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## FAITH AS A RELATIONSHIP

**H**ow should we view faith today? In our modern technological age, faith seems to be a mysterious, unknown planet and the Living God irremediably lost.... But what if God has only been eclipsed? A solar eclipse does not mean that the sun has been extinguished. Tomorrow, any obstacles between God and myself could be removed, giving rise to the hope of his return. His “disappearance” from in my life could be triggered by the cloud of haste, superficiality, and a feeling of emptiness that prevents me from sensing and seeing the Other and others.

The result is an ever-more fragmented and uninhabitable world. Genuine dialogue, and therefore every genuine relationship, always leads to a profound and unconditional welcome of the “otherness” of God and of the people I meet in the course of life.

Faith accompanies my existence from the outset and takes on different forms as I grow. Initially, its object is the persons and things I need for survival and thus is based exclusively on the witness of those who nurture my life. As I grow my horizons expand, and my faith reaches maturity when I discover that no person, thing or situation on earth can adequately satisfy my interior yearnings. Only at this point do I begin to seek God and faith autonomously. Because it is a relationship, faith’s sole goal is *contact with the Other [God]* and this contact, in turn, enables me to enter into communion with the many “others” around me.

In speaking about faith, divine Revelation uses two words laden with meaning: the He-

brew word *’emunah* in the Old Testament and the Greek word *pistis* in the New Testament. These are two different but complementary aspects of faith. When the Bible speaks about the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Job, etc., it uses the word *’emunah*, which means “to trust Someone.” A person of faith is one who is “promised and entrusted to the Living God.” And God, on his part, sustains and protects that individual.

Faith is mutual exchange in a spirit of dialogue. It is not a rule book that tells me what I must do. Concretely speaking, to live in a spirit of *’emunah* means to stand on my own two feet, to be steadfast, to persevere wholeheartedly under the gaze of the living God. Faith as a relationship reaches its fulfillment in the New Testament. Only when I reach the point of *pistis* (absolute truth) do I realize that it is not enough to simply trust God. I must acknowledge him as the Absolute Truth of my life.

A trusting relationship (*’emunah*) springs from contact with the One I trust, while the New Testament relationship of acknowledgment is based on complete acceptance of what I know is true. To acknowledge the truth of God in Jesus means to cling to him, to recognize and rediscover myself in him, taking as my starting point a relationship of unprecedented intimacy with him. Jesus of Nazareth gives faith a body, a face, a heart, a name. Thus, to have faith in God means to have total trust in him (*’emunah*), acknowledging him as the Absolute Truth (*pistis*) through profound assimilation of the thoughts and feelings of Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 2:5-11).