

Faith: A Moving Out of Darkness

Topics

- Faith, Belief, and Religion
- Scripture, Tradition, and Creeds
- The Meaning of Faith
- The Covenant and God's Plan of Loving Goodness
- The Theological Virtues
- Human Dignity: Made in God's Image
- The Human Desire to Know God
- Prayer and Relationship with God
- Revelation: God Is Making Himself Known

Objectives

To help the students:

- explore the meaning and importance of faith.
- see the different ways God reveals himself to us.
- realize the connection between faith, human dignity, and free will.
- appreciate how a community of faith nurtures and celebrates faith.
- understand personal prayer as a tool for growing faith.
- learn how to put faith into action.

Words of Faith

Bible (Scripture)
covenant
creed

dignity
faith
free will

God
Messiah
Revelation

soul
Tradition
vocation

Materials Needed

- student notebooks
- Bibles
- drawing paper
- poster-making materials
- pencils (crayons, inks, charcoal, paints—optional)
- Handout 1:1—What Stresses You Out? **(Copy for Day 1.)**
- Handout 1:2—Human Rights **(Copy for Day 7.)**
- Handout 1:3—Class Survey on Prayer **(Copy for Day 8.)**
- Handout 1:4—Thomas Merton on Faith **(Copy for Day 9.)**
- Handout 1:5—Faith and Health **(Copy for Day 9.)**
- Handout 1:6—Why Faith Promotes Better Health **(Copy for Day 9.)**
- Handout 1:7—Chapter 1 Review Answers **(Copy for Day 9.)**
- Chapter 1 Test **(Copy for Day 10.)**

Related Church Documents

Catechism of the Catholic Church #44, 45, 46, 47, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 96, 97, 98, 119, 136, 137, 138, 176, 179, 180, 181, 183, 228, 229, 231, 315, 353, 382, 1711, 1745, 1796, 1833, 1841, 1944, 1945, 2254, 2590, 2591, 2644, 2720.

Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation #2.

Chapter 1 Resources

Books

- Forest, James H. *Living with Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).
- Merton, Thomas. *The Intimate Merton: His Life from His Journals* ed. by Patrick Hart and Jonathan Montaldo. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).
- Merton, Thomas. *Learning to Love: Exploring Solitude and Freedom*, ed. by Christine M. Bochen (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).
- Merton, Thomas. *The New Man* (New York, NY: Noonday Press, imprint of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999). (reprint)
- Merton, Thomas. *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Scranton, PA: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974). (revised ed.)
- Merton, Thomas. *No Man Is an Island* (Orlando, FL: Harvest Books/Harcourt, 1978). (reprint)
- Merton, Thomas. *The New Man* (New York, NY: Noonday Press, imprint of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999). (reprint)
- Merton, Thomas. *The Sign of Jonas* (Orlando, FL: Harvest Books/Harcourt, 1979). (reprint)
- Merton, Thomas. *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York, NY: Noonday Press, imprint of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999). (reprint)
- Mott, Michael. *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Orlando, FL: Harvest Books/Harcourt, 1993). (reprint)
- Pennington, M. Basil. *On Retreat with Thomas Merton* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1995). (reprint)
- Shannon, William Henry, et. Al., eds. *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).
- Waldron, Robert G. and Patrick Hart. *Walking with Thomas Merton: Discovering His Poetry, Essays, and Journals* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002).

Articles

- “Faith eases chronic pain,” *Prevention* (October 2001), p. 50.
- “How can I find God? Another look” (Excerpts from book by James Martin, *How Can I Find God?*), *America* (August 30, 1997), p. 11+.
- “Science goes to church,” *Prevention* (December 1998), p. 107.
- “The questions most adults would like to ask God,” *Jet* (June 21, 1999), p. 20.
- “Thomas Merton,” *Contemporary Authors Online* (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2000).
Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center* (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2002).
- “Thomas Merton,” *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2nd. ed., (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Research, 1998).
- “Thomas Merton,” *Religious Leaders of America*, 2nd ed. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Group, 1999).
Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center* (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2002).

