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GOSPEL MOVIES

by
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FAITH

*GOSPEL
MOVIES*

(Second series)

FAITH

by

Placidus Kempf, O. S. B.

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PREVIEW

In *SERIES I* of the *GOSPEL MOVIES*, which had "GRACE" for its theme, we saw in the persons that came in contact with the unborn, the newborn, and the growing Savior, that grace works quickly, but that it also demands certain qualities of soul of its recipients.

In the second circle of men who came in contact with the "power that went forth from Christ" we have the twelve Apostles, who were sent to communicate this saving and healing power to all creatures by preaching, healing diseases, and casting out devils. By grace each Christian is made an apostle, to spread the faith in the pagan land of his own soul. Here are idols to be overthrown and devils to be driven out in the name of Christ. This is not to be the work of a month or a year, but of a whole human lifetime. Christ sent His disciples "TWO BY TWO" before Him into every town and place where He Himself was about to come."

For the conversion of our own soul "Grace" must be paired with that kind of "FAITH" that we see exemplified in the lives of the twelve Apostles. Like theirs, our faith must not be commercialized, but must be solid, sincere, active, constructive, prompt, eager, patient, zealous, proselyting, confident, persevering. It is such faith that will overcome the pagan world in your interior and demolish its idols. Eternal Truth assures us: "All things are possible to him who believes" (St. Mark 9:22).

Placidus Kempf, O.S.B.

Operator

The Rock Floats



“Upon this rock I will build
my Church.”

St. Matth. 16:18.

WHEN the last of the Apostles, St. John, an exile on the Island of Patmos, viewed in vision the “holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from

God,” he saw that the “wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the twelve names of twelve apostles of the Lamb.” How well he knew the bearer of each name!

There was, first of all, Simon, whose name the Master had changed to Peter—Rock.

What a transformation three years of contact with the Master and the grace of

Pentecost had wrought in this mass of pliable clay! It had solidified to a rock that would withstand the storms and waves of all time. But much patient molding had to accompany this slow process of hardening. First there must be extracted the *water of pride*, (manifested by his self-sufficient protestation of loyalty) which was pressed out by the triple denial in the courtyard. ("I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.") Next, there must be forced out the *air bubbles of vain presumption*, that would not serve as a life preserver on a stormy sea. ("O thou of little faith!") The *coldness of self-seeking love*, manifested by the shameful desertion, must be replaced by the triple protestation of self-sacrificing love and unwavering constancy. ("Lord, to whom shall we go?") A weak, fearful, earth-formed Peter entered God's kiln in the upper room, heated by the mutual love of Father and Son,—the Holy Ghost. A strong, fearless, divinized Peter emerged to profess his faith by word and deed and death in "Christ, the Son of the living God." There was to be no more going away from Him, but a constant walking towards Him with feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

Under a Fig Tree



"In whom there is no guile."
—St. John 1:47.

ACCORD-
ING to St.
Paul, "he is ap-
proved whom
God commend-
eth". What a
wonderful com-
mendation the
Savior has for
the Apostle
Bartholomew,

whom St. John calls Nathaniel, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile!" For no other of the Apostles has He such words of praise. To be so pure, so honest, so noble and upright that even Christ Himself is constrained to proclaim him guileless remains the Apostle's greatest badge of earthly distinction.

Philip had told Bartholomew that he had found Him of Whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus, the Son of Joseph of Nazareth. Bartholomew's reply to this startling news was: "Can anything of good

come from Nazareth?" His faith was deep, but its outpouring needed proper direction. There are Catholics who make themselves acquainted with what they think is the reasonable side of their faith. They steep themselves in a certain kind of controversial lore out of an admirable spirit of loyalty. They are forever *standing* up, as they say, for the Church. That is good. But it is better first to kneel down with her and for her. This spirit of championship is too often but the poor makeshift of a radically weak will. It seeks to prove that will "good" to Our Lord by a show of fortitude and skill in argument. They are not without guile.

Bartholomew, heeding the invitation of Philip, came to see for himself. Jesus had but to allude to what had happened under the certain fig tree, known to the Apostle alone, to elicit from him the remarkable profession of faith: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." He will be skinned alive for his Master, because his faith is not skin deep. It bubbles up like a deep spring of clear water from a simple, strong soul, honest to the core, without crannies or shadowy corners where guilty secrets might lurk, without deception.

Probing Fingers



"How can we know the way?"
—St. John 14:5.

SCARCELY is a child of Adam born into this wonderful world when it curls itself up into a question mark and cries: "Why? why?"

