



Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Psalm 33:12-22; Luke 12:32-40 Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (August 10, 2025)

Who is your *model* of faith? In what way have they *demonstrated* faith? Did anyone *mentor* you in the faith? What's a life of faith *for*? What does it look *like*?

People think faith is believing a **set of spiritual notions**, or having **religious feelings**, or obeying a set of **rules** to please God and avert God's wrath.

Hebrews defines **faith as *the substance of things hoped for***. In chapter 11, "the faith chapter," we hear of the faith stories of at least 16 people of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Some experience *attractive and glorious* outcomes (Heb 11:29-35) while others go through *violent and undesirable* moments (Heb 11:36-38). Yet, all life encounters are meant for a final positive outcome (Heb 11:39-40). Faith is not immunity from suffering. Faith accompanies us amidst our suffering and transforms it, in time, into resurrection.

"Therefore... let us run with perseverance the race... looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith..." (Heb 12:1-2)

Those who think that God's favor translates into a pleasantly comfortable, pain-free life (the "gospel of glory" preached by many) are greatly mistaken. Undoubtedly, there are some moments of satisfaction, even success in the course of one's life, just as one may experience many moments of anguish and desolation. Who does not want to pursue and hold on to pleasant experiences? Yet, suffering marks the majority of

our life on Earth.¹ The faithful knows that it is in our suffering that God is closest to us.²

We are part of a great **cloud of witnesses** (Heb 12:1) who mentor us, witness to us, shield us and encourage us on. Faith is total trust and confidence in the divine vision, the assurance of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, also spoken of as the New Heaven and the New Earth, and the Heavenly Banquet.

Hebrews 11 is so **countercultural**. It was back when it was written, and it is especially so today. Our present culture expects things to be done our way and done now. We want and demand control in life. We have certainly read the Bible that way, expecting to find an answer to every life's question. We turn it into a prescription book: *"If you are sad, if you doubt, if you want to marry... read such and such chapter in the Bible."*

Some read the Bible literally and become fundamentalist in their beliefs. Some even organize their theology in dogmatics and apologetics to make sure they have an answer to secular people's faith challenges as if God needed to be defended.

We can't bear uncertainty, and we fight it all the way. In the end, we drudgingly admit to our dependance on others and ultimately on God. Trusting and putting our hope in God is a big deal that requires a huge **leap of faith**. In that moment, we cross over a threshold and live differently, trustingly. We look at the world differently. We ask tough questions, and are not satisfied with easy answers for an easy way out.

If we look at the message from Hebrews, one doesn't have faith because God's promises have been fulfilled. If that were the case, we wouldn't need to walk by blind faith.³ No, we live in faith because we know Who it is who promised us.

¹¹ Psalm 90:10; John 16:33

² Psalm 23; Psalm 34 etc.

³ 2 Corinthians 5:7

The God we worship is the One we have come to know as “Our Father,” the ever Present One in time and space, the Compassionate and Merciful, always ready to forgive and welcome us back, to console us in our distress and grief but also ready to dissuade us from evil ways.

God is the Just One always on the side of those who suffer injustice and abuse and the One who gives true freedom and peace. It is God who guides us through the wilderness of life and gives us the strength and the courage to discover ourselves and to live in integrity of heart.

The oases of mercy and forgiveness we experience while crossing deserts of hardship and at times of despair strengthen and nurture us for the journey. In those moments, we know God’s care, faithfulness and extravagant grace.

We live the present moment as **strangers** and **foreigners**, never claiming to be arrived. The short respite we get in life⁴ is temporary, transient, impermanent. We receive grace with gratitude, and we hold on to that glory and refreshing joy with humility knowing that it’s not for us to keep but it’s a token of the glory to come.⁵ We lean into that hope.⁶

Having known the goodness of the Lord, the faithful does not desire to go back to the ways of the world (Heb 11:15-16) but rather keeps on, persevering and enduring in hope and trust even as the world decries and ridicules the faithful as a fool.

Faith is more **a question for us** than for God. It's not so much about God as it is about us. It's not if there is a God but whether there is an “I,” a fully present, responsible and responsive free agent? It’s not so much a question of who “God” is as it is more precisely who “I” am.

Often, we put God to the test. We challenge God to earn our trust. Through various tests, God needs to demonstrate God is worthy of our

⁴ Hebrews 11:9, Abraham was in the promised land “for a time” before he was asked to move on.

⁵ Colossians 2:16-17; Heb 9:7-28;

⁶ Romans 5:5

faith. We seem to have a need to be constantly convinced that it's OK to put our faith in God.

But it's God who consistently puts his faith in us. Through Jesus, **God is totally committed to us**. God is all in. The Spirit testifies to this if we but pay attention. God will never abandon us for nothing can separate us from God's love.⁷

There is nothing horrible we can do that we haven't already done. And yet, God sticks by us till the end. The righteous one is justified by faith.⁸ Not our faith in God but God's faith in us. Isn't it time we demonstrate some faith in ourselves?

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus calls on his hearers to turn their hearts away from greed and instead to **generosity**, to turn away from anxious self-preservation and instead to faithful self-giving. That is an exercise in trust.

Fr. Richard Rohr tells us that “Jesus walked the journey of faith just as you and I do. That’s the compelling message of the various dramas where Jesus needed faith—during his temptation in the desert, during his debates with his adversaries, in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross. We like to imagine that Jesus did not doubt or ever question God’s love. The much greater message is that in his humanity, he did flinch, did ask questions, did have doubts—and still remained faithful.”

Jesus is our companion and faith model in our life pilgrimage and will never abandon us. Let us follow him with courage and perseverance, enduring the challenge of temptations that can distract us or entice us. Let us fulfill our life goal to be true to God, to the kingdom’s values, to ourselves. Let us be alert and ready to welcome Him into our heart: when temptation knocks at the door, let Jesus in instead. Amen.

⁷ Romans 8:30

⁸ Romans 1:17