

PILGRIMS OF HOPE: JOURNEYING IN FAITH FOR A RADICAL AND LIVING COMMUNION WITH OTHERS

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Abstract

In the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, Pope Francis invites us to reflect on our faith and deepen our understanding of it. It is an invitation not only to journey physically but, more importantly, to undertake a spiritual pilgrimage in a world often marked by conflict, despair, and uncertainty. This article emphasises that our pilgrimage is a journey of personal and communal transformation. It is an opportunity to encounter God and to be renewed in faith. This pilgrimage is not only a solitary endeavour but also a communal journey that fosters unity and reconciliation, especially among those who feel marginalised or excluded.

Keywords: Hope, Faith, Radical and Living Communion, Spiritual Renewal, unity, Care for Others, Excluded.

Introduction

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis invites us to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ; this encounter is not just for ourselves, but a call to become tangible signs of hope for all who face hardship.¹ Our faith justifies us, granting us peace with God through Jesus Christ;

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¹ Hans Ausloos, "We Must Fan the Flame of Hope (Pope Francis): The Biblical Origins of the Jubilee Year as a Sign of Hope," *Indian Theological Studies* 62. 1 (March 2025): 10.

this faith gives us a powerful hope, a hope of sharing in God's glory.² Living with hope allows faith to be joyful and charity to be enthusiastic, expressed through small but meaningful acts of kindness that become the seeds of hope for others.³ As we are pilgrims of hope in the twenty-first century, we must cultivate and embrace a radical, living communion with others, becoming attuned to the complex realities of global societies and living in community. Jesus, a prophet and mystic, inaugurated a countercultural movement by responding to a divine call to renew the world,⁴ and Jesus showed us that "Christian faith is a great and admirable reality, and Sacred Scripture invites us to the obedience of faith (Rom 1:5; 16:26; 2 Cor 10:5-6)."⁵ The obedience of faith is often seen as the cornerstone of a strong relationship with God and others. "The relationship between God and humanity is a living relationship, and it is all-embracing and transforming, and the fulcrum of this faith is one's adherence to the word of God."⁶ A radical and living communion with other people becomes possible when we believe that "Jesus is the leader and perfecter of faith, as several theologians have recognised the exemplary faith in the life of Jesus."⁷ As Gerhard Ebeling says, "what Jesus says cannot be separated from His Person, and His Person is one with His way and His way includes a community with tax collectors, sinners, sick and others, this faith is expected from His followers."⁸ Jesus accepted people with unconditional love and compassion. Therefore, the praxis of faith leads to communion with others. The faith of the pilgrims of hope in Him has to reflect His way of life in our journey, and our faith is not a static belief; it is a dynamic force that fosters a living communion with others.

² Pope Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, Papal Bull on Hope does not Disappoint, 7 June 2024; AAS 116 (2024): 647- 665, § 2.

³ *Spes Non Confundit* § 18.

⁴ Jose Kizhakkekuttu, "The New Humanity in Christ: A Study Based on the Life and Works of M.M. Thomas," PhD diss. (DVK, 2015), 123.

⁵ Lancy Monteiro, *Revelation and Religions: Hospitality Within Catholic Universality and Rationality* (Bengaluru: Asian Trading Corporation, 2016), 160.

⁶ Fernando Ocariz and Arturo Blanco, *Fundamental Theology* (Illinois: Midwest Theological Forum, 2009), 5.

⁷ Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 251.

⁸ Gerhard Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 56-57.

