

St. Paul says that 'we walk by faith and not by sight.' This is not to be taken that Christians are blindly to believe and abdicate the use of their reason in making the assent of faith; to do so would be to commit the error of *fideism*. God created us with an intellect by which we can know Him and then from that knowledge come to love Him. The more we know, the deeper and more fruitfully we love. We should engage our intellect when we evaluate why we believe. The primary reason that we believe should not be based on a blind impulse of the mind- 'I believe just because,' nor on sentiment or spiritual consolations- 'I believe because of how it makes me feel.' Such assertions leave one building their whole spiritual life upon a weak foundation that is vulnerable to attack either by the spirit of the world or that of fallen human nature. Think of the atheism of today that is so rampant and how many people leave the faith. St. Peter writes that in order to resist the devil one must stand firm in his or her faith (see I Peter 5:9). Faith can be viewed from two perspectives. First and foremost, faith is a gift from The Holy Trinity, which is not earned. It is given in order that by it the just may be united to God: in the Holy Spirit, through the Son, to the Father. Yet, in order that this may happen, and this now is the second perspective, one must freely desire to receive it, one must make a free assent of the will, meaning we have to choose freely. This desire, like all free and authentic human desires, proceeds from our reason or intellect. Right? Because one can't fully assent or consent to something that one doesn't fully know. Think of for example someone running a race and not knowing what, or where, nor how far the finish line is; such knowledge is pivotal to the point of the race and one's deciding to do it.

Now, we should also be aware that the *object* of faith, meaning that which constitutes the totality of our Faith, is God Himself. This is how God reveals Himself to us. In principle, such a subject (God in Himself) far exceeds the capacity of any created mind. Just as the eyes of a nocturnal animal are not proportioned to take in sunlight, that is, their eyes are incapable to receive the fullness of the sunlight, in a similar kind of manner our minds are not proportioned to comprehend the fullness of God and this is precisely where faith comes in. Faith places us before God as He is, it puts our intellects in contact with Him and thus enables us to participate in His love such that we love Him with the same love with which He loves Himself. It also enables us to receive God as a gift to be possessed. Without Faith, this supernatural love is impossible. By means of faith, God shows Himself to us in a divine light which brightness surpasses our understanding. But that does not mean that we cannot know God, nor that the act of faith is unreasonable.

We have motives to believe that the deposit of faith is true and that its origin is from God. That is to say there are external indications of God's revelation or divine acts (something only God can do) that are suited to the understanding of all, meaning you don't need to be a theologian to be a faithful Christian. These signs which do not require faith and which can be evaluated with our reason are: the miracles of Christ and the saints down through the ages; the fulfillment of prophecy (if one does the math it is statistically impossible for Jesus 'by mere chance' to fulfill hundreds of prophecies); the Church's growth and holiness, and Her fruitfulness and stability despite the many scoundrels, within and without it, who have tried to destroy Her. These real signs lead to the conclusion that the Church has Divine assistance, meaning that God sustains and safeguards the Church in Her life and teaching. Divine assistance would not be present to any institution which makes the 'truth claims' which are made by the Church if they were not true because that would be a contradiction. Thus, one can see that it is, in fact, reasonable to assent to what Jesus taught us and continues to teach us through His Apostolic Church.

What follows from this is that the Catholic Church is who She says She is, because that is who Jesus says She is. This is huge because that means we have an infallible guide, or mother, who tells us how authentically and fruitfully to walk by faith. Thus, if we want to walk by faith and love God supernaturally, then what the Church teaches regarding matters of faith (revelation of God) and morals (actions that perfect us) is not optional. Which leads to reflective questions: Do I live by my faith or do I try to make my faith live by me? Do all my actions and habits convey my faith? What do I base my faith on? How much do I allow the Church to form my faith and moral life versus the secular world? Do I believe that God's Mercy is limitless? Your servant in Christ, Joe.