

Keeping Faith Alive During Life's Dark Nights (Part III of IV)

Carmelite Sisters

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Editor's Note: In Part I, we looked at how faith is a response to revelation, how it penetrates the veil of the ordinary, and how it is essential to our relationship with God. In Part II, we considered the general patterns of growth which we experience. Today, we will begin to explore how to keep faith alive during our lives' dark nights.

How to Keep Faith Alive During the Dark Nights of Our Lives

Take Care of Your Soul

One of the great themes in the [works of St. Teresa of Avila](#) is the beauty and the grandeur of the human soul in the state of grace. Sometimes faith becomes weak not so much because of the big burdens but because we allow the little frets and cares and burdens to accumulate. If anything agitates us, we should go ahead and deal with it. Get it righted with the Lord before speaking to or meeting anyone. Whatever it is, invite Him into it. Regret nothing, not even the sins and failures.

We are swimming in the graces of the present moment. We should breathe in the rich blessings of each new day and forget all that lies behind. We are made so that we can carry the weight of 24 hours, no more. The Lord has promised to help us with the burdens of today only. Small wonder so many in our world are heartsick and weary.

Pray

An honest cry for help cannot be ignored by the living God. "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief." Scripture, especially the psalms, teaches us how to cry out to God. This cry from the heart doesn't have to be refined. It may only be a groan in the depths of the heart, but He will understand. He promised that His Word is a shield in time of battle. Shields don't help unless we use them. We should pray for – ask for – faith. That is how we grow in faith – by asking for it.

Faith must be exercised and strengthened. If the eye is always covered with a patch and not used, it will grow weaker and weaker. We cannot give faith to ourselves. Ask for it. He will not refuse. Frequent the sacraments. There is no healing, and there is no restoration of what is lost outside of Jesus Christ. Strength and healing are found in Holy Communion and Confession. Ask for the grace of repentance. Say, "Lord, I am rebelling. Forgive me."

Grow in Your Knowledge of the Faith

You cannot entrust yourself to someone whom you do not know. Get to know God better. This can be done through prayer, Bible Study groups, [good spiritual reading](#), retreats and conferences as well as courses including [distance education courses](#).

Understand That Temptations Will Come

Temptations do not mean you have done something wrong. When temptations against the faith come, treat them just as that: temptations.

If the temptations regard either chastity or faith temptations — take flight. Make an [act of faith](#) and then later, when you are on firmer ground, go spend some time in study.

Choose Your Friends Well

"Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are." Read the lives of saints. Find a faith-based group that will support and help you. At the same time, stay away from anyone or anything that will be an obstacle to your relationship with God. As it says in the Act of Contrition, "I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more and avoid the near occasions of sin."



Remember That We Are Body-Soul People

We need to create an environment that is supportive of our soul. As far as sight is concerned, we need to have helpful visuals – statues, pictures, maxims, books, DVDs. In the auditory sphere, we should have on hand good, wholesome [religious talks](#) from conferences and we must always be vigilant of the music to which we listen.

Remain Steady

Sometimes we do not remain steady during times of trial and we begin to doubt our faith because we do not see the long vision. We need to learn how to develop a positive attitude as well as a trusting attitude in the everyday events of our lives. Remember delay is not denial. Remember also, that some denials are expressions of love.

Editor's Note: [In Part IV](#), we will conclude our look at how to keep faith alive during the dark nights.

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