

ST AGATHA'S NOVENA – 1ST FEBRUARY 2024
LIVING MY FAITH AS A CATHOLIC TEENAGER – MAURA

Faith. The dictionary definition of this is complete trust or confidence in someone or something. In Christianity, this is believing in God and the Trinity even with no solid proof. When one becomes a teenager, it is completely normal to begin to question one's faith and what they believe in. It is a discussion I had many times with my friends in school (an only girl's catholic school) with questions such as is God real? Do I believe in God?

I have been attending church every Sunday with my parents and younger brother since I was little for over 10 years. Both of my parents grew up in strong catholic households as did I. As a child, I didn't really understand enough to question my religion. It was just something that had become part of my routine - church every Sunday. As I grew up, I began to form my own opinions separate from those of my parents. I did have a stage in my life where I wasn't sure if I believed in God and, in this time, I was reminded of a certain person in the Bible: doubting Thomas. I am sure we all remember that Thomas was a disciple of Jesus that refused to believe in Jesus' resurrection until Jesus appeared to him in the flesh. The message of this Gospel account from John is one shouldn't need evidence to believe in God. It made me realise that I should believe regardless of what others say, regardless of lack of proof and regardless of others' doubts.

My faith has kept me strong in life and helped me overcome obstacles I never thought I would and that itself is proof. As I continue to make my way in life and meet more obstacles, one of the things that brings me extreme comfort is my religion. It has become second nature to me that if I have an important exam or I am worried about something or someone, I pray and ask God for help. I know I can rely on God to keep me safe and do what is best for me as he has done for others.

My catholic faith is present in all I do and guides my decisions; it guides me to choose the right path and the one God would approve of. This helps me be a better person. For a teenager, there are many different forms of temptation, and it can be a time of rebellion (which I am sure my parents are aware of) but whenever I make a mistake or go down the wrong path, I know God will help me correct this. Mistakes are inevitable, which is why Jesus taught us forgiveness is crucial, because once forgiven, we can assure we learn from the

mistake and don't repeat it. I am embarrassed to admit there have been times I haven't made the right decisions and I have felt ashamed afterwards but I know God doesn't judge and He is always there to help guide me back on the right path and make amends along the way. I know undoubtedly that if I stay true to God, He will help me overcome any obstacles and this will only bring me closer to Him. I hope that my journey in life will not only be lived in the best way possible for me but will also inspire other people to live in the same way, guided by God.

In the New Testament, in Matthew, Jesus describes what is known as the parable of the sheep and goats. In the parable of the sheep and goats, there are the sheep that represent the righteous people that will join the kingdom of God and there are the goats that represent the unrighteous people who are hard-hearted. Those who have lived good lives and believed in God will be put on one side and have a place in Heaven (the sheep) whereas those who have rejected the belief in God and sinned in their lives will be placed on the other side as sinners (the goats). The main message of this parable is that Christians should take action to help those in need and carry out God's will on Earth. Jesus tells the disciples they must clothe the naked, help the needy and feed the hungry. In summary, Jesus is telling us to help people and demonstrate our faith through actions by making a difference even if it seems like a small one.

With this parable in mind, I strive to orientate my life to help others and have a positive influence on the world as much as I can. This includes even the small things such as being involved in my community by helping in church with altar serving when I was younger and now by reading in mass and helping clean the church when needed. At school, I try help my friends with homework and classwork, to be a reliable friend and to moderate situations when arguments occur and things escalate. The way I live my daily life is inspired by God and the Gospel.

I am grateful to be a catholic and to have God in my life to guide and support me. I am eternally thankful to my mum and dad who raised me in the catholic faith at home as well as enrolling me in catholic schools because it has allowed me to always have God by my side and feel his guiding hand with everything I do and that is how faith has shaped me as a catholic teenager.