

Saints Alive!

A Periodic Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

Issue
28

God's Faithfulness

By Rich Cleveland

“To him, it is important that we try to serve him with the talents we have, however meager.”

*Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions,
they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.*

Refrain:

Great is thy faithfulness!

Great is thy faithfulness!

*Morning by morning new mercies I see:
all I have needed thy hand hath provided —
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

The words of this song were based on a poem by Thomas O. Chisholm which was put to music in 1923 and has become a beloved hymn sung by thousands and thousands of people during the ensuing ninety-seven years. I first learned this song when I was 20 years old, shortly after responding to God's call on my life. Over time they have taken on great meaning and provided lasting comfort as I have learned and experienced God's faithfulness.

The hymn is probably based in part upon Lamentations 3:22–23, but in context I think verse 24 is also very relevant: “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’” This belief that God would be faithful to his promises was the great underlying truth, the rudder if you will, that steadied Israel through their many ups, and downs of existence. If God was whimsical, instead of

being utterly reliable, their faith and ours would be shaky and our eternal destiny would simply be dependent on whether we died on a day when God was in a good mood, or in a bad mood. What a fearful existence that would be.

But as the hymn states, God is utterly reliable; “Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father; there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not; as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.” The books of the Old Testament provide countless stories, and profound declarations and explanations, of God's faithfulness to his promises, and of his being merciful to his people, Israel. Even in the midst of their most difficult historical moments God was with them and made his mercy known to them. Consequently, knowing these scriptures we can awake every morning assured that even as we have seen and experienced God's mercies previously, so we will see and experience them again this coming day to which we awake. We will be able to joyfully sing with the hymn writer and the author of Lamentations, “morning by morning new mercies I see.”

One could write endlessly about how God's faithfulness was manifest in the Old Testament, but instead I would like to jump ahead to the New Testament to consider 2 Timothy 2:13, to ensure that we do not mistakenly interpret God's faithfulness in light of our own human characteristics. Paul writing to Timothy reminds him to commit himself and his teachings to “faithful” people who in turn will pass them on to others. However, being realistic, Paul knows that some are not

continued on final page

Inside this Issue

- From the Heart
- *The Words of the Risen Christ*
- Excerpt from *The Catholic Topical Memory System*

From the Heart By Henry Abeyta

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”
(John 15:4-5)

Emmaus Journey

MISSION:

Emmaus Journey is a lay Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry which partners with parishes, small groups and individuals to facilitate a personal encounter with and conversion to Christ, thereby forming missionary disciples actively living for Jesus.

VISION:

By encountering Christ through scripture, discipleship and community—individuals experience: 1) conversion to Christ; 2) transformation in Christ; and 3) mobilization for Christ, where they are actively involved in sharing their faith with others and living out their faith in the greater community. Thus achieving Goal One of the USCCB's initiative on evangelization, “To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.”



Saints Alive! is published by Emmaus Journey, a national ministry of Catholic evangelization and discipleship. Copyright © 2020 Emmaus Journey. Please feel free to get in touch with us:

Emmaus Journey
P.O. Box 66417
Albuquerque, NM 87193
(505) 314-3453

info@emmausjourney.org

www.emmausjourney.org

We are living in an unprecedented time of disruption of most that we have held as ordinary and sure. A time when those things we placed our confidence in that made up “normal” life have been found precarious so easily eliminated and gone in days. The economy and perhaps our source of income and savings, grocery store supply lines strained and unable to keep up with such mundane things as toilet paper, and those things touted to be the best in the world, our health care systems, our businesses, our air travel system, all those things taken for granted a few days ago, equally precarious and fragile. Two months of carnage approaching 100,000 deaths as of this writing, especially impacting our honored aged and elderly, but also for the seemingly fit and young, consequently death has come too swiftly for too many. Governments throughout the world struggle with the inability to mobilize resources necessary to address this unknown and perhaps unanticipated challenge we face. Where do we turn in times like this?



Henry Abeyta

Through the Lenten season and entering Easter renewal, I have been struck by God's faithfulness in our current reality, now as before, the faithful one who is and was and is to be. When I consider God's faithfulness, I am overwhelmed by God's creation very evident in the clear skies and bright starry nights serving as reminders that we are created with intentionality, purpose, and beauty through an outpouring of his love. That love outpouring reminds us that we are part of a bigger plan and his purposes are part of our own individual calling.