- “Why we pray,” *Life* (March 1994), p. 54+.
- Bauman, Alisa. “Running on faith,” *Runner’s World* (June 1999), p. 86.
- Bennett, William J., ed. “The Blind Men and the Elephant,” in *The Moral Compass*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 192–193.
- Farrington, Jan. “Stress and what you can do about it.” *Current Health 2, a Weekly Reader publication* (January 1996), p. 6+.
- Martin, James. “How can I find God?” *America* (September 30, 1995), p. 12+.
- McCourt, Frank. “When you think of God what do you see?” *Life* (December 1998), p. 60.
- McFarling, Usha Lee. “Doctors may help patients more if they recognized power of faith, experts say,” *Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service* (December 22, 1998).
- Michaud, Ellen. “Do you have the miracle healer in you?” *Prevention* (December, 1998), p. 107.
- Moring, Mark. “The nightmare of September 11: When terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, Phillip Santiago and Matthew Rivera were in school just three blocks away. This is their story.” *Campus Life* (Jan.–Feb. 2000), p. 42+.
- Parachin, Victor. “God’s 911,” *Christian Reader* (September 2000), p. 65.
- Pennington, M. Basil. “Thomas Merton,” *Encyclopedia of American Catholic History* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), pp. 912–916.
- Pope John XXIII. “*Peace on Earth*.” In O’Brien, David J. and Thomas A. Shannon. *Renewing the Earth: Catholic Documents on Peace, Justice, and Liberation*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Image Books, 1977), pp. 126–131.
- Shannon, William H. “Thomas Merton,” *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement 8: 1966–1970. (New York, NY: American Council of Learned Societies, 1988). Reproduced in Biography Resource Center (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2002).
- Teitsort, Janet. “Lending Our Eyes to Joanna,” *Christian Reader* (March 2001), p. 25.

Lesson Plan Strategies

Day 1

LIVING LIFE FULLY

1. Introduce yourself to the students. Tell them something about yourself and why you are teaching this course. Have the students introduce themselves.
2. Invite the students to turn to the Chapter 1 opener (pp. 2–3). Pray the Psalm, present the chapter objectives, and study the picture. Encourage the students to ask questions they have about faith and to state what they hope to learn from the course. **OPTION:** Lead the students in spontaneous prayers for inspiration and guidance throughout the course.
3. Ask the students to read silently “Living Life Fully” (p. 4). Allow time for discussion.
4. Have the students individually complete the “Activity” (p. 4). Tell them that it is not a test but rather a way to express their understanding of the concepts of faith, belief, and religion. Have the students share their responses and make a poster reflecting these responses.
5. Ask several volunteers to take turns reading aloud “A Life-changing Event” (p. 5).
6. Form the class into small groups. Have the students discuss “Let’s Talk!” (p. 5) in their groups. After allowing sufficient time for the students to talk, lead the entire class in a discussion of question 4. Perhaps share why faith has been important in your life.
7. Talk about the student notebooks and how you expect each student to keep a journal throughout the class. Explain about the notebook’s privacy. Have each student decide whether or not to permit you to read all the passages when you check the notebooks periodically to make sure they are being done. Allow time in class for the students to work on the “Reflection” (p. 5).

Day 2

SEEING AND BELIEVING

1. Have the students read silently “Seeing and Believing” (p. 6).
2. Lead a class discussion about the ways these two gods are similar to and different from our concepts of God and the devil. (*God is often seen as the God of light. The devil is often seen as the ruler of darkness, the lord of the underworld.*)
3. Ask volunteers to read aloud “The Blind Men and the Elephant” (p. 7). Allow time for discussion.
4. Make copies of **Handout 1:1—What Stresses You Out?** and distribute them to the students. Follow the directions in the “Activity” (p. 6). Also allow time for the students to write their “Reflection” (p. 7).
5. Assign the following for **HOMEWORK**:
 - Complete the “Reflection” (if it was not finished in class).
 - Read “Learning to See” (p. 7) and “What Is Faith?” (pp. 8–9).