1. Biblical Perspectives on a Radical and Living Communion with Others

The Bible is not merely a book but the inspired Word of God, through which God speaks to humanity.⁹ The object of faith is grounded in the teachings of Jesus as found in Scripture and Tradition.¹⁰ Therefore, understanding Christian faith requires continuous reference to the Bible.¹¹

1.2 The Old Testament

The New Testament often shapes the Christian understanding of Old Testament faith.¹² The Old Testament concept of faith has no single term exactly corresponding to the New Testament term '*pistis*'; the nearest equivalent term in the Old Testament is '*emun*' which conveys the ideas of constancy, reliability, and faithfulness.¹³ We understand that "In the Old Testament, human beings are confronted with the word through revelation, which demands faith and accomplishment."¹⁴ Hebrew religion could be described as a religion of action because its essence is found in the practical application of faith in daily life. Therefore, "one might almost say that Hebrew religion is a religion of the verb rather than the noun because it finds its characteristic expression in action."¹⁵ Faith includes the other person in the community, which we find from "Abraham's time that faith did not refer merely to a person or a family group, but to a whole nation in the person of their progenitor, and the time of Moses, the social aspect was clearly manifested."¹⁶ The prophets of the Old Testament were the greatest defenders of the covenant, and it was the cause of their fighting, suffering, and death.¹⁷ Loving one's neighbour is an act of loving God, accomplished through divine power. For

⁹ Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, ed. Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 101.

¹⁰ Brennan R. Hill et al., *Faith Religion & Theology* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publication, 1997), 36.

¹¹ Avery Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped for: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7.

¹² Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 7.

¹³ Ocariz and Blanco, *Fundamental Theology*, 122.

¹⁴ René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation: Including a Commentary on the Constitution Dei Verbum of Vatican II*. (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968), 39.

¹⁵ E. W. Heaton, *Old Testament Prophets* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), 51.

¹⁶ Ocariz and Blanco, *Fundamental Theology*, 154.

¹⁷ Joseph Pathrapankal, ed., "Pauline Understanding of the New Covenant," *Jeevadhara* XI, no. 62 (1981): 125.

example, King David acknowledges in his confession: I have sinned against the Lord, and it was an attack on a neighbour, which was a sin directly against God (2 Sam 12:13).¹⁸

In the book of the prophet Micah (Mic 6:8), a key requirement from God is "to do justly."¹⁹ It involves acting with fairness and respect towards those who are socially vulnerable, prioritising moral obedience that of righteousness, love, humility, and faith over ceremonial obedience (Mic 6:8).²⁰ According to prophet Amos the worship is meaningless to God unless it is accompanied by a commitment to justice and a radical transformation in human society (Amos 5: 21-24).²¹ Prophet Hosea emphasised the need for a well-organised and unified community among God's followers, and the covenant community has specific demands to keep it alive,²² such as respect for one another and refraining from immoral behaviour, idolatry, and political malfeasance with an acuteness that puts them at odds with their communities.²³ It is consistent with Prophet Isaiah's call for justice, as the holiness of God's people requires mutual acceptance; otherwise, our worship is profanation.²⁴ The story of Prophet Jonah illustrates the importance of embracing an inclusive community. Jonah flees God's command to go to Nineveh and evades the command and instead starts for the extreme west on a ship sailing to Tarshish.²⁵ Jonah was reluctant to share his faith because of his sectarian view that others must not enjoy the mercy of God.

On the other hand, God wants the prophets to emphasise social justice, respect, and a thriving community that lives in communion with others.²⁶ Christians who remain steadfast in their faith in Jesus Christ are undoubtedly its beneficiaries, but individual members of the community also benefit from it.²⁷ The New Testament offers a

¹⁸ Dennis J. MaCarthy, "Prophets and Covenant Community," *Jeevadhara XI*, no. 62 (1981): 106.

¹⁹ Walter C. Kaiser, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 74.

²⁰ Kaiser, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 74.

²¹ Carolyn J. Sharp, *The Prophetic Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019), 187.

²² MaCarthy, "Prophets and Covenant Community," 108.

²³ Sharp, *The Prophetic Literature*, 16.

²⁴ MaCarthy, "Prophets and Covenant Community," 108.

²⁵ Klaus Koch, *The Prophets: The Babylonian and Persian Periods* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 2:182.

²⁶ MaCarthy, "Prophets and Covenant Community," 108-9.