When able to propel itself on hands and knees it begins its tour of exploration and investigation. Everything must be seen, touched, tasted, and taken apart.

The Apostle, St. Thomas, was a true child of Adam. He is called "Didymus—Twin." Thomas, in Syriac, means "twin." We find him making good use of his twin senses. Thomas manifested his deep faith

in Christ by his ardent profession: "My Lord and my God!" At the last supper the Master told His sorrowing Apostles that he was going to leave them in order to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, "Whither I go, you know, and the way you know." Thomas replied: "Lord we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" His faith was not wavering. He merely asked for the grace to see the Divine Truth more clearly, that it might be "a lamp to his feet" to enable him to walk more securely on the Way—Christ. After the resurrection, when he demands to see the glorious wounds in the body of the risen Savior, was it not that his probing fingers might penetrate more deeply into this fathomless mystery of the Savior's boundless love? Faith is never satisfied until supplanted by beatific vision.

Faith is not a science, but an infused gift, a supernatural power that vitalizes the soul. But this power, like any bodily organ, will grow weak and become useless unless constantly engaged in penetrating ever more deeply into the divine mysteries. Thereby the soul "shall go from virtue to virtue" until the "God of gods shall be seen in Sion," the place prepared not for doubting, but for humbly probing Thomases.

Building Blocks



“Build up yourselves upon
your most holy faith.”
—St. Jude 1:20.

THE earliest feat that an unlettered child learns to accomplish is to heap up its play blocks on the floor. Later, after it has mastered the alphabet, it will try to spell out simple words by means of the letters on the cubes, or arrange them in some geometrical form or pattern. For either it needs a solid foundation—the floor or ground.

The same holds with regard to the true faith. If our faith is to be a constructive faith, it needs a solid foundation. The more solid this foundation, the more readi-

ly adaptable it becomes to the various demands made on it in our daily lives. There is a difference in "heart soil" into which faith is implanted. The Apostle Thaddeus was a "man of heart," but suited to become a supporting pillar of Christ's Church only after a *change of heart* had taken place, after becoming an apostle after the Heart of God. He shared Simon's faith and zeal for the law, but, though impetuous of character and feeling, remained in doubt long after he was called. He had looked for a sensational establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom. Querulous about his own greatest honor and privilege, he asked Jesus at the Last Supper: "Lord, how is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?"—St. John 14:22. And Jesus said to him: "If any man *love* me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will *make our abode* with him."—14:23. There is the solidifying force—LOVE. Faith gives birth to love, and love—manifested by doing the Will of God—intensifies faith. St. Jude was a man of quick intelligence and generous spirit when once fully convinced. There was something both of intimate fraternal love and of chivalrous devotion in his adherence to the Savior.

*From
Belt to
Halter*



“What are you willing to give me? —St. Matth. 26:15.

JUDAS Iscariot! The word “Iscariot” is said to be deprived from “Kerioth,” Judas’s native place, or from the “leather belt” worn by this perfidious

Apostle. A belt is a useful article when used to hold up one’s garments; but it becomes an instrument of death when used as a halter. That is what Judas’s love of gain became to his mercenary soul. It pulled its opening ever tighter until it choked in it the life of grace: Judas was a hypocrite, a liar, a thief. When he murmured against the “waste” caused by Mary Magdalen

pouring the precious ointment over the Savior's feet, St. John adds this significant comment: "Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein." He saw three hundred pence expended on ointment instead of being put into his purse; his miserly soul lusted for these pence, and he betrayed himself in words that reveal his inmost character in all its hideous littleness.

Judas has his followers today. To many Catholics their "deposit" of faith is something to be gambled with for mercenary and selfish gain, a means of exploiting God. "What will you give me?" seems to be their only motive in living according to the teachings of their faith. They attend Holy Mass for the gain that attendance brings to themselves, not for the purpose of rendering to God the worship that is His due. They give alms because of the "hundredfold" reward promised. They pray, because it pays. Thus selfishness is drawing their soul's mouth ever tighter, making it impossible for God (Who will not use force) to get His graces and gifts into it. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." —Ps. 80:11.

Making Change



“He arose and followed him.”
—St. Matth. 9:9.

A COIN is placed on the closed eyelids of a deceased person to keep them closed until the *rigor mortis* has set in. Money blinded Judas to real values, a n d

caused the death of his body and his hardened, commercial soul. At the tax collector's till Levi's eyes were opened by the

Master's simple invitation: "Come, follow me." Immediately "he arose and followed Him." It was the Master collecting tax of him, and Matthew paid it willingly in the sterling coin of prompt faith.

