**FAITH**

(preferably 15 to 20 minutes)

PURPOSE:

* Thus far in the Weekend, the participants have received three proclamations: Live life with an ideal; the Christian ideal; Christian ideal is lived out within a community (Laity). This talk is intended to offer an answer to the question: “How do I respond to these proclamations?” The response is faith.
* This talk is also intended: to help alleviate fears about not being able to live out the Christian ideal; to clarify the role of faith in living this ideal; and to show that the Holy Spirit is God’s gift enabling us to live the ideal of grace.

CORE IDEAS:

* God’s call to us is all encompassing.
* If we are to proceed under our own efforts, we will likely fail.
* There is a transforming power available to all Christians.
* Faith is the key to unlocking this transforming power.
* To receive this transforming power, we must open ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
* The Holy Spirit works through faith.
* Palanca are signs of the faith of others.

INTRODUCTION:

1. God’s call to us is all-encompassing. As we have heard in the last three talks, we have three primary calls from God.
   1. We are called to be fully human – with an ideal which motivates us and all our life.
   2. We are called to be fully Christian – to live the Christian ideal – a life of grace in close relationship with God in Christ.
   3. We are called to be active apostles – our life in grace is lived out in community. We bring Christ to the world and bring the world to Christ.
2. On our own, we are not likely to succeed in our call – for two reasons:
   1. We would not know what to do or how to do it.
      1. Left to ourselves, we usually tend to serve our own interests.
      2. Our nature is tainted by sin. We are likely to misuse our freedom. (See BCP p. 848ff. “Sin and Redemption”)
   2. We become easily frustrated and discouraged.
      1. The good we want to do eludes us, sometimes becoming the very opposite of what we intend. (Rom. 7:18-20)
      2. In the face of obstacles we tend to give up or in, falling back into our old, unproductive patterns. (Rom. 7:21-23)

THERE IS A TRANSFORMING POWER AVAILABLE TO EVERY CHRISTIAN:

(Recall the Grace talk and the emphasis on God’s willingness to give us all the grace we desire if we will only say “yes” to God’s invitation. Faith is that “yes” to God’s call)

1. Faith is the key to a life of grace. (Recall the Greek word for faith, “*pistis*”, is a verb – faith is an action word in the Greek language as well as a noun.)
   1. Faith is freely and wholeheartedly saying “yes” to God’s invitation.
   2. Faith is trusting God with the whole self. (Heb. 11:1ff)
   3. Faith does not require sophisticated beliefs, strong convictions, or moral perfection.
   4. Faith is ACTIVE - it is making an investment of all you are and all you shall be in what God has promised.
   5. Faith is less something we *have* and more something we *do*. People came to Jesus for healing. Their coming and asking demonstrated their faith.
2. Faith is essential to the life of grace.
   1. Faith is turning to God as we are.
   2. Grace tells us that God will accept us as we are even with our doubts, fears, and guilt.
   3. Faith confesses, “I am a fallen soul.” God’s grace says, “You are my beloved child.”
   4. Faith is a surrender of control to God. “Without God, I can’t. Without me, God won’t.” (12 Step saying)
   5. Faith answers the call to be human (Ideal), to be a Christian human (Grace), and to be a Christian in community (Laity) with the words, “I will with God’s help.” (BCP p. 304ff.)
   6. Faith is not a product of intellect. We can find it in the profoundly disabled. (See“Adam” by Henri Nouwen)

THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH OUR FAITH:

1. Grace and faith are closely related. (Eph. 2:8-9)
   1. Grace is the power of God present to us at all times. (God’s favor towards us, unearned and undeserved;” BCP p. 858) (There was a time in the church when this was referred to as “habitual grace”.)
   2. Faith is the way of responding to this power of God. As we open ourselves to this power, it becomes effective in us.
   3. When we exercise our faith, this general presence of God becomes present in a unique, individual way. (This was at one time referred to as “actualized grace”.)
2. When we exercise our faith (when we say “yes” to God’s call), God the Holy Spirit becomes specifically present to us. (John 14:15-17)
3. Through faith and the presence of the Spirit, we are sent out in Christ’s name. (John 20:21-23)
4. The Holy Spirit has a specific nature and work.
   1. The Holy Spirit is God- the fullness of God available to us and for us. (John 3:1-8)
   2. The Holy Spirit is the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst. (1 Cor. 12:11-13; Rom. 8:9; John 14:22-23)
   3. The Holy Spirit leads us into a greater love for God. (John 14:15-17)
      1. This love opens our eyes to what is real, true. (1 Cor. 2: 9-13)
      2. This love prompts us to offer ourselves more freely to God. (Rom. 12:1)
      3. This love animates our worship and praise.
   4. The Holy Spirit sustains us in the conflicts of life.
      1. Interceding for us, assisting us in prayer even in weakness. (Rom. 8:26-27)
      2. Giving us a vision of God at work in our lives. (2 Cor. 4:13-18)
      3. Granting us a share in the victory of Christ over sin and death, increasing our strength to deal with everyday living. (Eph. 3:14-19)
   5. The Holy Spirit enables us to be the Church – more than an institution or organization – a living center, a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 3:16-17) – a royal priesthood to carry on God’s work of healing and redemption in the world.
5. We will be filled with the Holy Spirit.
   1. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism. (Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; BCP p. 308)
   2. We are further filled with the Holy Spirit:
      1. if we desiring to be filled;
      2. if we willing to be led;
      3. if we repent of sin; and
      4. if we entrust ourselves into God’s care.
   3. The choice is ours; the Holy Spirit will not overpower us. In saying “yes” to God’s invitation in faith, we become freer, more fully human, as we are filled with the Holy Spirit. God does not do away with our essential selves, but enhances that which we are.
6. As the Holy Spirit is available to us, so we are called to be available to the Spirit:
   1. Through prayer (daily fellowship/Eucharist);
   2. Through faith (trusting God for the impossible);
   3. Through action (translating faith into deeds);
   4. Through confidence (leaving the outcome to God).
7. Palanca are special signs of faith. (See Appendix 2. Definitions)

COMMENTARY ON THE OUTLINE:

At this point in the Weekend, the participants are settling in a little. The heart of this talk is the “transforming power” section where they are encouraged to trust God for the power to carry out the ministry to which they are called. This talk concludes the proclamations of the call to be human, the call to be a Christian human, and the call to be a Christian in community by inviting them to believe that they can respond to that call “with God’s help.” The objective is to offer a joyful conviction that we can live a life of grace, and it will permeate our lives. “Whatever you eat or drink, and whatever else

you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

*Adam* by Henri Nouwen

*Reaching to the Invisible God* by Philip Yancey