²⁷ Antony Edanad, "Johannine Vision of Covenant Community," *Jeevadhara XI*, no. 62 (1981): 140.

profound vision of this radical and living communion, where believers are called to love one another deeply and to extend that love to the world around them.

1.3 The New Testament

In the synoptic Gospels, Jesus appears as the catalyst of faith, and faith is related to concrete situations of need. Faith is directed toward future well-being, and it is a force that brings them to Jesus.²⁸ According to the social-scientific interpretation, the Gospel of Mark portrays the followers of Jesus as a millennial community to embody the ministry of Jesus. The disciples must be prepared to abandon and be rejected by their families and villages (Mk 6:1–6) and join together with the actual “mother, brothers, and sisters” (Mk 3:20–21). This new family is nonbiological, which includes women (1:31; 10:30; 15:41) and children (9: 33–37; 10:13, 16), the unclean and dispossessed, the poor and outcast (6: 34–41; 8:2). Both Israelites and Gentiles are welcome to the apocalyptically oriented community.²⁹ It is how Mark underscored the significance of communal faith in his Gospel, emphasising the sharing of Christian faith among believers. In the Gospel of Mathew, the remarkable faith of Gentiles is appreciated, which is presented as surpassing the wavering faith of the Jews (Mt 8:10), and it highlights that Christian faith is inclusive, recognising and including individuals from all social backgrounds who believe in Christ.³⁰ The Gospel of Luke presents a view of Christian mission as an act of communion carried out by disciples. The mission is not about conquest, but rather about a compassionate encounter with the real-life challenges ministers face, which include gentleness, poverty, vulnerability and so forth.³¹ In the Gospel of John, as described in John 15:15, the horizontal dimension of friendship challenges the disciples to emulate the love and relationship that Jesus shared with the Father and his disciples. It involves cultivating a deep sense of fellowship and mutual support within the Christian community, expressed through sharing and selfless love.³²

²⁸ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 10–11.

²⁹ Dennis C. Duling, *The New Testament: History, Literature, and Social Context* (Australia: Wardsworth, 2003), 303–304.

³⁰ Józef Kudasiewicz, *The Synoptic Gospels Today*, trans. Sergius Wroblewski (New York: Alba House, 1996), 264.

³¹ Andre Fossion, “Hospitality as the Horizon of Gospel Communication,” *The Japan Mission Journal* 73, no. 4 (2019): 221.

³² Seena Maria, *Friendship as a New Paradigm of Johannine Discipleship: An Exegetico-Theological Study of John 15:12–17* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2023), 211–12.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Christian faith unites her members, incorporates them into her, and maintains them in her (Acts 2: 41), and faith is the shared element for all of the members of the Church.³³ The letter to Hebrews and several New Testament letters highlight that faith is described as a dynamic, communal, and holistic concept (Heb 10:39).³⁴

1.4 Biblical Personalities as Instruments of God's Care for Others

Authentic Christian faith goes beyond mere understanding, feeling, or personal experience; it is a way of life that is both private and public.³⁵ Abraham is the prototype of faith in the Old Testament, exemplifying unquestioning obedience to God's commands (Gen 12:1-3).³⁶ The blessings received by Abraham were not meant for him and his descendants alone; they were intended to extend to all the families of the earth, demonstrating the universal and inclusive nature of God's plan (Gen 22: 18; 26: 4).³⁷ For Moses, faith was not just a belief but an adhesion to God that empowered him to act and fulfill the tasks given to him.³⁸ Moses called the people to choose between blessing and curse, life and death, and obedience and disobedience. This choice aligned with God's will and fostered a strong sense of community (Dt 27-34).³⁹

Mother Mary is presented as a central figure in the Christian faith, a model whose life and 'Yes' to God's plan have both a radical and communal dimension.⁴⁰ In our faith journey, "Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture, and Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment."⁴¹ Mary's unwavering faith in God's redemptive plan for humanity is a powerful model for all believers. Her profound devotion and selfless cooperation in the incarnation and sacrifice of her Son, Jesus Christ, exemplify the radical transformation that faith can inspire. This communal dimension of Mary's faith unites

³³ Ocariz and Blanco, *Fundamental Theology*, 156.

