

Faith – Part 2

~ Let us Live by the Grace of Faith ~

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► **The Rosary**

In 2011 Kyoto Diocese took up the theme 'Faith' so that Christians could examine their faith from within so that, by responding to the call of God with 'Genuine Faith', they could become 'True Believers'. This year I would like to consider the Rosary as a way of deepening our lives as witnesses to our faith.

The Rosary is a prayer which contains the full message of the Gospel in all its depth. Incidentally, this year marks the tenth anniversary of the promulgation by John-Paul II, on October 16, 2002, of his Apostolic Letter, "*Rosarium virginis mariae*" on the most holy Rosary. In that letter the pope proposed adding to the Rosary the 'Mysteries of Light', by which we meditate on significant events in Christ's public life from his baptism to his passion. We now pray the 'Joyful Mysteries' (mysteries of the incarnation) on Mondays and Saturdays, the 'Mysteries of Light' on Thursdays, the 'Sorrowful Mysteries' on Tuesdays and Fridays, and the 'Glorious Mysteries' on Wednesdays and Sundays.

In last year's New Year Pastoral Letter, in the form of eleven questions, I presented eleven functions of the 'Sense of Faith'. This Year I have tried to relate this sense of faith to the five meditations in each of the four sets of Mysteries of the Rosary. I think by praying the Rosary, whilst meditating one by one on each 'request for the Our Lady's intercession', we should be able to come up with very practical ways of living our faith.

The Rosary is not only a prayer of individual reflection, it is a prayer which can bring about a sense of being together with Mary for people around us who feel the need to pray because of things which happen in the family, society or the country, or which affect the whole of mankind. Because of this when we pray the Rosary with Mary, it becomes a prayer of solidarity with people who are suffering. This year, especially, let us offer the Rosary for, and in solidarity with, those who are suffering because of the Earthquake in Eastern Japan and the incident at the Fukushima Nuclear power station, for their help and recovery.

"I believed; therefore I have spoken." (2 Corinthians 4:13) ⁽¹⁾

1. **The Experience of Faith: Let's Tell People about Meeting with Christ.** **(A Personal Sense of Faith)**

Beginning with the joy to be found in the events surrounding the Incarnation, the 'Joyful Mysteries' are a meditation on the hidden life of Jesus. In the pages of the Gospel we meet with Christ who has become man. This is so that we can replicate that meeting with Christ in our meetings with the people around us.

Let us bear witness to our faith by saying 'Yes' to the call of God.

▷ The First Joyful Mystery: Mary Receives the Annunciation.

By faith Mary replied to the angel, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word' and believed what she had been told. We, too, can make clear our determination to live as God wishes by confessing our faith publically in speech. This is the starting point for evangelizing the individual believer.

Let us live as witnesses of the Lord's Resurrection

▷ The Second Glorious Mystery: Jesus Ascends into Heaven

The glorious mysteries, passing beyond the darkness of Christ's Passion, turn our hearts towards the glory of his Resurrection and Ascension. Let us hand on not so much the idealistic words of Jesus as share passionately the fact that the risen Christ is among us now, to be found tasting his real living presence amongst people, or in the events of daily life. Witnessing to faith in the Resurrection is putting that faith into action.

2. Prayer, the Word of God, a New Enthusiasm.

(A Discovering Sense of Faith)

Witnessing to Christ by Turning to the Son of God in a Spirit of Worship

▷ The Third Joyful Mystery: Mary Gives Birth to Jesus

The sense of faith is a feeling of discovering the will of God. When we prepare ourselves inwardly and turn seriously to Jesus, the Lord opens himself to our thoughts. In our prayer, or when we feel deeply the Word of God, we touch the reality of Christ and the emotion which springs from his is genuine. Because it is genuine it will likely be passed on to other people. Let each of us resolve to bear witness to a faith which is based on the experience of meeting with Christ.

