

# Stick with the Faith



I was talking with one of my hip friends. I have hip friends. I swear.

He is not a believer and never has been as far as I can tell.

I feel for him. There's not much comfort in his vague agnosticism, especially when alone at the shank of the evening. But the grace is there, and so is hope.

A few weeks back he was skirting around the edge of the Troubles. He never wants to offend. But he gets curious.

He finally blurted out, "You sure stick with it, no matter what."

Usually I will then move the conversation to Apologetics 101. "First Cause" is always a favorite for this stuff. I will pronounce from on high that since everything in existence was caused by something that created it, all creation must eventually be traced back to an uncreated "First Cause" that kicked things off. Proof of the existence of God! Inspiring, huh?

But something else pops into my head and heart this time. "You sure stick with it, no matter what."

Before I had started Catholic school, my parents had taught me the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.

Our first-grade nun was introducing us to the Rosary. And after the Sign of the Cross, we needed to say the Apostles' Creed to get started.

In 1955, the Apostles' Creed seemed like the longest prayer on

earth and heaven. I imagined myself a shaky old man unable to say the Rosary because I could never memorize it all.

For each of us it is different. Yet the same. It can be a time, a place, a memory. It is what it feels like to be Catholic, so deep in our soul. It can be a simple Hail Mary said at that shank of the evening. It can be as joyous as a Nuptial Mass, as consoling as a grandmother's funeral, as serene as a pew in a quiet church.

Our Faith – our Catholic faith – is who and what we are. It is impossible to define us in any other way. And that's difficult to put into words for my hip friend.

It is the devotions of a lifetime, and the prayers to greet the morning, to carry us through the day and to an evening's rest.

It is the water, bread, wine and liturgy of the sacraments to mark us with sanctifying grace and bless us throughout our lives.

It is the Church seasons and feasts through the cold, wet, warmth and dry that make the whole year a faithful pilgrimage.

It is the sublime awe, majesty and miracle of the Mass, whether at a cathedral or a small rural chapel.

It is the happiness found in Jesus born at Christmas and the celebration of Jesus risen at Easter.

It is the Lenten Stations of the Cross and the oils blessed at chrism Mass, the sacred silence of Good Friday, the light from the paschal candle.

It is the altar decorated with flowers.

It is the statue of the Blessed Mother and the Angelus bells at noon.

It is holy cards and scapulars, sacramentals and holy water.

It is a 6-year-old poring over the Apostles' Creed so that he can pray the Rosary.

It is the Church One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

It all comes to me in a rush. I could erase it, start all over and list a thousand more elements that are the feel of our Faith. They hold me despite whatever is in the newspapers and despite the turmoil in the Church.

I believe in "the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen."

"Yep," I finally said, "I do stick with it."

No matter what.

*Robert P. Lockwood writes from Indiana.*