³⁴ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 16.

³⁵ Hill et al., *Faith Religion & Theology*, 52-53.

³⁶ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 8.

³⁷ Terence E. Fretheim, *Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2007), 34.

³⁸ Luis Alonso Schökel and Guillermo Gutiérrez, *Moses: His Mission; Biblical Meditations*, trans. Dinah Livingstone (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1990), 29.

³⁹ John E. P. Taylor, "Moses and Old Covenant Obedience," *Churchman* 131, no. 4 (2017): 346.

⁴⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary Mother of the Redemption*, trans. Smith N.D. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 81.

⁴¹ Ocariz and Blanco, *Fundamental Theology*, 118.

believers across time and cultures, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose in their pursuit of spiritual redemption.

2. Fathers of the Church on a Radical and Living Communion with Others

The ‘Fathers of the Church’ were early Christian writers whose teachings emphasised the unity of believers.⁴² This unity was based on a shared belief in the same doctrines of revelation, even amidst diverse cultural and theological expressions.⁴³ Despite their diverse backgrounds, the Church Fathers shared a profound and convincing faith in Christ that compelled them to transmit it to others.⁴⁴ Their faith was not static; it was a dynamic force that motivated them to travel and share the Christian message in communion with others.⁴⁵

2.1 Ante-Nicene Fathers

The Apostolic Fathers did not focus on defining faith, but rather on encouraging Christians to persevere and grow in their faith. Their primary concern was practical rather than theoretical.⁴⁶ For example, in his letter to the Corinthian Church, Clement of Rome emphasised the need for discipline and unity to prevent strife.⁴⁷ Clement’s message highlights the role of faith in fostering peace, good works and conduct within the Christian community.⁴⁸ According to Ignatius of Antioch, the living and radical communion of the Church is reflected in its hierarchical structure, with bishops, priests and deacons.⁴⁹ He frequently connects faith and love, stating that faith is the beginning of life and love is the end. When the two blend perfectly, there is God, and followers must persevere in faithful action to the end for salvation.⁵⁰ In the *Apology*, Justine the Martyr defined his commitment to giving practical expression to his faith, and he emphasised that the

⁴² James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers: A Plain Exposition and Vindication of the Church Founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Illinois: TAN Books, 1980), 4.

⁴³ Michel Fédou, *The Fathers of the Church in Christian Theology*, trans. Peggy Manning Meyer (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 202.

⁴⁴ Yves Congar, *Tradition & Traditions: The Biblical, Historical, and Theological Evidence for Catholic Teaching on Tradition* (San Diego: Basilica Press, 1996), 24.

⁴⁵ Bryan M. Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 17.

⁴⁶ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 20.

⁴⁷ *The First Epistle of Clement* 22 (ANF 1:11).

⁴⁸ *The First Epistle of Clement* 32 (ANF 1:13).

⁴⁹ *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians* 6 (ANF 1:62).

⁵⁰ *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians* 16 (ANF 1:55).

Christian call was to love and pray for enemies.⁵¹ St. Irenaeus expressed his faith through a commitment to unity, aiming to harmonise the various early Christian communities. He used the analogy of the sun, which gives the same light everywhere, to illustrate how the light of faith shines uniformly throughout the world.⁵² Irenaeus' Catholic faith emphasised fostering a deep, living communion with every member of the Church community.⁵³ Tertullian taught that to be a Christian means persevering in faith to the very end,⁵⁴ and Christian Community is a unified body bound by a shared faith, discipline and hope.⁵⁵

