,10)

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. (Rom 1:19,20)

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Heb 1:1,2)

No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. (John 1:18)

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith-- to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Rom 16:25-27)

For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.
Wisdom 13:5