

Faith is one of the three theological virtues. What is a virtue? A virtue is an disposition and attitude that leads to an action that allows us to more fully live as people who are made in God's image.

A theological virtue is one that we cannot make happen on our own. Rather it is only by God's work in us that we can live out a virtue like "faith".

Let me explain what I mean. I have in my hand here a light. In order for this light to do what it is supposed to, it needs a source of power, it needs to be plugged in and then turned on.

The theological virtue of faith is like this light. Faith needs to have a source. We call this source the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ. Faith also needs to have a way to be plugged into the source of this love, we call that the Church. Faith also needs a way for each one of us to share in the source of faith, and that is our baptism. To live out daily our baptism is to choose to turn on the light. That's our work. But without the cord and the plug, the Church,

we could not access the source of this power, the Love of God.

People who are discovering the theological virtue of faith come to realize something about how we live are lives, what St. Paul calls to "be justified".

Listen to how Paul uses this word in our reading:

"since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift"

"he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus"

"For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law".

"and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith".

Now when Paul talks about the circumcised he is using this a code name for those people who were God's special people, the Jews. The uncircumcised are those who were non-Jewish. At the time when Paul lived, many believed that the only people who could be plugged into the source of God's love were the Jewish people. Non-Jewish people did not have access to this power. But here Paul is saying that in ourselves we are all, Jewish people and non-Jewish people alike, unable to access God's loving power based on our own efforts. If I try to plug this light into the flash light, I will get no where. If I try to plug it into my phone it just won't work. Both have power, but they are the wrong kind of power. No, for this light to work it needs to be plugged into this socket which in turn is connected to power source that allows all of our computers and lights to work here at St. Peter's. This power source in turn is connected to Direct Energy or Enmax that supplies power to St. Peter's.

When Paul says we are justified by faith he means something similar. To have faith in Jesus Christ is to trust in the power of his love. As we choose to trust in his love, then through the Church we can connect with the source of that love through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, confession, the mass, holy orders, marriage, and anointing. Then we in turn have a choice as to how we will live. Will we turn on the light and so shine Jesus' love to others or leave it turned off?

Because of Sin, which can be explained in many ways, but for today let's say it is like living life without being plugged into the source. Many people have always lived their lives thinking that we can be human without God, or we can become evermore human by getting rid of God. But that is like trying to shine with either a broken bulb or no power. We cannot be all God wants us to be.

But as we take to heart this theological virtue called "faith" we can in the words of today's Collect:

Always ponder spiritual things so that we may carry out in word and deed that which is pleasing to God.

Remember at the beginning I said a virtue is a disposition and attitude that leads to an action that allows us to more fully live as people who are made in God's image?

As we live the virtue of faith we can increasingly shine with the light of God's love in all our relationships and so live in a way pleasing to him.