

What Helps Me Grow in My Journey of Faith?

Intro: On June 15, 2012 **Nik Wallenda** walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. The walk of 1500 feet took 25 minutes. He had lots of faith in his talent as a tightrope walker; faith in his equipment. He also expressed faith in God as he made this momentous journey. Faith is an essential quality for daily living.

I Faith is an essential virtue for our spiritual life also. **Faith is a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.** We belong to God. God belongs to us.

A Before we learned the Creed or the teachings of the Church, we would talk to Jesus. He was our best friend.

1 Sacrament of baptism brought us into God's community – the Church.

B **Faith is staking our lives on the promises of God.** We choose to believe and live a certain way because that is what God expects of us.

1 Bible stories tell us about God's love for us. **"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life.** (John 3:16)

II One of the things that helped our faith to grow was learning about the **lives of the saints.** These are role models for all Christians. They teach us how to think and act.

A Most were ordinary people: St. Joseph; Blessed Mother; St. Gemma; Juan Diego

1 Some lived in great poverty: St. Francis; Bl. Teresa of Calcutta;

2 Some were martyrs: Maximilian Kolbe; Fr. Miguel Pro; Bp. Oscar Romero

"The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity."

III What does God expect of our lives of faith? **Become the best version of yourself for God. Holiness is an inside job.** It has to do with what goes on in our hearts.

A “*Rediscover Catholicism*” by Matthew Kelly. Seven steps to holiness.

1 Union with God through prayer and the sacraments. Each day is new. Mass and confession. Adoration. Fasting. Use of prayer partners.

2 Read the Bible and memorize some quotations. It is the source of knowledge, inspiration and encouragement. (2 Tim 3) The Bible is our daily bread, not cake for special occasions. The Bible is food for the soul.

B We are called to be bold witnesses for Jesus.

1 “Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me.” (Matt 25) We bring Christ to the world. E.g. grace at meals in a restaurant.

2 Faith without works is dead. (Epistle of James) We bring time, treasure and talent to serve God’s people. Share your testimony.

IV We have accepted the call to be disciples of Jesus. Loyal soldiers. Our job is to bring Christ to the world. **“Most people live in the world and go to Church. Why can’t we live in the Church and do to the world?”**

A The world is not a friendly place for Christians today. The culture of physical and spiritual death we find everywhere conflicts with the Christian culture of life. Trial and persecution come to all believers. The persecution of the Church is our persecution.

Some points to keep in mind:

1 Your faith and mine comes from God not from the people around us. It is a free gift we need to cherish and protect. Satan will try to separate us from God.

From the desk of Father Michael Salvagna

2 Scandals have always been in the history of the Church: popes, bishops, priests, lay people. Pray for the people who have fallen from grace. Pray for God to send prophets and reformers to cleanse the Church. Don't let negativity and cynicism rob you of your joy.

3 **Don't let any person come between you and God** no matter what the problem, e.g. a conflict with a priest, divorce. Seek counsel from wise people.

4 Find the way to treat all people respectfully as Jesus did. What Would Jesus Do? (WWJD) Love is the answer. Love triumphs over fear and evil. (Mother Teresa was asked by a reporter, "Are you discouraged that you cannot help all the people on the streets of Calcutta? She answered: "No. I just love them one at a time.")

Closing

We have been given the gift of faith to treasure and share. At times we may have questions or doubts when trials afflict us. We may have fears for our family or for the future of the Church. But the New Testament reminds us not to be afraid. Jesus said "I have overcome the world." Blessed John Paul II - "Fear not."

Go forth into the world **thankful for your life of faith**. Look for opportunities to share your faith with others. **May the joy of the Lord be your strength.**