Faith does not ask: "*Why* does God make this demand of me?" or "*How* can I meet this demand?" It believes, hopes, and acts, no matter what objections human prudence might raise. Consider Christ's action and that of His Apostle in this case.

Matthew's call to the apostolate represents a distinct act of defiance to public opinion on the part of Christ. He, the King of the Jews, selects a member of the most hated class in Galilean society to act as one of his immediate company. A Roman official to begin with, a Jewish Roman official to make matters worse, a publican, a tax collector, who was regarded as thriving on the misery and misfortune of others.

And Matthew? He prepared a banquet for tax officials and sinners as a public farewell to his former friends and companions—the only friends he had. "Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."—Gal. 1:10.

Prosaic Plodders



"Lord, show us the Father."
—St. John 14:8.

GRACE does not destroy native character; grace merely elevates and perfects it. That seems to be the truth exemplified by the life of the apostle, St.

Philip. Philip, a disciple of St. John the Baptist, has the Messiah pointed out to him. He announces, not only the glad news, but also the carefully thought-out evidence as well: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." To the objection raised by Nathaniel, the good-natured skeptic, he counters with the one supreme argument: "Come and see."

When five hundred hungry souls have been sated with the Bread of Truth, and Jesus wishes to refresh also their bodies before sending them away, He turns to Philip, who has established his reputation of being a practical man, of knowing the sober facts of a case, and asks: "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Philip with lightning calculation estimates the amount of bread required to give so great a crowd a fish sandwich.

It is after the last supper. Jesus is taking leave of His Apostles. He is consoling them in advance and strengthening them for the ordeal that is to test their souls and try their confidence and trust in Him. He points out the one and only "Way" to "Truth" and "Life." Philip is still puzzled. To him, at least, the Master is still speaking in riddles. Once again he uses the old test of things, "Seeing is believing," and asks with eager faith: "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us."

Even after Pentecost he remains true to his innate character, a prosaic, plodding, methodical, practical man, aflame with intense personal love of Christ, but still the average man instinct with a high purpose and alive with it.

Test Tube Trials



"The trying of your faith begets patience."

—St. James 1:3.

PATIENT trial has taught the chemist, who separates matter into its component parts by means of distillation in his test tube or alembic, that

the separation of the elements takes place according to fixed laws. These he has reduced to chemical formulae.

In His book of spiritual formulae, the Sacred Scriptures, God clearly shows what results to expect when the human soul is made the test tube for experiments. In his epistle St. James shows how one of these laws works out. When God applies the torch of trial to a soul *full of faith*, the visible residue is a greater or less amount of *patience*. "Knowing that the trying of

your faith begets patience. And patience hath a perfect work.”—St. James 1:3-4. The various stages of this distilling process are described by St. Paul in his letter to the Romans (5:3-5): “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, trial; and trial, hope; and hope confoundeth not.”

St. James, the Brother (i. e. Cousin) of the Lord, surnamed “The Just,” and first bishop of Jerusalem was revered for his wisdom, austerity, and meekness. His Epistle reveals him as a man of calm mind, trust in Christ, a man of prayer, and devoted to the poor. His *patient faith* made him truly wise. “The *learning* of a man is known in patience.”—Prov. 19:11. His calmness rested on the twofold foundation—“He that believeth, let him *not hasten*,” (Is. 28:16), and “Let us *run by patience* to the fight proposed to us,” (Heb. 12:1). His trust in Christ rested on the words of St. Paul: “If we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience.” (Rom. 8:25)

After 86 years of patient faith, patient prayer, patient waiting, the crown of martyrdom graced the crushed skull of St. James—his eyes of faith beheld the splendor of the beatific vision.

Stethoscopic Diagnosis



“Lord, behold here are two swords.” —St. Luke 22:38.

TO MINI-
MIZE our
fears when some
part of our bodi-
ly mechanism
fails to function
properly t h e
medical examin-
er will magnify
the echoes, re-
sulting from

our heart's broadcast in our constricted chest, by means of his stethoscope.

“Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church,” counsels St. James (5:14). He not only counsels, he comes with his stethoscope to examine our faith. Three times within the narrow limits of ten verses of his advice-teeming letter he gives the infallible symptoms whereby we may distinguish a

living from a dead faith. "Faith *without works is dead.*" (2:17,20,26) He, whom we just saw to be a type of *patient* faith, is the brother of Simon, a type of *zealous* faith. Simon, called the Zealot and Cananean, from Kanna, which means "zealous," had transferred his fiery zeal for the preservation of the Jewish national spirit to the personality of Christ. Hence, after the last Supper, when Jesus counsels His Apostles: "He that hath no purse, let him sell his coat and *buy a sword,*" Simon, the militant patriot, was ready with the answer: "Lord, here are two swords." And Jesus said: "It is enough."