2.2 Post-Nicene Fathers

During the fourth century, Latin authors such as Hilary, Marius Victorinus, and Ambrose primarily discussed faith in the context of their arguments against Arianism. Among these Western Fathers, Augustine of Hippo is uniquely influential for his theology of faith.⁵⁶ St. Augustine opposed Donatism's view of a 'Pure' Church, and promoted a 'mixed Church' that includes both saints and sinners, held together by the bonds of peace and love.⁵⁷ St. Augustine saw faith not as a powerless reality but as a force with inherent power. God's revelation in Christ does not simply initiate human action but orients and corrects a person's path, showing them how to love God in response to His love for humanity. According to Augustine, faith belongs exclusively to those who believe in God.⁵⁸ St. Ambrose restored order to the Church in Milan and was a strong advocate against the oppression of people by rulers,⁵⁹ notably challenging Emperor Theodosius.⁶⁰ He emphasised that a minister's task is to ensure that both love of God and love of neighbour are practised, and was particularly insistent on having an explicit faith in Christ with a faithful and devout spirit.⁶¹ According to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, faith

⁵¹ *The First Apology of Justine* 14 (ANF 1:167) ; Cf. Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 7.

⁵² *Against the Heresies* 3.6 (ANF 1:420).

⁵³ Fédou, *The Fathers of the Church in Christian Theology*, 202.

⁵⁴ *The Prescription against Heretics* 1.3 (ANF 3:244).

⁵⁵ *Apology* 39 (ANF 3:46).

⁵⁶ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 25.

⁵⁷ Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists* 7.51 (NPNF 4:512).

⁵⁸ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 32 (NPNF 5:97); Cf. Henri De Lubac, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Richard Arnandez (Ignatius Press, 1986), 299–301.

⁵⁹ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 217.

⁶⁰ Ambrose, *letter to Emperor Theodosius* 51.4 (NPNF 10:451).

⁶¹ Ambrose, *Exposition of the Christian Faith* 1.2.12 (NPNF 10:203).

has a transformative power that benefits the individual and others. He describes faith as ‘Catholic’ meaning it as universal and must be actively shared with all people, regardless of their status or background. This faith is intended to bring salvation and holiness to everyone, underscoring its inclusive mission.⁶² St. Leo the Great emphasised that the dual commandment to love God and neighbour is inseparable, for him, perfect love of God must be accompanied by a comprehensive love for all people, a love rooted in our shared human nature.⁶³ St. Leo has a strong faith in caring for people in need, and he says it aligns with our faith; we cannot ignore people experiencing poverty. Caring for the weak and supporting others are deeply rooted in our faith.⁶⁴

St. Ephrem served as a metaphorical bridge between two distinct cultural worlds of Greco-Roman culture and Semitic Syriac culture; the early Church Fathers considered Ephrem very astute when it came to discerning sound doctrine and teaching it to the whole Church and a champion against heresy.⁶⁵ Christian faith calls us to love people, and envy is from Satan, who subverts orthodox teaching, sows hateful things, turns upside down hope, cuts it off, and ultimately isolates us from others and God.⁶⁶ The steadfast love of God is seen in loving fellow humans: “If thou hatest thy fellow, thy hatred is towards God.”⁶⁷

2.3 Middle Ages

St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) articulated the leitmotif of his theology in the original subtitle of his *Proslogion*: “Faith Seeking Understanding.” Anselm feels bound to believe that this is so, for it is written in Scripture that without faith, it is impossible to understand.⁶⁸ For Anselm, faith is related directly to experience; in this experience, God is in a relationship entered by faith, allowing him to approach God at any time, seeking help to deepen his understanding.⁶⁹ Through God, people love Him, and themselves and one another; therefore, our

⁶² Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 5.8 (NPNF 7:31).

⁶³ Leo the Great, *Sermon* 12.2 (NPNF 12:122).

⁶⁴ Leo the Great, *Sermon* 10.1 (NPNF 12:120).

⁶⁵ St. Ephraim, *Ephraim the Syrian* 1.1 (NPNF 13:120).

⁶⁶ St. Ephraim, *Seven Hymns on the Faith* 7.2 (NPNF 13:330).