Seeking out Jesus in our Daily Lives

▷ The Fifth Joyful Mystery: Mary Finds Jesus

When Joseph and Mary found the twelve year old Jesus in the Temple, they failed to understand what he said (Luke 2:50). The sense of faith is an ability to imagine which we use, 'when we perceive things which cannot be seen'. By this power of imagination 'signs' are recognized and mediated to us. If this sense is not used it becomes dulled and our faith lives become formalized. Let us meet the challenge of God's call with the 'new enthusiasm, or passion' spoken about in the 'New Evangelization'.

3. Deepening our trust in the Lord in ordinary events.

(A perceptive sense of faith)

The fact that people can 'know' the mystery of God on the basis of a personal relationship filled with love depends on their sense of faith. Rather than a knowledge of God which can sometimes be expressed in clear concepts, my preferred thoughts about God are intuitive ones which cannot be

expressed in words. When speaking about faith to other people, therefore, it is best communicated by speaking about my own life.

With a heart opened to believe in the Lord, let us deepen our faith in Jesus

▷ The Second Mystery of Light: Jesus First Sign at the Wedding-Feast in Cana
Mary noticed that, 'They have no wine'. When we look at the events around us with a spirit of faith and love we are able to meet with Christ who shows us the Will of God. Mary, trusting in her son, presents us with a model of obedience. When we, too, believe that all the things and events of this world have meaning, we acknowledge our own lives as among works of Christ that bring salvation. Placing our trust in Jesus, let us become instruments of salvation in our everyday lives.

**4. Through Him, with Him and in Him
(A Christological Sense of Faith)**

The final object of the sense of faith is the Triune God. The first model (yardstick) for the sense of faith is Jesus Christ. At its heart the Rosary is a prayer which places Christ at the centre.

Let us witness to the Gospel by responding to Jesus' invitation to sincere repentance.

▷ The Third Mystery of Light:

Jesus Announces the Coming of the Kingdom of God and Invites People to Repentance.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel, but for us believing the Gospel is accepting Jesus Christ. Sincere repentance is changing our way of thinking, adjusting our opinions, conversion of heart and a change the direction of our lives. Accepting the Gospel of Christ with heart and our whole being is the first step of bearing witness.

Let Us Pray for the grace of Dying with the Lord and Participating in His Resurrection

▷ The First Glorious Mystery: Jesus Rises from the Dead

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead." In order to participate in the resurrection, Paul aim was to shake off his old self and live a new life. "The Imitation of Christ" (*Imitatio Christi*) is to liken your new self to Christ and to take Christ as your model, in practical and concrete ways, in the in the midst of everyday life.

**5. From receiving the sacraments to living the sacraments
(A Sacramental sense of faith)**

In the seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, The Sacrament of Reconciliation, Marriage, Ordination, The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick) various saving graces of God are made present. But receiving a sacrament is not the end of the matter: we have to live those graces. The sense of faith prevents us from wasting these sacramental graces.

Thankful for the Grace of Baptism, Guided by the Holy Spirit, Let Us Live as Children of God

▷ The First Mystery of Light: Jesus Receives Baptism in the River Jordan.

Jesus, in order to show the love of the Father to all people as his brothers and sisters, received Baptism from John the Baptist. As Christians who have received Baptism and have known ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Corinthians 2:16) as His brothers and sisters, let us proclaim to all people the value and joy of living as children of God.

Mindful of the Look of Mercy Jesus bestowed on Peter,

Let us pray for the grace to turn away from sin.

▷ The Second Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus is scourged.

Jesus announced the coming of the Kingdom of God, called for repentance, and in humility and trust forgave the sins of all the people who came to Him. This is the work of mercy which Christ entrusted to the Church until the end of the world. Peter, who betrayed Jesus, was granted the power to give sins. Christians who receive the sacrament of reconciliation, and continue their way of life after repeatedly being raised up after sinning, witness to the world about the Church’s mission of forgiveness.

6. The Unity of Faith and Life, Putting into practice Love and Service (A practical sense of faith)

The practical sense of faith is closely related to its cognitive aspect; it gives us an awareness of the deep interaction between ‘knowledge’ and ‘action’. A person who is accustomed to feel the separateness of faith and life, precisely because he can apply the faith with a loving heart to individual circumstances (hard questions), comes to know in his everyday life that ‘faith is something which gives meaning’. That is what ‘faith expressing itself through love’ (Galatians 5:6) is. It is love itself which enables us to understand the obligation to put love into practice.