"In patience you shall possess your soul," (St. Luke 21:19) and with your zeal you will win back your soul from the slavery of sin and death to the service of Christ and eternal life. Patience may be termed the glowing embers in the furnace, zeal, the heat that emanates from these embers and furnishes the motive power. Peter's impetuous zeal burned out before the fire of the soldiers and servants in the courtyard. It flared up and died. Simon's zealous faith could not be "sawed in half" and killed as his body was, for more closely than the ties of blood was it inseparably joined to patience.

+ Equals X



"God loved Andrew."
(Divine Office of Feast.)

CHRIST'S Cross is a symbol of pure love and purifying suffering. Jesus eagerly endured suffering on the Cross because of His boundless love of us. We pa-

tiently endure the suffering He sends us because of our grateful love of Him. God sends sufferings to His friends as a test of their love of Him, and as a proof of His love for them. Since "God loved Andrew" He let him die on a cross that since then is called by his name—St. Andrew's Cross.

Again, the figure of the Cross of Christ and of the Cross of St. Andrew are the signs we use for addition and multiplication. Though unlike in shape, they produce the same result, for $3+3+3$ and 3×3 will always equal nine. The first sign repre-

sents a man standing erect and still, the second a man in motion. Both are symbolic of our faith.

By "acts" of faith we *add* to our personal store and thereby increase our spiritual stature. By "acting" or living our faith we *multiply* the believers in Christ, spreading the faith among them like a running flame. Andrew, quick at addition (to believe himself), was equally quick at multiplication (to spread the faith among others). He is the Apostle who "brings others to Jesus." Through St. John the Baptist he was led to Jesus, and spent a day with Him. He could not keep the news of his discovery to himself but quickly told Peter, his brother, the good news. When the thousands followed the Master into the waste places without food, and the other Apostles stood helplessly by wondering what could be done, Andrew quickly sized up the situation and brought the boy with five loaves and a few fishes to Jesus. Again, when a group of Gentiles asked to see Jesus, Philip, whom they met first, referred the matter to Andrew, who took them at once to Christ. If your faith does not make converts there is something radically wrong with the positive side of your elementary mathematics.

Mixing Drinks



“Can you drink of the cup of which I am about to drink? We can.” —St. Matth. 20:22.

IN TIME of stress, when modern man feels the need of a stimulant to bear up under endured or anticipated strain, he will mix a drink for himself according to his own taste and capacity or need. God does the same to us. He knows our capacity, but he does not consult our taste. See the cup He offered His own beloved Son in the Garden of Olives! All the bitterness of every sin of every child of Adam was in that chalice, yet Jesus drained it to the dregs because of His boundless love of every sinful soul.

James, the Greater, brother of John, loved his Master ardently. As a demonstration of their purest and noblest friendship for Christ, he and John asked that they might be nearest to Jesus when "His Hour" was come. It was a request dictated by tenderness and courage. As such Christ met it. "You know not what you ask," He said, "Can you drink of the cup of which I am about to drink?" James knew the meaning of the question well enough. He knew it meant sacrifice and renunciation, pain and defeat, a share of the world's hatred, for these were to form the contents of the bitter cup that Christ foresaw for His friends that would chose His fate as their own. He generously replied: "I *can*." This was not said in a spirit of boastful pride, but in confident humility, for in the cup mixed by God and presented to him to drink, James had mixed a goodly portion of confidence born of faith in the words of the Master: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world."—St. Jn. 16.33.

* * * * *

Christ: "Can you drink of my chalice?"

James: "I *can*."

Herod—"Killed James, the brother of John, with a sword."—He *did*.

Pensive

Pensioner



"I wish him (John) to remain until I come."
—St. John 21:22.

ST. JOHN was no effeminate fop as some artists would have us believe, but a thorough, complete, noble man. Christ had given him and James, his

brother, the significant title of "Sons of Thunder." No weakling could have fulfilled the divine promise of drinking Christ's own bitter chalice as John was destined to do. Beneath the Cross John's faith and trusting love were tried in the furnace of apparent defeat. Christ had proclaimed himself Messiah, God. John saw Him die in disgrace. His love proved stronger than all possible doubts, and the agony of his soul must have shone forth through his

eyes as he gazed upward into the breaking eyes of Jesus. No, John was a vigorous, outspoken, frank, honest, manly man, impetuous and fiery to a fault, strong with a virility that required only the touch of grace to temper it into complete charity that should remake him.