As I ponder the beauty of God's creation walking along the river in my daily time with him, in the glory of the natural world as I observe its seasons, I am assured that God's faithfulness is invariant. **It is something I can depend on**, resilient to even the most disruptive things we face. I have learned about God's faithfulness through my own life experience and continue to learn daily about living out of it in the moment. Jesus is God's communication, his living Word, to show us the way in the continuing story of his covenant with us as a people. He speaks through Sacred Scripture reminding me that I am created with purpose and that discovering his plan is part of our participation with God's creation. In *Called to Life*, Jacques Philippe, discusses how God speaks to us in practical ways so that I can listen and respond:

“Each of God's interventions in one's life—through Scripture, life's events, the movements of the Spirit...has no goal except to propel one toward this identification with Christ, which is the ultimate meaning of human existence. Human beings are called to love, and love is learned only at the school of Christ.” (*Called to Life*, Jacques Philippe, 2008 page 106)

There are many evidences of this outpouring of love around us in our health care workers, in our teachers reaching out to each individual graduate, in the contributions and distribution of food to those in need, and in groups banding together to sew face coverings for all those that need them. As Christians, God is calling his people, the branches of the vine to be his evident love outpouring on the world now and in the future.

Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) wrote: “Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

So as a fellow “branch” in his family, let us together place our trust in God's call and have confidence in his faithfulness, that we together can grow and be fruitful through clinging and abiding in Jesus. We are ordained to live in this time, to have our being and existence, to have purpose as God's ambassadors representing the creator of the universe! May the Holy Spirit empower each of us for the day's ahead!

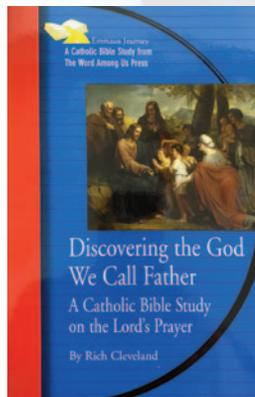
Henry Abeyta is the past President of Emmaus Journey. He and Darlene continue to serve and advise Emmaus Journey as members of the board of directors. They live in Albuquerque, NM.

The Words of the Risen Christ

Discovering the God We Call Father

Discovering the God We Call Father “opens the door” for you to enter into a more profound understanding of some of the great mysteries of the Catholic faith contained in the Our Father prayer that Jesus taught his followers.

As you complete this eight-chapter study each of the petitions in the Our Father will take on new meaning for you each time you pray it. Additionally, this bible study will enable you to develop a new consciousness of your relationship with the Father as his dearly beloved child, and as an heir with Christ to all that is the Father’s.



Discovering the God We Call Father consists of eight enlightening chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Discipleship Begins with Prayer
- Chapter 2 – Understanding Our Father
- Chapter 3 – Honoring Our Father
- Chapter 4 – Living as Citizens of the Kingdom
- Chapter 5 – Doing the Father’s Will
- Chapter 6 – Relying on God’s Resources—Grace for Today
- Chapter 7 – Relying on God’s Resources—Forgiveness and Forgiving
- Chapter 8 – Relying on God’s Resources—Protection from Evil

In this study you will find stimulating reflections, thought provoking Scripture based questions, enlightening Church teachings and moving testimonies.

Sound interesting? You can order a copy today by clicking [here](#).

Topic: His Faithfulness

Verses: Lamentations 3:22–23 and Numbers 23:19

Reflection on the Wisdom of the Church

The strength of our faith is dependent upon the extent to which we believe that God is faithful. Will he do what he says he will do? Will he consistently remain true to his character? Will his love and commitment to us never fail? Unless we can answer a resounding “Yes!” to these and similar types of questions, our faith and commitment will be weak, and we will “hedge our bets”, just in case God fails.

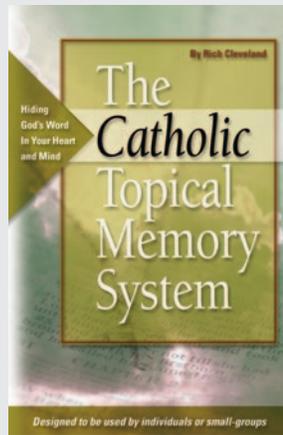
But it is not within God’s nature to be fickle, capricious, and unreliable, for as God says, “I the LORD do not change; therefore, you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6).