⁶⁷ St. Ephraim, *Three Homilies* 2.4 (NPNF 13:299).

⁶⁸ Charlesworth M. J., trans., *St. Anselm's Proslogion* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 53.

⁶⁹ Terrence R Kenney, “Faith and Reason in Anselm,” *The Covenant Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (1980): 12.

faith in Him must have a radical and loving communion with one another.⁷⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas says that the purpose of faith and all other virtues is charity. Therefore, the love of God and love of neighbour are interrelated, and believers must not only hold faith inwardly but also confess it outwardly when it serves God's honour and the good of their neighbour.⁷¹

3. Theological Understanding of a Radical and Loving Communion with Others

In a theological sense, faith is a dynamic reality that involves more than just belief; it is a life-giving movement toward God and others.⁷² Rene Latourelle describes faith as adherence to God's word, which invites us into a deep and fulfilling friendship with God.⁷³ Our faith in God, Gerhard Ebeling says, "faith is movement and happening; it is life, fulfilled life."⁷⁴ Faith involves including others and moving towards the life promised by Christ. Romano Guardini distinguishes between two types of faith: 'full faith' is characterised by a lively and intense awareness of what is believed, and a sensitivity to the World and people around us; in contrast, an 'empty faith' tends to be cold and indifferent to the things and ideas they encounter.⁷⁵ Karl Rahner, in his *Foundations of Christian Faith*, emphasises that people receive faith from the concreteness of a community of persons, through intercommunication, and develop it only within this community; the life of an individual Christian is inseparable from the Church, where the grace of God shapes their faith.⁷⁶ Individual faith and the personal experience of grace are not mutually exclusive with ecclesial Christianity, and the personal Christian identity and ecclesial identity are interconnected; much like the body and soul, there has to be intercommunication within the Church.⁷⁷ Christian faith does not

⁷⁰ St. Anselm, *Proslogion* 25; Cf. Charlesworth M. J., *St. Anselm's Proslogion*, 149.

⁷¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 3, a. 2. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 1989), 3:1184.

⁷² Ocariz and Blanco, *Fundamental Theology*, 168.

⁷³ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 426.

⁷⁴ Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith*, 21.

⁷⁵ Romano Guardini, *The Life of Faith*, trans. John Chapin (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1961), 87.

⁷⁶ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1978), 389.

⁷⁷ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, 389.

support a life of isolation but rather a deep reliance on fellowship with other believers.⁷⁸

3.1 Personal Response of Our Faith

As individual Christians, we are called to respond to God with our response, for God is our mystical partner, and we need to have a personal response of faith in Him.⁷⁹ A Christian has to have a personal relationship with Jesus in faith, hope and love because, as an existential reality, a Christian is always present through God's self-communication in the depths of his conscience, through living a sacramental life, through the preaching of the Gospel and the deliberate practice of a Christian and Ecclesial life.⁸⁰

3.2 Communal Dimension of Our Faith

Catholic faith is not a private matter but a commitment to active, loving communion with others. For early Christians, faith was a public, social commitment that required them to be actively involved in the lives of others, particularly those in need.⁸¹ St. Thomas Aquinas states that Christians must have a living faith, not merely a lifeless one, and Aquinas means that a corresponding commitment to good works must accompany our declaration of faith in Christ.⁸² For St. Augustine, faith is the shared element that unites all members of the Church: "we are one because we believe."⁸³ Avery Dulles insightfully explores how our faith strengthens the human community, fosters solidarity, and inspires acts of service: "Faith gives an unwavering centre of loyalty, undergirding trust, truthfulness, and commitment. In so doing, faith offers a remedy against cynicism, suspicion, greed, and selfishness, and faith motivates to care for the weak and helpless and the fashioning of a universal community."⁸⁴ Christian faith has a fundamental communal nature because it is an event of salvation from Jesus, intended for universal salvation.⁸⁵ Christian faith is not only concerned with being a good person privately; it also includes being

⁷⁸ Karl Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord: Theological Meditations* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 26–27.