Each day let us, too, take up our cross and follow the Lord

▷ The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus takes up his cross.

Christ, who out of Love was ‘obedient to death— even death on a cross’ (Philippians 2:8), is God made humble. The cross of Christ, because it was motivated by love, is a symbol of sacrifice made because of love. Nowadays, much effort and many sacrifices are required to protect human life, human rights, peace, the environment and other eternal values and to carry out the way of life of the Gospel. A way of life characterized by carrying the cross for love, justice and peace is what bears witness to a faith which can gain the trust of the people of our time.

Let us offer up everything in daily imitation of the love of Jesus who gave up everything

▷ The Fifth Mystery of Light: Jesus institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper

Jesus divided bread and wine between his brothers and made them his sacred ‘Body and Blood’, a sign of the all-embracing love and dedication between God and people. When we take part in the Mass we receive the love of the Father, deepen our perception of the Church’s conviction of the salvation of all people, and are renewed and refreshed. Applying ourselves to daily sacrifices and works of service gives

silent witness to the fact that the love of God supports life and is the source of strength and courage to live.

7. The Grace, Joy, and Peace of Salvation

(A Salvific sense of faith)

The Sense of Faith has a 'Salvific Sense'. This is a sense of faith which comes from experience in one's own life of being saved. This consciousness of salvation is given meaning by being freed from suffering and anxiety and becomes a power to bring back to life.

Let Us Work towards the Grace of Salvation Being Given to All People.

▷ The fifth sorrowful mystery: Jesus dies on the cross.

The death of Jesus was an offering bearing witness to the Love of God. The revelation of God's love was not only for our salvation but for the happiness of all people. We should work so that as many people as possible, especially those who are suffering, who are overwhelmed by sorrow and the poor may meet with Christ.

Let us seek the Kingdom of Heaven and ask for the grace of entering into eternal joy.

▷ The fourth glorious mystery: Mary is assumed into heaven.

Christians who, together with Mary, meditate on the Christ's resurrection know why they have been given the gift of faith, know what it is that they believe and experience the joy of that faith. This is why living for others in this world, and constantly trying to evangelize Society, is the basis of a living hope which transcends this world. Let us pray that a loving way of life, which places our hope in eternal life, may become our joy.

8. Hope – the Rhythm of Life

(A synthesizing sense of faith)

To answer the question, "Has your faith become the story of your life?" every individual aims to review their life in faith to see whether hope in, and thanksgiving to, God are a clear reality. The 'synthesizing' sense of faith makes a connection between the past and the present, faith and individual identity, doctrine and life, faith and practice. The threads of sin and salvation which run throughout lives are woven together as a whole to form a single life story. John-Paul II said, "The simple prayer of the Rosary etches itself on the rhythm of life" (Angelus address, October 29, 1978).

Let us offer our daily lives to God

▷ The fourth joyful mystery: Mary offers up Jesus

In the last two meditations of the 'Joyful Mysteries' the atmosphere of Joy is already mingled with a foreboding of the tragic events which are to follow. The child who is consecrated in the temple becomes, "a sign that will be spoken against" and the prophecy that a sword would pierce his mother's soul is also spoken. Even in the midst of sacrifice and troubles Mary presents us with a model of the

true believer who, living everyday life with love, answers 'Amen'. By offering up in faith our everyday lives we, too, can take part in God's plan of salvation.

Let us live the faith without fear of misunderstanding or insult.

▷ The third sorrowful mystery: Jesus is crowned with thorns.

Whilst facing all kinds of temptation and derision Jesus fights against all human sin. This was because he said to the Father, "...not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Even though the gospel sense of values, which places hope in God who cannot be seen, is ignored in today's godless society we go on choosing to live by it.

