



Most Rev Anthony Randazzo
Bishop of Broken Bay

Message for BBNeighbourhoods
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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the first encyclical written in Pope Francis' pontificate, [Lumen Fidei](#), the Holy Father looked at the biblical account of faith in the Old Testament. In particular, he looked at the kind of faith that Abraham exercised.

The faith of Abraham, says Pope Francis, was a faith where journeying in the expectation of the fulfilment of a promise by God took centre stage. The encyclical had this beautiful line to sum up the kind of faith I want to talk about this week in our Broken Bay Neighbourhoods: "faith sees insofar as it journeys" (Lumen Fidei, 9).

One of the fruits of the incarnation is that our faith cannot be an exit from this world. This is because heaven does not run from this world, it runs through it. The kind of faith our forebears believed and embraced was faith in action, embodied in the concrete circumstances of our lives.

The Psalms keep reminding us not only to think of the Lord, but "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34:8). This verse in [Psalm 34](#) is a beautiful reminder of two important things.

First, it is a reminder of the incarnational aspect of our faith. Our faith in God is one that our bodies can and should experience and put into action in a concrete way. If you read this line of Psalm 34 carefully, you might notice that it is also a call to each and every one of us. It is calling us to be attentive to our circumstances and not try to use our faith to escape from them.

Our lived experiences are not a distraction from our faith in Christ. They are the very tools God uses for us to engage our faith. Indirectly, Psalm 34 is calling us to be attentive to the care of our sisters and brothers in Christ. Remember that when we walk with Christ, we also walk in communion with our brothers and sisters, and so they form an integral part of our lived experience of faith.

The other thing that the Psalm reminds us, is that our walk *in* and *with* Christ is ultimately a *work* of Christ.

When I say that faith is a faith in action, I do not mean that faith is a self-help programme. There is a line that says that "God helps those who help themselves", and this is terrible theology.



Faith does not mean pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps and proving to God that we are worthy of Divine assistance. Faith is not a force within us, it is a free gift of God, and the greatest gift of all is the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.

This is where the incarnation once again becomes so important. The incarnation reminds us that God is not out there, distant, and uninterested in the lives of His Creatures. God poured himself out to live in solidarity with His creatures. In the person of Jesus, God lives as we would live and experiences the world as we would experience it. By doing so, God redeemed the world, and is still redeeming the world, out of love for you and me.

God continues to love us by joining us in our life, our joys, our hopes, and our sufferings, assuring us that we are not alone. This, my brothers and sisters, is what we call “grace”. It is the pure and undeserved love of God. Our walk with Jesus Christ is the living out of that ridiculously abundant love of God for His world, in this world.

Blessings of love, joy, and peace,

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