His love is constant, his word is constant, and his nature varies not. When we awake tomorrow, we will find him as we do today — utterly reliable.

“He is ever the same and unchanging, deceiving neither in his essence nor in his promise. As again says the apostle writing to the Thessalonians, ‘Faithful is he who calls you, who also will do it;’ for in doing what he promises, he is faithful to his words.”¹

As we come to increasingly believe that he is utterly reliable, anxiety will begin to flee and we will discover, as did Saint Elizabeth Seton, that God is faithful to guide, to meet our every need, and to lovingly care for us.

And in every disappointment, great or small, let your dear heart fly direct to Him, your dear Savior, throwing yourself in His arms for refuge against every pain and sorrow. He never will leave you or forsake you.²



Questions for Meditation

Lamentations 3:22–23

(For context read Lamentations 3:19–32)

- What enabled Jeremiah to wait and endure in hope during the difficult times of his life?
- What examples of God’s faithfulness have you seen in your life?

Numbers 23:19

(For context read Numbers 23:13–26)

- How can the truth of this passage increase your faith?
- How would you restate this verse in your own words?
- Describe the difference between “waiting on the Lord” and stoic endurance.
- Practically, how can we increase our ability to recognize and recall the Lord’s loving kindness to us?

Order Your Copy

The Catholic Topical Memory System is available through Emmaus Journey’s Bookstore.

Order your copy using by clicking [here](#).

1. Saint Athanasius in a Treatise Against the Arians, from *Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture*, Vol IX, page 246

2. Saint Elizabeth Seton from *The Soul of Elizabeth Seton*, page 64

God's Faithfulness

continued from front page

“God is so faithful, that even when we fail miserably, he remains true to his own nature, he will not respond to our faithlessness out of spite, or exasperation, nor with rejection, but will continue to be merciful to us.”

faithful, and some of those who desire to be faithful, fail miserably, and so he graciously reminds Timothy, “...if we are faithless, he [God] remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.” God is so faithful, that even when we fail miserably, he remains true to his own nature, he will not respond to our faithlessness out of spite, or exasperation, nor with rejection, but will continue to be merciful to us. It is hard for us to even imagine a God so faithful, but yet, his faithfulness to stand by his promise of salvation is true, and remains untainted by our faithlessness.

The importance of this character trait of “faithfulness” which he desires to also see in us, is mentioned more than once by Jesus in the Gospel narratives, and sometimes his use of the words *faithfulness* and *unfaithfulness* within parables is difficult to understand, for instance; “He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?” (Luke 16:10–12). It seems that our being faithful is not based on the degree to which we have been successful for him, but rather on the extent to which we tried to serve him. Conversely, we could say that being unfaithful humanly speaking is manifested by our unwillingness to get involved trying to serve

him. This understanding is encouraging because many of us do not have numerous, great, or showy talents to commend us to God, or man, but he whose opinion is most important (God), looks beyond the results of our accomplishments to the heart from which we served. To him, it is important that we try to serve him with the talents we have, however meager.

Blessed John Henry Newman who served God throughout his adult life, having renounced being an Anglican priest in mid-life to become a Catholic layman, who later was ordained a Catholic priest, had a career full of apparent failures both as an Anglican and as a Catholic, he was appointed a Cardinal late in life, and recently, in 2019, was declared a Saint, and he explained his experience with God's faithfulness this way: “I have now lived three quarters of a century, and I call men and angels to hear my witness that much as I have failed Him, He never has failed me—nor will He ever.”¹

May we also testify with assurance to God's faithfulness in our lives, and may our faithfulness to serve him be an expression of our gratitude for his faithfulness to keep his promises and to provide new mercies for us all the days of our life.

After thirty-five years as evangelicals, Rich Cleveland and his wife Gail became Catholic. Rich is the founder of Emmaus Journey, and he and his wife continue to serve Emmaus Journey, and live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

1. *John Henry Newman*, by Ian Kerr, page 697.