9. The outlook of the prophet (A critical sense of faith)

Because of their knowledge of salvation based on faith Christians are endowed with a power of wise decision and supported by an intuitive sense to discern the things which are opposed to the love of God. This is the critical dimension of the sense of faith, akin to the prophets' way of seeing.

Let us bear witness faithful to Jesus' words

and with our Lord's transfiguration engraved on our hearts

▷ The fourth mystery of light: Jesus shows his glorified form on mount Tabor.

By ordering the disciples to, "Listen to Him" the Father prepared them to witness the Son's passion. It is especially in times of trouble that we experience the strength of the Holy Spirit which springs from the glorified Christ. In the present day climate of persecution which refuses the love of God, let us hold fast to the way of Jesus.

Let us stay awake and pray not to fall into temptation

▷ The First Sorrowful Mystery: Jesus agony

Christ experienced great anguish facing the will of the Father. The temptations which face Christians at the present time are directed at believer from within rather than at the institutional Church; sometimes the very salvation which Christians themselves seek has begun to be secularized. In order to overcome this temptation to secularism let us always be vigilant and pray with Jesus.

10. Solidarity and service which cultivate the shoots of faith (A community sense of faith)

To ascertain our own sense of faith we take the measure of other Christians' sense of faith. The critical sense of faith expands to become the Church's community sense of faith

Let us rejoice together, praising the coming of salvation.

▷ The second joyful mystery: Mary visits Elizabeth

Because of the presence of Jesus in Mary's womb, at her voice John, "leaped for joy" (Luke 1:44). The Christian faith is alive in those who share it. That is to say it hands on the joy of faith to many other people and shares it with them. Let us work together seeking out in others seedlings of the Gospel and help them grow more abundantly.

**Let us work so that all people who are seeking salvation
may be drawn to Jesus the Son of God.**

▷ The fifth glorious mystery: Mary becomes the mother of all people.

The mission to bear witness cannot escape from the grace of faith which God gives to us. The community of believers is not simply a group of individuals, in the final analysis it is the place progressively nurtured by the grace of God commissioned for evangelization. My own sense of faith can contribute to the shared sense of faith of the community.

11. Courage for the New Evangelization (A Pneumatological ⁽²⁾ sense of faith)

The sense of faith springing from the Spirit of Christ enables us to endure with courage and responsibility and have great freedom to work for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God

**Filled with the Holy Spirit, may we always have the courage
to become people who spread the Gospel of salvation.**

▷ The third glorious mystery: the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles.

The Holy Spirit gave to the apostles the will to put into practice the teaching of Jesus Christ and the courage to bear whatever difficulties this entailed. We who, as servants of the Spirit of Christ, have received the vocation of bearing witness to the love of Christ must discover within ourselves the gifts, the charisms, which have been given to us for the service of salvation. Then may we develop these as the Church community to create 'new expressions and methods' for a 'new evangelism' that will be useful for, and effective in present day society.

► Faith, Hope and Love

'Faith, Hope, Charity' is the traditional order of the theological virtues, and it is true that starting from Faith we can truly Hope and can work toward Loving perfectly. It is also true, to some extent, however that it works the other way round; where there is Hope and Love the seed of Charity begins to grow and the person who is looking forward to the triumph of love, constantly trying to engender true love, is led towards faith. This is working daily at works of Charity so as to make Hope the foundation of Faith

Pope Benedict XVI will declare a 'Year of Faith' from October of this year. This 'Year of Faith' begins on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, on October 11, 2012 and ends with the

feast of Christ the King on November 24, 2013. (This was announced in the *Motu proprio*, “*Porta fidei – Announcing a ‘Year of Faith’*” of Pope Benedict XVI on October 11, 2011.)

This year may we, the faithful of Kyoto Diocese, working on the theme ‘Witnessing to the Faith’, prepare for this ‘Year of Faith’.

January 1, 2012

Notes

- (1) All direct quotations of the scriptures are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version, Biblica Inc., 1973.
- (2) ‘Pneumatological’ is a difficult, theological word but it is the only adjective I know which conveys the meaning ‘concerning the Holy Spirit’.