

Flight of Faith- August 7, 2022
By Rev'd Jenny for St. James in St. Marys and you!

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

As many of you know, I recently had my grandson, Rory, come from PEI for a visit. He stayed for a week and then I travelled back to PEI with him for a few days' visit. It was wonderful to get to know Rory as a twelve-year-old. And it was wonderful to spend time with my daughter, Sarah. Time passes so quickly and with the pandemic, our visits have been few and far between.

Rory travelled by himself to Ontario by airplane. Being now twelve years old, he is no longer given special treatment and must navigate on his own. This was stressful for his parents, as you can well imagine. We booked the flights so that he didn't have to change planes and left and arrived at small airports that are easier to navigate. No Toronto airport for sure! Even I as an adult can get lost there!

As Sarah and Owen saw Rory off as he entered the secure area of the airport, it was very difficult for them. They had to have faith that Rory could navigate security on his own. They had to have faith that Rory could listen for instructions on when to board the plane and appropriately navigate that. They had to have faith that Rory would be able to find his seat. They had to have faith Rory would behave appropriately during the flight. They had to have faith that the flight crew would assist as needed. They had to have faith that the pilot would be able to take off, fly, and land the plane safely and at the correct airport. They had to have faith that the plane itself was well maintained and safe. They had to have faith that Rory would be able to navigate getting off of the plane and retrieve his suitcase. They had to have faith I would be there to meet Rory and that I would take good care of him while he was in Ontario.

And that was just to get Rory to Ontario! It took a great amount of faith. Of course, some things, Sarah and Owen had more faith in than others. They have great faith in my ability to meet Rory and look after him while he is in my care. That is faith that comes from knowledge and experience.

They had faith in Rory being able to navigate the system safely. They have travelled with Rory, and he has travelled on his own but under the “unaccompanied youth” program airlines have. It is wonderful. They take the child from the parent, and someone takes him right through to getting in his seat on the plane. Then the stewards pay special attention and give extra treats. The child is accompanied off the plane at the destination and handed over to the designated and approved person at the destination. But this trip, Rory is too old for that program. Sarah and Owen had faith Rory could handle it though. That also is faith that comes from knowledge and experience.

But when it came to having faith in the plane and the flight crew, Sarah and Owen had to trust and have faith in the unknown. They have never met the flight crew. Sarah and Owen had not inspected the plane or questioned the pilot about his or her experience flying planes. This faith was based on trust and experience.

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Our Epistle today from Hebrews centers on Abraham and the faith he had. Seven times in the short reading, we hear the phrase, “by faith”. It is like a heartbeat through the reading. By faith...by faith...by faith... by faith...by faith...by faith...by faith.

Abraham set out by faith, leaving his homeland and travelling without knowing the destination. This was a faith far greater than putting your only child on a plane. It would be more like putting Rory on a plane without knowing the destination or timeline, only knowing I would be there to meet him.

Abraham also had faith enough to believe he could create children in his old age and that his wife who also was well beyond the childbearing years would conceive and bear a healthy child. Abraham had faith when God told him that his descendants would be “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

Abraham had faith that all of this would carry on even after he had died. He also had faith that he would enter a heavenly kingdom far better than anything on earth.

Abraham’s faith was great and can seem almost unachievable for us common people. Each day, we experience faith in things though, don’t we? We get out of bed each day, trusting the floor beneath our feet will hold us up. We breathe air we have faith surrounds us. We turn on taps, having faith water will come out and that it is clean and safe. We sit down on a chair, having faith the chair will hold us. We eat food we have faith is healthy and safe even when we do not know where it was grown or how it was manufactured. We drive our car having faith it will work well and will protect us if we get in an accident. We have faith that the other drivers will drive in a safe manner.

That is just a quick sampling of ways we have faith each day in this hoped for and unseen. How much different is having faith in God? We cannot see God or hear God or feel God in the ways we see, hear, and feel humans. But if that were the criterion, I would never get on a plane or in a car because I have never seen, heard or felt the people who manufactured them. I have never seen, felt, or heard the person who first invented cars or airplanes either. But I have faith that they can do what they are designed to do. I know from observing others boarding the plane, not all people share the same level of faith in the aircraft, the pilot, or even the science of flight. Some are very nervous, and some are comfortable. But each of them has taken a leap of faith. There are many who will never have that faith. They will never step foot in an aircraft and will never be able to experience the joy and gift of flying.

So, how do we develop faith in our unseen, unfelt, and unheard God? Some never do, sadly. Just like those who never have the faith to fly, some will never have the faith to believe in God. That doesn’t mean planes that fly don’t exist, and it also doesn’t mean God doesn’t exist.

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Each of us must take that first step in the journey towards faith. We can gain knowledge about whatever we want to place our faith in. We can learn about airplanes and pilots and aerodynamics. Or maybe we are taken on a plane as a child and learn to trust through our parents giving us that experience. Or maybe someday we decide we want to go to Australia and the best way to do that is to fly so we just get on a plane and have faith in getting there safely.

It is the same with faith in God. We may study for years and finally decide it is safe to have faith in God. We may be introduced to God through our parents whom we already have faith in. Or we may have an experience where we just step out in faith and believe in God.

No matter how you come to faith in God, it is certainly worth it. More than getting on a plane for a journey, faith in God is a journey that will take you into eternity. It will enrich your life now and in the future. It will take you places you never dreamed possible. It will comfort you in times when things don't go as planned. It will introduce you to a community of fellow believers who will also help hold you up and will journey with you.

Faith is the greatest gift God can give us. Thank you for taking this faith journey with me today, tomorrow, and for all eternity.

Buckle up! The best is yet to come.