One by one the names of the Apostles, engraved on the foundation stones of the heavenly city of Jerusalem, had passed in review before the pensive eyes of the aged Apostles on Patmos. He was the last of the Apostles. The rest of the original band of twelve were now reigning with His Master and His Mother in the celestial kingdom. The infirmities of old age, like so many termites, were undermining his decrepit bodily frame. Faith now served as a prop to his body and as spectacles for his dimmed eyes. He saw and walked only by faith. In patience he awaited the Master's summons home. The glorious sunset of his dying life that was to usher in the eternal day of a bright eternity is sketched in vibrant colors by St. Paul. "Being justified therefore by faith...we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not." —Rom. 5:1-5.

St. Joseph's Lantern

A SHORT REEL



“Thy word is a lamp to my feet.” —Ps. 118:105.

“GO TO Joseph!” Pope Pius IX solemnly proclaimed St. Joseph “Patron of the Universal Church.” As the patronage of St. Joseph ex-

tends over the entire Church, there is no earthly necessity of which the holy Patriarch cannot take care. So unbounded is his compassion towards us, so great is his power in heaven, that there is no manner of grace that he cannot obtain for us. To us the Church says, what Pharaoh once said to the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph! and do all that he shall say to you.” But if we go to St. Joseph, will he, of whom the Evan-

gelists have recorded no spoken word, now speak to us? He will, by *actions* that speak louder than words. For the few passages about him in the Gospels seem to say: "Go to Joseph, and learn how to model your *faith* on his."

St. Joseph was a man of deep faith, typified by the lantern that he hung up in his humble home at Nazareth, in the midnight cave at Bethlehem, and took with him on his journey to and from Egypt. For it was especially at these places that his faith was put to a severe test. Consider, for example, the first of these occasions—when he became aware of the fact that Mary, his wife, had conceived a child.

St. Joseph's faith was, as it were, the summing up of the faith of all the patriarchs and faithful Jews in the promised Redeemer. Compared to this Light of the World it was a mere spark—like the light of a lantern compared with the brightness of the noonday sun—but a vital spark. As a faithful, God-fearing Israelite, St. Joseph read constantly the books of the Prophets and the Psalms. He was well-read in the Divine Law. Being a "Just Man," as the Holy Ghost styles him, he "meditated on the law of the Lord day and night" (Ps. 1:2). With the Psalmist he could say:

“Thy word (Law) is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths” (Ps. 118:105). This is the special characteristic of St. Joseph’s faith. He merely asks, *what is to be done*, not, *how* can this be? He seeks a *reason for action*, not a motive for believing. His strong faith did not need the latter.

Look at him in his humble house at Nazareth. Mary, his virginal wife, has just returned from her three-months’ stay with her cousin Elizabeth. But, oh, horrors! she is blessed with child. Conscious of Mary’s immaculate purity, and uninitiated into the mystery of her virginal conception, all manner of conflicting thoughts race through his troubled mind. What is he to *do*? Tossing upon his straw pallet he finally falls asleep amid these disturbing thoughts. In a dream an angel appears to him, saying: “Do not be afraid, Joseph, Son of David, to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is begotten of her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins” (St. Matth. 1:20-21).

Why did the angel appear to St. Joseph during his sleep and not during the day? St. John Chrysostom replies: “Because Joseph was a man of great faith he did

not, like the shepherds and Zachary, need to see the angel with his bodily eyes. He had confided his thoughts and doubts to no one, so after the angel's message he did not doubt that he had been sent by God, for God alone, he reasoned, can read the secrets of the human heart."

St. Joseph, therefore, believed the words of the angel, and thereby, one of the deepest mysteries of our holy faith—the becoming Man of the Son of God in the immaculate womb of His Virgin Mother through the action of the Holy Spirit. He did not doubt God's power, when the angel recalled the prophecy of Isaias that "a virgin shall conceive." He was merely in the dark as to what *course of action* was expected of him *now*. God manifested His Will through the words of the angel; "*take to thee Mary thy wife.*" Immediate *action* followed this manifestation. St. Matthew continues the account: "Joseph, *arising* from sleep, *did* as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and *took unto him* his wife" (1:24).

With deep faith in the mystery that she concealed under her heart, with a deeper understanding of her immaculate virginity, and with a deeper love for his wife, the Mother of his God, Joseph took Mary to his own virginal bosom.

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