⁷⁹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 309.

⁸⁰ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 306–7.

⁸¹ Hill et al., *Faith Religion & Theology*, 52–53.

⁸² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 4, a. 4.

⁸³ Augustine, *Tractate on the Gospel of St. John* 110.17.2 (NPNF 7:408).

⁸⁴ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 278.

⁸⁵ Rahner, *Foundation of Christian Faith*, 347.

publicly involved in working for peace and justice.⁸⁶ Therefore, our response to faith must align with faith's communal dimensions.

3.3 Challenges of Our Faith

Even in a world where humanity seems to have lost control, the Church's call remains constant to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁸⁷ The upper room in Jerusalem served as a 'school of faith' where the Apostles experienced a deep struggle between belief and unbelief, ultimately leading to a profound confession of Christ's truth. The upper room highlights that faith can coexist with doubt and internal conflict.⁸⁸ To face the challenges of faith, we need to understand the various models of faith, each offering unique insights and orientations that guide our faith journey. Avery Dulles proposes seven models of faith: the Propositional model, the Transcendental model, the Fiducial Model, the Affective-Experiential model, the Obediential model, the Praxis model, and the Personalist model.⁸⁹ Our faith should make a person doctrinally orthodox, trustful, obedient, and socially committed; the different models of faith should be seen as complementary, not contradictory. Our faith must transform believers from within, orienting them in a new way toward God, as their Creator, Saviour, and ultimate end.⁹⁰

Conclusion

In supernatural faith, Fernando Ocariz says that believers participate in a radical transformation, as can be seen in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, where the effects of believing in the Gospel are radically different from the effects of observing the Mosaic law (Gal 3:7, 13-14).⁹¹ According to the Second Vatican Council's *Dei Verbum*, Christian faith is rooted in the experience of God's revelation through Jesus Christ.⁹² This faith is not just an intellectual belief but a call to transform our lives and become more like Christ through our

⁸⁶ Hill et al., *Faith Religion & Theology*, 53.

⁸⁷ Marthe Dansokho, "International Review of Mission," *International Review of Mission* LXXXIII, no. 331 (1994): 613.

⁸⁸ Pope John Paul II, "The Challenges of Faith and Youth Today," *The Pope Speaks* 46, no. 1 (2001): 17. This Message is From Addressing Youth During 15th World Youth Day by Pope John Paul II.

⁸⁹ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 170-80.

⁹⁰ Dulles, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, 181.

⁹¹ Ocariz and Blanco, *Fundamental Theology*, 151.

⁹² DV § 2; Cf. Kalaparambath, "Jesus Christ- The Revealed Truth of God Forms the Basis of Christian Decision of Faith. A study of Believing and Reliving the Revealed Truth for a Mature Christian Life According to *Dei Verbum*, 60.

experience of Jesus.⁹³ To be a messenger of God's love, one must love one's neighbour through patience, forgiveness, and tolerance.⁹⁴ Faith is our confidence in the personal experience of others, a conviction gained through the power of the Spirit which is at work in others; the brotherly love out of our faith is not directed towards an abstract but towards our actual brother here and now, our "neighbour."⁹⁵ Therefore, in his call to be "pilgrims of hope" Pope Francis urges Christians to journey with others by practising the essential aspects of our faith. The invitation includes promoting equality, caring for others, and fostering communion within the Church. Our faith fosters a profound social dimension, inspiring us to engage in a radical and living communion with one another. First and foremost, communion with our fellow Christians is essential, and it must extend to all humanity. In our practical Christian way of life, we can accept others, but we are not able to live and accept the Christians who are poor in economic and sociological conditions. Our Christian faith is supposed to respond to all evils and make a beautiful human community.

⁹³ Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 463.

⁹⁴ Karl Rahner, *Everyday Faith*, trans. O'Hara W.J. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 117.

⁹⁵ Karl Rahner, *Theological Meditations: Belief Today*, trans. Heelan M. H. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 55.