

FAITH

Faith as personal encounter

Faith releases in us a power that is beyond us.

Albert Nolan

The great tragedy for Christianity (it's been said) is the transfer of faith from the dimension of personal encounter into the dimension of formal instruction. Faith then is reduced to assent, believing that a statement or claim is true. Marcus Borg says we should affirm or assent to the faith deeply, but loosely - avoiding excessive precision and certitude.

Think about what you most deeply believe - what really makes a difference to the way you handle your everyday. And be honest!

Cardinal Newman said unbelief was a "fault of the heart, not of the intellect". The evangelical Bishop Ryle saw that it was "want of heart, not want of evidence, that keeps people back from Christ".

We can begin to see faith - the faith Jesus sought - as radical trust, as meaning "I give my heart to": to hold dear, to prize, to give one's loyalty or oneself to. Faith is knowledge born of love. It involves a change of heart and mind, allowing us to contemplate the reality which is beyond understanding, which cannot be encapsulated in concepts. It's why Augustine said, "It is better to find You and leave the question unanswered than to find the answer without finding You".

Richard Rohr says faith grows out of the experience: "can't fix - can't control - can't understand" - the faith where God alone is in charge. Explore what "can't fix - can't control, etc" feels like for you.

Thomas Merton says Christianity is not a set of foregone conclusions. Christian faith is a "principle of questioning and struggle before it becomes a principle of certitude and peace". It is being vulnerable towards another, or susceptible to the Spirit.

Think about someone who has different beliefs from you.

How threatened do you sometimes feel?

What would **genuine** dialogue be like?

Is there a **truth** which truly liberates you both?

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